



Decentralization

of the housing policy in

the Netherlands

A HISTORY THESIS ABOUT

Policies on the housing market from 1990 to the present by the Dutch national government.
In relation to the housing shortage in the Netherlands

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Introduction

In recent years the news in The Netherlands has been dominated by articles about the shortage of housing and plans to increase housing development. (NOS, 2021) The low interest rate and quantitative shortage of housing has caused an increase in prices over the last years. Making it even harder for people to find a suitable house to live in. (De Nederlandsche Bank, 2023) These problematics have been reason for a lot of researchers to look into the possible causes and history behind the Dutch housing market. In more recent years there have been more direct causes for a decrease in the production of houses. Such as the nitrogen problem, competing spatial claims, lack of construction materials and a shortage of trained personnel. But over a longer timespan there has been a lot of governmental decisions and policies that have influenced the processes on the housing market. (Boelhouwer & Heijden, 2022) Because there is a broad span of governmental interventions and policies, this thesis will focus on a time period of the last 30 years and highlight the most important governmental interventions.

A lot of the development options and housing prices is decided at the start of the process, it starts with the developed or undeveloped land. On this real estate market there are different stakeholders, different interests, a set of rules and governmental policies. And all of these factors have effect on the way the housing market is organized in The Netherlands. Therefore this thesis will be focusing on the following matter: ‘In what way has governmental policy influenced the housing market in The Netherlands and what is the relation towards the housing shortage?’ The themes that will be addressed to be able to answer this question are: the governmental policy over the period from 1990 to 2020; the housing market and market competition; the involved stakeholders and their interest and influence on the housing market; and the influence and interest of different governmental bodies. By discussing these themes this thesis will an overview of governmental policy on the housing market in The Netherlands. And from that point look into see whether there is a relation between the policy from the past to the housing shortage of the present.

There is already a lot of knowledge on the topic of the housing shortage in The Netherlands and its possible causes. But with this thesis the focus

will be on the governmental interventions on the market and the building process. Governmental policy can be looked at over time and is therefore interesting to investigate. It might lead to new insights on how to approach certain issues on the housing market in the future.

The understanding of this topic is also important in the architecture field, because it determines a lot of the possibilities for architects in an early stage of the building process.. If the architect has knowledge about this he can then better understand his importance and knows better how to approach a design assignment.

The image of the real estate land market and the problematics on the Dutch housing market, will be shaped by researching and discussing direct sources and existing literature on this topic. The source material that will be used is both present and from the past, to be able to create a correct overview of government policy over time. By also looking back in time it will be possible to see possible causes in government policy for present problematics. Therefore sources that will be used are governmental documents from the Dutch second chamber of the States General, reports and research papers.

To be able to formulate an answer to the question: ‘In what way has governmental policy influenced the housing market in The Netherlands and what is the relation towards the housing shortage?’ The governmental policies from 1990 to 2020 will be discussed in chapter 1. The policies discussed in chapter 1 will also be focused on the housing market itself and therefore chapter 2 will give insight into how the Dutch housing market and building process works. In chapter 3 the policies from chapter 1 will be discussed further in how they influence the housing market, processes and stakeholders from chapter 2. This will give a clear image of how the governmental policies have lead to certain situations on the housing market in the Netherlands of today.

1. Governmental policies from 1990 to 2020

Over the years the policy from the government on the housing market has been changed several times. The ideas on what the role of the government is and should be on the housing market changes with time and depends also on the political climate. With this change also the way the government is included in steering the market and parties involved changes. In this chapter these changes and different roles of the government over time will be discussed in more detail. This will give an overview of the most important governmental decisions and policies of the last 30 years, by highlighting the most important housing agendas and policy reports. In that way it might give insight in what the government could do in the future to overcome the housing shortage of the present.

1.1 1990 - 2010: from the national reconstruction to the finished spatial organization of The Netherlands



Figure 1 J.A. (Johan) Ringers, was the first minister in charge of Reconstruction and Public works and therefore responsible for housing. (Stichting PDC, 2023)

In the years after the second World War, that ended in 1945, the government's policy has always been aimed at the reconstruction of The Netherlands and increasing the housing stock. To execute the reconstruction plans the government installed a special ministry, the Ministry of Public Works and Reconstruction (1945), J.A. Ringers (figure 1) was the first minister of this ministry. This ministry was responsible to reconstruct the damages houses and buildings and to plan new building projects in The Netherlands. The responsibilities of this ministry were later transferred to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations under the department of Reconstruction and Public Housing. In 1965 the name of this department was changed again and became the department of Public Housing and Spatial Planning. In the 1960s there was an increasing interest in environmental issues. Therefore a special Ministry of Environment Management was installed. In 1982 the Ministry of Environment Management and the department of Public Housing and Spatial Planning were combined into the new Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (from this moment on Ministry of VROM). This Ministry was from that moment on responsible for the spatial planning and housing projects in The Netherlands. (Stichting PDC, 2023)

1.1.1 The Fourth National Spatial Planning Policy Document (VINEX)



Figure 2 Ed Nijpels (VVD) on the left, on his first day as Minister of VROM in 1986. (ANP, 1986)



Figure 3 Hans Alders on the right (PVDA) as Minister of VROM in 1990, with in his hands the National Environment plan. (ANP, 1990)



Figure 4 Figure 4 Housing locations from the VINEX program in the Randstad area (De Volkskrant, 1994)

Around 1990 there was a big shift in the role of the government. Till then the national government had a strong role in the construction of houses. By subsidizing the development of land and production of houses. But with the planning documents by The Ministry of VROM, the VINO (1988) and the VINEX (1990) this changed. The VINO is short for The Vierde Nota Ruimtelijke Ordening, which translates into the Fourth National Spatial Planning Policy Document. This was initiated by the Minister of VROM, at that point Ed Nijpels (VVD) (figure 2). The new policy was initiated and responsibility for the production of housing shifted from the national government to the active market parties on the housing market. (Boelhouwer & Heijden, 2022) Later a new cabinet was installed and Hans Alders became Minister of VROM (figure 3). The specific locations for housing development were laid out and were added to the VINO-document, this became the VINEX spatial planning policy (Vierde Nota Ruimtelijke Ordening Extra). With this document the Dutch national government set out the spatial planning agenda for the coming 25 years.

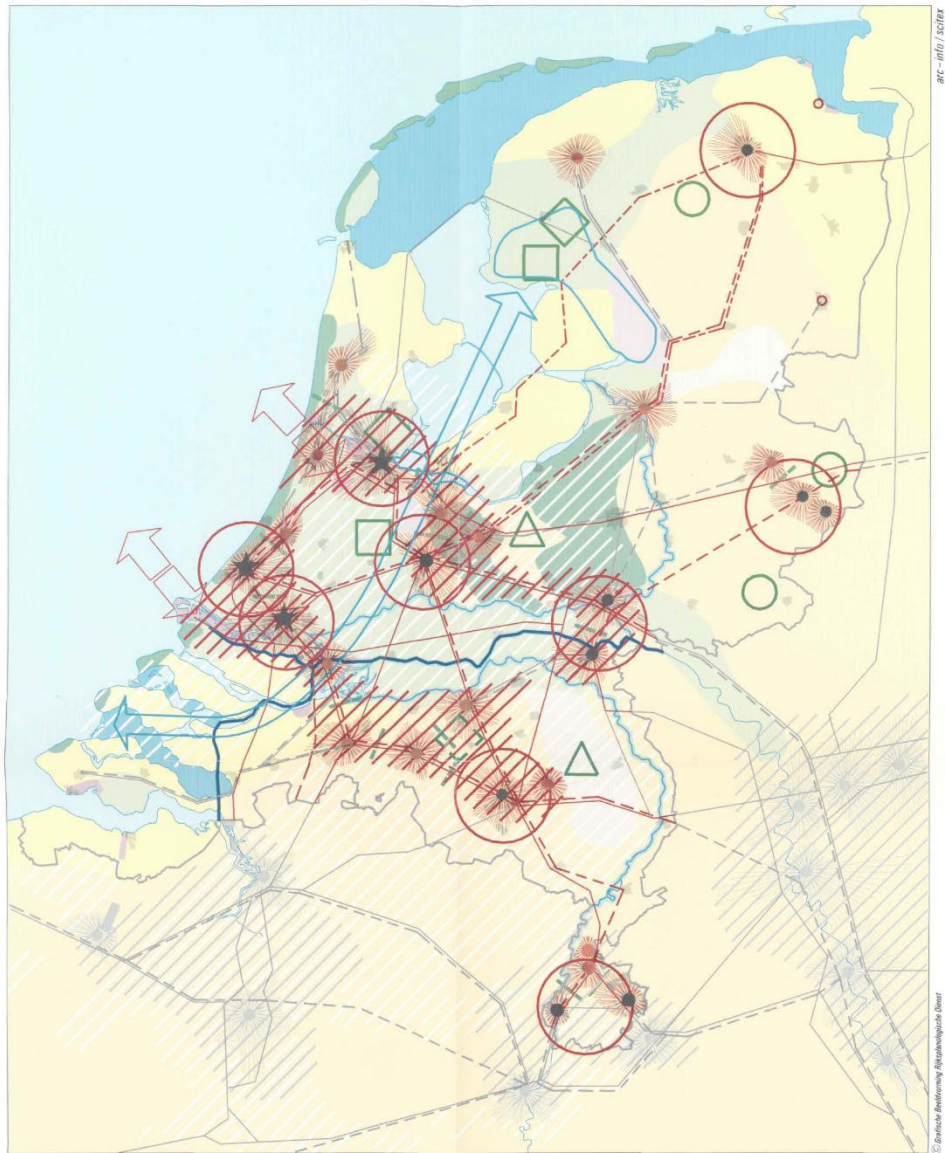
The emphasize of the involvement of the national government was put on the production of housing for the lower class. The houses in segments above the social housing limit, became the responsibility of lower government bodies and private parties. (Priemus, 2010) Although the financial responsibility was now more part of the market, there was still talk of strong steering government policy on a national level. (Priemus, 2010) With the VINEX the national government laid out a map of possible locations to construct houses and new neighborhoods (figure 4). As shown in figure 1 the map determines the land use on a national scale. With different indicators the national government set out the different uses of land that are allowed in a certain area or region. In the spatial planning document of VINEX these indicators were further specified with demands and restrictions for these indicated areas. (VROM, 1990) With the policy described in the VINEX the national government aimed at a more restrictive land policy. The goal was to maintain and create more open green spaces and to create scarcity of land. This scarcity would result in higher revenues of land for the local governments. These revenues would serve as a replacement for the governmental subsidies, that had disappeared in the new governmental policy. (Tijdelijke Commissie Huizenprijzen, 2013)



*Figure 5 Ir. Leeflang explains the Vinex plans
(Doornum & Lange, 1991)*

According to Hans Leeflang (figure 5), who was one of the architects behind the plans of VINEX, the VINEX program went even further than appointing the use of land in certain areas. He said that the policy document of VINEX did not only describe the future plans, but also the way they should be executed. (Doornum & Lange, 1991) With this document the national government focused on improving the livability of all the regions in the Netherlands. Therefore it is stated in the document that the focus in the coming years will be more on improving the quality of housing than on increasing the quantity of housing. (Ministry of VROM, 1990) In figure 6 there is the map that came with the VINEX program. On the map the different fields of the plan are combined into a map of integration. This map shows the spatial planning of the Netherlands on housing, infrastructure, nature, water and urbanization. The ambitions were translated into building larger and more luxurious houses. With this the VINEX plans mainly focused on families, a substantial part of 80% of the entire program existed of single-family homes. With this the housing stock that was added with the VINEX program was quite unilateral. With only a few apartments, rental homes, small houses and single story houses. (Priemus, 2010) Although the program was quite unilateral it proved to be a quite successful cooperative way of building between government and private parties. In numbers the program had the goal to build 455.296 houses. But in 2010 there were already 519.393 houses built on locations set out in the VINEX document. (Priemus, 2010)

INTEGRATIEKAART VIERDE NOTA



RUIMTELIJKE HOOFDSTRUCTUUR

- stadsgewest, respectievelijk concentratiekern in het noorden
- industriegebied
- open ruimte, respectievelijk open ruimte tussen stadsgewesten
- hoofdverbinding (weg respectievelijk spoorlijn)
- grote rivieren en andere hoofdvaarwegen
- grote wateren met zeer hoge natuurwaarde, respectievelijk overige grote wateren
- gebieden met hoofdfunctie natuur
- hogere gebieden, multifunctioneel, grotere respectievelijk kleinere ruimtelijke eenheden
- lagere gebieden, multifunctioneel, grotere respectievelijk kleinere ruimtelijke eenheden
- gebieden met hoofdfunctie landbouw

RUIMTELIJK ONTWIKKELINGSPERSPECTIEF

- stedelijk knooppunt
- internationaal stedelijk vestigingsmilieu
- stedenring centraal Nederland
- mainport
- hoofdtransportas weg, respectievelijk idem, nader te bepalen
- hoofdtransportas rail/intercity-plus/hogesnelheidstrein (indicatief)
- hoofdtransportas water
- natuur- en of toeristisch-recreatieve ontwikkelingszone
- vernieuwing respectievelijk aanpassing respectievelijk handhaving van de ruimtelijke structuur in het landelijk gebied
- handhaving van de ruimtelijke structuur (mogelijk)
- studiegebied

Figure 6 Integration Map Vierde Nota Extra (VROM, 1990)

1.1.2 The Nota Ruimte (2004)



Figure 7 Sybilla Dekker (VVD), as Minister of VROM presenting the Nota Ruimte in The Hague (ANP, 2004)

In 2004 the new minister of VROM, Sybilla Dekker (VVD) presented the Nota Ruimte (figure 7). After the realization of the new neighborhoods of the VINEX program and expansion of existing neighborhoods, the Nota Ruimte was the new national spatial planning program. With this document the responsibility and decision making in the spatial planning are moved further towards the level of lower government bodies and private parties. A movement that had already been started with the introduction of VINEX. But unlike the VINEX program there was no planned map with development locations delivered by the national government in the Nota Ruimte (figure 8). Therefore developers, construction companies and housing associations were more free to develop new housing on locations they prefer. This often translates into more specific developments on a smaller scale. (Ministries of VROM, LNV, VenW, EZ, 2004) And with that the Nota Ruimte took a big step away from the national planned housing program of VINEX.

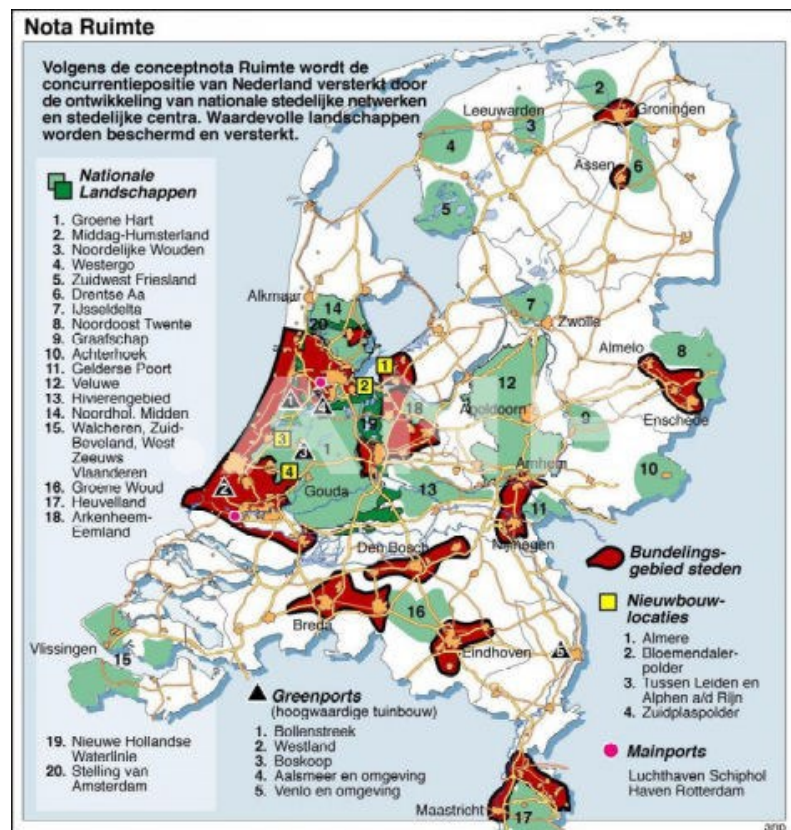


Figure 8 Map from the Nota Ruimte (2004) Indicating green areas on national scale and housing developments only in the Randstad Area and no longer on national scale (ANP, 2004)

1.2 2010 - 2020 the years after the Ministry of Public housing, Spatial planning and Environment (VROM)



Figure 9 image of the moment that government officials of VROM hear about the plans of the Rutte I cabinet (Oomen, 2010)

In the previous paragraph several policy documents have been discussed. These policies were made on a national level by the Ministry of VROM. After years of national agendas and a complete policy on national level within all of these fields, there was a discussion on the necessity of the Ministry of VROM. One of the reasons to dismantle the Ministry of VROM was the strong will of the Rutte I cabinet to create a less complex government. (VVD - CDA, 2010) The idea was that a government with less ministries and separate departments should be able to govern in a faster and more transparent way. After the installation of cabinet Rutte I on the 14th of October 2010, the Ministry of VROM was dismantled some days later on the 20th of October of 2010 (figure 9). On this date the responsibility of housing planning was transferred to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. (Besluit opheffing ministeries van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer [...] instelling ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2010)

1.2.1 Housing as responsibility of the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations



Figure 10 Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations Donner in 2011 at a presentation of the redevelopment of Strijp-S in Eindhoven. (ANP, 2011)

In 2011 the minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations J.P.H. Donner (CDA¹) (figure 10) brought out his first report about the housing stock and housing market in The Netherlands. With this report he presented the new policy from the national government of The Netherlands on the housing market. In this report he also states that more responsibility and control on the housing production should be brought to civilians, companies, housing corporations, local government and non-governmental organizations. He concludes his report saying that the intent of this new policy is to create a housing market with more market competition. (Donner, 2010) With this he followed the direction of decentralization of the housing program that had been started in the past. Most of his specific policy measurements were focused on correcting the market and land policy. The housing market was stagnant at that time and needed some impulses to regain the trust of the people. (Centraal Plan Bureau, 2020) In figure 9 there is the amount of transactions

¹ Political party in the Netherlands, the second largest party in the Netherlands at that time.

Veranderingen in woningmarkt indicatoren

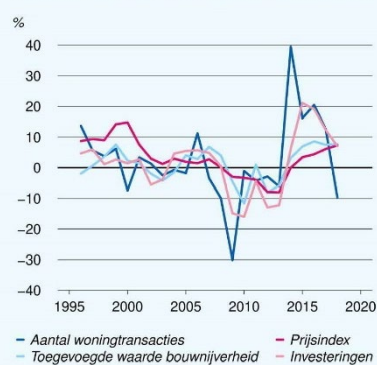


Figure 11 Changes in the housing market indicators (Centraal Plan Bureau, 2020)

housing presented with the blue line. Around 2008-2010 there is a clear low in the amount of transactions. The policy of Donner was therefore focusing on increasing the amount of transactions and encouraging home ownership in the Netherlands. Some of these measurements were the lower the transfer tax temporarily from 6% to 2% and to give corporations the opportunity to sell houses to their current tenants. (Donner, 2010) Municipalities were asked to be more considerate in making the choice between facilitating-and active land policy.² This meant that municipalities were less likely to obtain new lands for developments and that private parties would be more active on the development of housing.

1.2.2 The reintroduction of Minister of Housing and Public Service

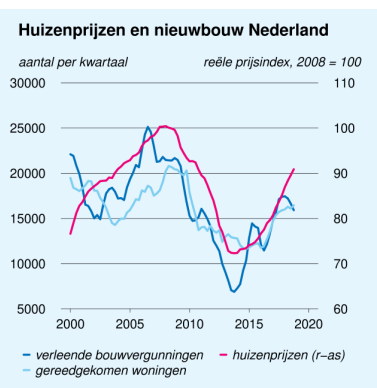


Figure 12 Housing prices and new building in the Netherlands, a strong decrease between 2010-2015. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

In the years after the housing market in The Netherlands also felt the effects of the bank crisis of 2008-2014. The prices of houses dropped due to the reduced spending power of people and stricter mortgage conditions for banks. This decreased the amount of transactions and therefore the demand on the housing market (figure 12). The government tried to overcome this situation by taking steps to correct the market. As mentioned before this was done by lowering the transfer tax, but also by reducing the tax rates in construction. (Centraal Plan Bureau, 2020) Although the intention was to give an impulse to the housing market, the effect of the measurements was that the prices of houses decreased even more. This resulted in a situation where it was not profitable anymore for investors and developers to develop new housing projects. (Boelhouwer & Heijden, 2022) There was a need for new government interference to improve the situation on the Dutch housing market.



Figure 13 Stef Blok as Minister of Housing, at the presentation of the Housing Agreement in 2013. (ANP, 2013)

This strong need resulted in the return of a minister of housing, which came with the new cabinet of 2012-2017. Stef Blok (VVD³) (Figure 13) became the minister of housing and presented his report, 'De Hervormingsagenda voor de woningmarkt' (Housing reform Agenda) in 2013. This report presented his view on the housing market and set out

² Active land policy is the land policy by the municipality when they own the land. They will decide what will be developed and make plans and guidelines. Through an open tender a developer will be chosen. With facilitating policy the municipality can only make agreements with the developer (most of the time the owner of the land in this situation). The developer decides what to develop within guidelines of the municipality, (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

³ Political party in the Netherlands, the largest party at the time.

the measurements of the cabinet. The measurements were focused on the responsibility of local governments and decentralized the policy on the housing market and production even further. From this moment on there is no national housing development planning from the national government anymore. Except for the Randstad area in The Netherlands. Here the national government stays directly involved, because of the complexity of urbanization in this area. (Blok, 2013). Another important decision that was made in this policy, is the focus of tasks and responsibilities for housing corporations. This was needed because the corporations had taken to many financial risks with public money in the past. Therefore the government of Rutte II decided with the Woningwet of 2015, that the role of housing corporations should be restricted to producing homes for the lower income groups in The Netherlands. They were no longer allowed to also invest in housing in the higher price ranges. (Boelhouwer & Heijden, 2022) With the Woningwet corporations are no longer allowed to buy plots of land, unless it is certain that it will be possible to build on those lands within five years. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) This meant that a lot of the houses that used to be produced by corporations in this segment were now left over to other market participants. A side effect of the changing role of the housing corporation was that they had less financial means to invest in social programs and neighborhood improvement programs. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

On top of that there was the new landlord tax⁴, which resulted in less financial resources for the housing corporations to invest in new housing projects. (Boelhouwer & Heijden, 2022)

The policies at this time were focused on the limitation of market disruptions and encouraging individual initiatives. (Blok, 2013) The goal was to regain the trust of investors and market participants in the housing market. By several interventions in the market and financial loan system investors would invest more in housing and private individuals would be more likely to move. This should all result in a market where it was more attractive to invest in new housing, especially in the midrange rental housing. (Blok, 2013) One of the measurements was to increase the loan capacity for developers and private parties. In 2017 Stef Blok claimed

⁴ A tax imposed on residential property owners in the Netherlands, that was installed in 2013. It is an annual tax that is calculated as a percentage of the taxable value of qualifying residential properties. (Belastingdienst.nl, 2023)

that the policy on the Dutch housing market policy was finished. (Pont, 2019)

1.2.3. The years after the finished housing policy



Figure 14 Kajsa Ollongren (D66) as Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. (ANP, 2017)

In the new government registration that followed in 2017 there was no longer a special minister of Housing and Public Service. These responsibilities were moved back to the Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations. But soon enough it was clear that the housing policy in The Netherlands was not finished and governmental interference was needed. According to Kajsa Ollongren, then Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (figure 14), the housing market needed more intensive policy and planning. She concluded that there are investments in housing production needed in the future. (Ollongren, Minister Kajsa Ollongren: ‘Nee, de woningmarkt is niet af. Er moet veel gebeuren’, 2021)

The most important change on the level of the national government is that the national government and lower government bodies together agreed on the goal to build 75.000 new houses per year. (Ollongren, *Integrale visie op de woningmarkt*, 2018) In the years 2017 to 2022 the national government did take some measures to resolve the issues on the housing market. (Boelhouwer & Heijden, 2022) The government made housing deals with local governments to set a goal for the amount of new constructed houses within that city or region. With the housing construction boost the national government made extra financial means available to help municipalities realize non-economically viable projects. To increase the investment capacity of housing corporations they are exempt from paying the landlord tax, when building affordable or temporary housing. This should help boost the housing production by housing corporations. (Ollongren, *Integrale visie op de woningmarkt*, 2018) The measures named above are taken to resolve problems in the housing market, but there is not a national program of housing comparable to VINEX of 1990. The first responsibility for the housing production is for local governments and market participants. The national government still has a more directive role.

Since the policy shift in 1990 the national government of The Netherlands has pushed the responsibility for the production of housing more and more towards local governments, private individuals, companies and housing corporations. With these policies the market competition on the housing market has become more important. (Boelhouwer & Heijden, 2022) The market parties involved have been given more responsibility for the housing production and therefore more power and influence. Because of this importance of the market competition, the way the housing market functions has also more influence on the housing stock and housing production in The Netherlands. To fully understand the influence of these policies on the housing shortage in The Netherlands it is important to have a good image of the housing market and process of housing production in The Netherlands. In the next chapter the process of housing production, the influence of the housing market and market competition will be discussed.

2. The building process and housing market

To know what the influence of the housing market on the housing production is, it is important to understand the process of housing construction and the strong connection to the housing market. From that point it will also be possible to understand the influence of policy on the housing market and housing stock.

For each real estate development you need a plot of land and each real estate project determines the value of the land at the same time. The determined value of a plot of land and the restrictions or possibilities that come with it, determine for the largest part what will be developed on a certain plot of land. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) Therefore it is important to get a good image of what that real estate land market exists of and how it works in practice. In this chapter we will have a closer look at the housing market and process of housing construction in The Netherlands. What the market consists of, what the processes in housing construction are and which stakeholders are involved.

2.1. The building process and real estate land market

To get a good picture of what the real estate land market actually is, it is important to determine the commodity that is traded on this market. When determined the commodity we can also look at what specific characteristics will determine the value of this commodity. These two important factors of the real estate land market will be discussed in this paragraph. The commodity that is traded on the real estate land market, is of course land. But there is a lot of difference in characteristics of land and therefore in value.

First there is the uncultivated, undeveloped land. This type of land does not have the status of land to develop houses on yet. Therefore this type of land brings more uncertainty for its buyer and is lower in value, than land that already has been cultivated. (van der Krabben, 2021) Most of the times this type of land is owned by the original owner, for example farmers. The disadvantage of these lands is that it still has to be cultivated which could lead to discoveries that will slow down the development process, such as existing pollution.

Then there is also the land that is already cultivated and ready for development. This type of land is most of the time owned by the local municipalities. The demand side for this type of land exists of real estate

Table 1 Land ownership of parties that are active on the housing market. (in hectares) (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

	Binnenstedelijk	Nabij bebouwd gebied	Buiten bebouwd gebied	Totaal
Corporaties	397	849	400	1.646
Gemeenten	18.216	36.418	41.372	96.026
Marktpartijen	5.043	5.406	4.403	14.852
Totaal	23.656	42.672	46.175	112.523

developers, housing corporations or end-users. In table 1 the ownership of different types of land has been given. It is clear that municipalities still own the largest part of land, especially within city borders. In figure 15 there is an overview of the process of housing construction, starting at the beginning with farmland. This infographic shows the involved stakeholders and process steps. It also indicates the significant increase in value as soon as the land-use changes to housing.

From agriculture to housing development

The process of building new homes is long and complex. This infographic describes the steps involved and how much time they take.

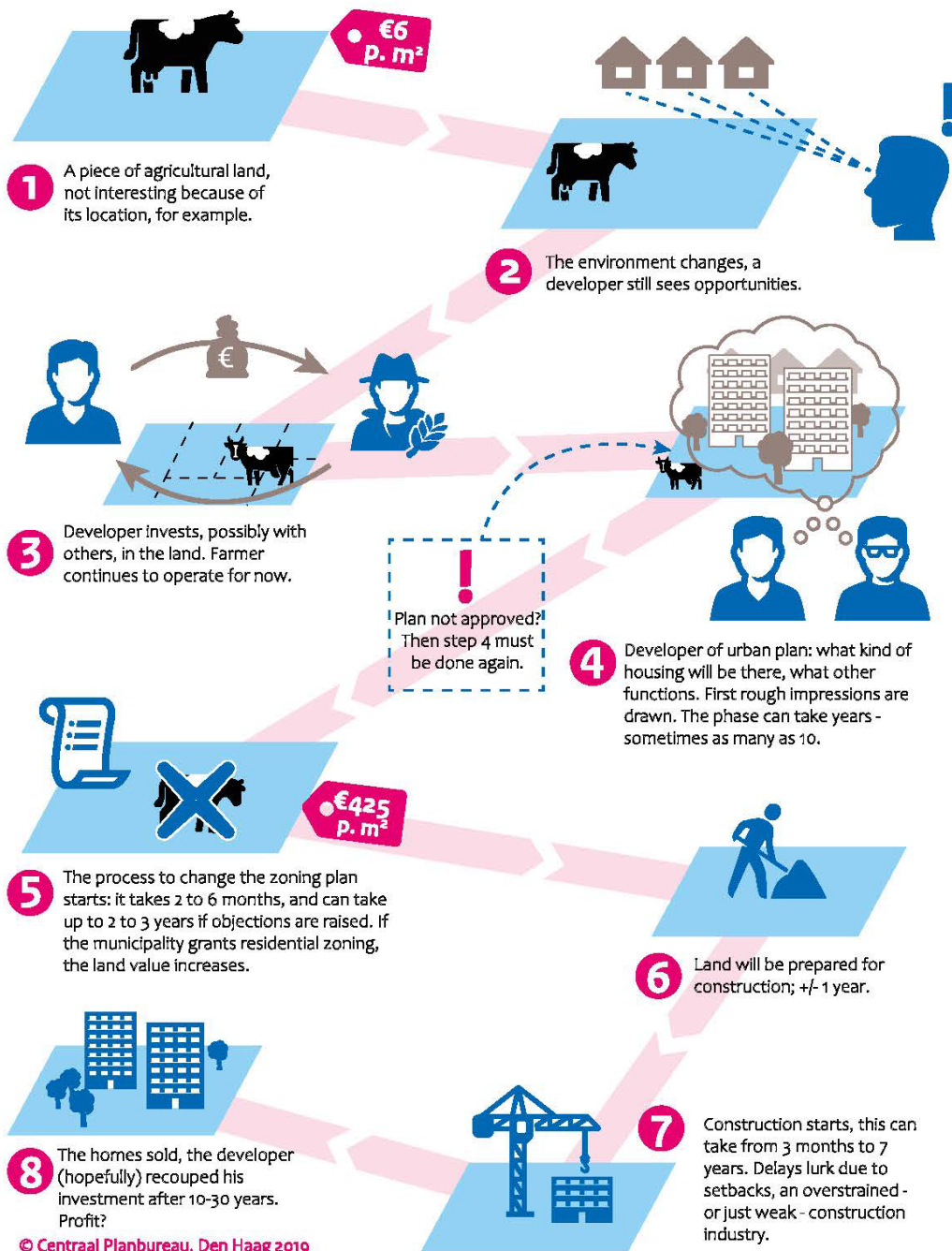


Figure 15 Infographic of the housing development process, from agriculture to housing development. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

2.2. Stakeholders on the real estate land market

There are several stakeholders involved in the market of real estate land. All these stakeholders have different interests and therefore shape the market. The understanding of these stakeholders and their interests will help to understand the governmental policies that will be discussed later. Therefore this paragraph will go in deeper into the stakeholders and their interests on the market of real estate land.

The main stakeholders that are involved in this market are: municipalities, real estate developers, landowners, real estate investors, housing corporations and end-users.

2.2.1 Municipalities and their interest

Municipalities can have different roles on the market of real estate land. They can be the owner of land that wants to sell their land to a developer. But they can also be the party that wants to buy land for a development in the future. This will be further explained in the next paragraph. For this part the focus is on the political interests that a municipality might have. The municipality wants to create developments that are beneficial to their existing inhabitants and that also fit their vision for the future of their municipality. Therefore the municipality can connect a set of rules to a certain piece of land, when they sell it on the market. Or they can connect a set of rules when changing the land-use destination or when issuing permits. With these tools the municipalities interest is to comply with certain demands of their future vision. Such as providing enough housing for certain target groups or complying with modern standards of sustainability. But they can also control the developments to maintain a certain quality of life and public space for the existing inhabitants of their municipality. (Krabben, De werking van de grondmarkt, 2021)

To maintain this standard and even improve it, it is important for the municipality to gain enough financial benefit out of the development. In what ways the municipality can do this will be discussed in paragraph 2.3.

2.2.2 Real estate developers and housing corporations

For the real estate developer the process only starts with the land, therefore his interest is to obtain land for the lowest possible price. And to obtain land with a certain degree of certainty about what you can develop on the land. For the developer the most important goal is to make his development financially healthy. This means that at the end of the construction process, there should be a surplus on the costs, or profit. (Krabben, De werking van de grondmarkt, 2021) Almost the same goes for housing corporations, with the important difference that for them the development is financially healthy as soon as costs are even to the returns. (Krabben, De werking van de grondmarkt, 2021)

2.2.3 Land owners

Land owners, who are not interested in developing themselves, have a different interest. Where the process for a developer starts with the purchase of land, that is where it ends for the original owner of the land. Therefore his interest would be to get the best price possible for the land that he wants to sell. These two contradictive interests end in a negotiation of the price, where the starting point will be the residual land value. With residual land value we mean the value that refers to the estimated value of a piece of land after deducting all the costs associated with development, including construction, infrastructure, and other expenses, as well as the desired profit margin. It is the amount that remains after subtracting the total development costs from the estimated future selling price of the developed property. (Krabben, De werking van de grondmarkt, 2021) This value is often used to determine the starting point of negotiations about the price of the land.

2.2.4 Real estate investors and end-users

Then finally there are the real estate investors and end-users, they will come in as soon as the development is finished. Therefore they are more indirectly involved in the real estate land market. Their interest is to obtain real estate for an affordable and fair price. The interesting point here is that the value of the land is determined by the value of the future development, in this case the house, and not the other way around. This

means that the price that will be paid for the land, does not directly influence the price of the developed housing. But the real estate investor and end-user do still have a certain interest in the real estate land market. The less land can be developed, the less supply there is and this will result in higher prices. (Krabben, De werking van de grondmarkt, 2021)

In short there are a lot of stakeholders with strong interests involved on the real estate land market. All these parties need to negotiate with each other which makes it a long and complicated process. The next paragraph will explain why the real estate land market is especially difficult to trade on for these different parties.

2.3 The supply side of the real estate land market

A lot of the value of a piece of land is being determined by its land-use destination. To give an example of this, a piece land that consists of nature would have a value of roughly one euro per square meter. But at the same time a piece of land that has housing as land-use destination has a value of 425 euro/m², based on the numbers of 2018. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) This means that when the land-use destination of a piece land changes there is a lot of revenue involved. This revenue is split over the original owner, the municipality, investors, housing corporations and real estate developers. (Krabben, De werking van de grondmarkt, 2021) Which makes it interesting for all of these parties to change the land-use destination of land into housing. But at the same time the shortage in available land to develop housing is seen as one of the main causes of the lagging supply to demand of housing in The Netherlands. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) This together raises the question what the reason behind this actually is.

To be able to find an answer to this question it is necessary to understand how the value of a piece of land is determined and what influences this has on the market. Therefore it is important to understand that land can be brought on the market by different parties with different conditions.

2.3.1 Municipality as owner

In the situation where the municipality owns the land, their policy is called active land policy. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) In this situation the municipality will make the plans for the development area. They will look for a contractor through a tender, this contractor will make the land ready for development.. When these works are done the municipality will also set out a tender for market parties to buy the land and realize the housing development within the guidelines provided by the municipality. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) The municipality will base the value of the land on the possibilities to develop. In the example of housing this means that the value of the land, according to the municipality, will be based on the market value of the housing development. This value minus the construction cost, taxes and extra costs (e.g. planning costs) will result in the residual land value. (Krabben, De werking van de grondmarkt, 2021) It is important to note that the variables that are used for the construction costs determine for a large part the residual land value.

With this policy the municipality benefits from the land market through the profit of the sold land. The municipality will profit from changing the land-use of a certain plot of land in their zoning plan. When they sell this land to a market party the extra value (Figure 15) that comes from the new land-use destination of the land partially goes to the financial means of the municipality. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

2.3.2 Market party as owner

When a market party owns the land he has more freedom to develop what he wants to develop on his plot of land. There is then no negotiation with the municipality about obtaining the land. The municipality can then also not directly profit from changing the land-use destination of this plot. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) But the municipality can still indirectly profit from housing development if they are not the original owner of the land. It is for the municipality then possible to set certain demands for the developer before approving the zoning plan. Examples of these demands could be that the developer needs to meet a certain quality in architecture or that he has to invest in certain public facilities such as parking. The municipality can also set a minimum of social housing units

that the developer needs to develop and determine what types of housing he can develop on this land in general. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

2.4 The real estate land market: an incomplete market

In this paragraph we will briefly discuss why the real estate land market should be seen as an incomplete market. This information is important to later understand why government interference in this market is considered necessary in the first place. The following characteristics of the real estate land market make this market an incomplete market: the heterogeneity of the product, no free access to the market, thin market, non-transparent market, cyclical market and the influence of government policy.

The commodity land makes a heterogenetic product because its value is mostly determined by the specific use of this specific land. And the market is split up in different segments of the market. There is no free access to the market, you first need to do a large investment to obtain land. This investment cannot be done by any party and is not without big financial risks. The real estate land market is a market with low trading volume and liquidity, where a small group of buyers and sellers are responsible for the trading activity, this makes it a thin market. This is mostly caused by the high transaction costs and regulatory barriers. As discussed before the real estate land market has a lot of uncertainty in it. For example the future possibilities for the development of the land. But also the lack of transparency in ownership of land and difference in knowledge between buyers and sellers, make this market into a non-transparent market. Another characteristic of the market that emphasizes this uncertainty in the market is the strong connection to the real estate market and its fluctuations in value. The value of the land is after all partially based on the value of the final development.⁵ This connection makes the real estate land market a cyclical market. As already mentioned the rules and regulatory boundaries are another characteristic of the real estate land market, that make it an imperfect market. How this regulatory boundaries exactly influence the market will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁵ This comes from the fact that the residual value of the land determines most of the time for what price someone will buy the land. As seen in paragraph 2.2.3 the residual land value is based on the value of the final development.

All the characteristics of the real estate land market that are named above, make that this market is considered to be an incomplete market. And therefore is seen as a market that is prone to market failure. This makes that government interference is considered to be necessary. (Krabben, De werking van de grondmarkt, 2021) As seen in chapter 1 the national government has more and more given the responsibility for the housing production to market participants and local governments. With this policy the housing production process has become more and more dependent on the functioning of the housing- and real estate land market. Therefore to increase housing production it has become more important to improve the functioning of the housing- and real estate land market in the Netherlands.

To see whether this is possible through government interference, the next chapter will have a closer look at the current situation of the housing market and influence of government interference.

3. Policies and effects on the housing market

Due to the fact that the government has placed more responsibility in constructing houses in the hands of market participants, the way the market functions has also become more important. With that also the influence of the economic situation in The Netherlands has a stronger effect on the construction process of housing. (Boelhouver & Heijden, 2022) Based on this situation the national government has aimed its policies more and more on making corrections in the market competition and tried to correct the market to keep the housing production up to speed. The general direction of the governmental policy on a national level has been to give more importance to market parties and more control to local governments. In this chapter the policies will be discussed and will show how the governmental policies might have influenced the way the market competition and the housing development process work in the Netherlands.

3.1. Local governments and policy

As seen in chapter 1, the national government's policy has been giving more of the control and responsibility to make policy on the housing market to lower governments. This means in The Netherlands that provinces and municipalities make most of the direct policies involved in the construction of housing. According to the present Minister for Housing and Spatial Planning Hugo de Jonge, this was with too little involvement of the national government and a national housing program or agenda. (Jonge, 2022) A reason for the housing production to be lower than necessary to comply with the demand, is the contradictory in interests of the provinces and the municipalities. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) This will be further explained in the following paragraphs.

3.1.1 Provincial States: interest, influence and policy

The first level of the local governments in The Netherlands is formed by the Provincial States. (Government of the Netherlands, 2023) The influence of the Provincial States is as follows. They decide the maximum amount of houses that each municipality is allowed to build and they are responsible for the spatial planning on regional level.

(Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) A problem that arises according to several stakeholders in the housing market is that Provincial States underestimate the demand of housing needed for the future. According to the Central Bureau of Planning (to be named CPB from this moment) this discrepancy is caused by the way the Provincial States determine the future need for housing. They use predictionary models of demographic changes in The Netherlands and estimate how much housing is needed based on these numbers. But other factors that determine the future demand of housing are not taken into consideration in these models, such as the growth of single households. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) This results in a maximum amount of houses for each municipality that might be lower than the amount of houses needed in each municipality.

Besides this issue there is another interest of the Provincial States in The Netherlands that is often placed above the realization of affordable housing, according to a report published by CPB. In this report the CPB states that a lot of involved stakeholders claim that Provincial States often prefer to maintain open space, over the development of land for housing. This results in a lower quantity of land that can be used to develop housing and therefore lowers the production of housing in The Netherlands. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

3.1.3. Municipalities: interest, influence and policy

The direct influence of municipalities on the realization of new construction plans of housing is significant. They determine where houses will be built and under what conditions. This is often determined by the wish of the municipality to maintain a good quality of spatial design and certain target groups they want to keep or attract within their municipality. These conditions or wishes from the municipality determine the options of a developer to a certain level. Sometimes the interests of the municipality and the developer do not align with each other, which slows down the process. When the demands of the municipality do not align with the financial feasibility of the project for the developer, the development does not go through at all. This is one of the ways that municipal policies can lead to a lower production of housing. But according to the report of CPB there are more causes for the lacking housing production in certain municipalities.

A reason that is often named by people within municipalities to hold back on new housing projects by municipalities, is the interest of existing

inhabitants of that municipality. For them it is not attractive to agree with new housing projects, because they give more value to the open space in their neighborhood. On top of that the addition of new houses could lead to a lower value of their own house. Because of the market competition an increase of houses could mean a deflation of the housing prices. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) This means that the people that benefit from new housing projects in a certain municipality, often come from outside this municipality. Therefore these people do not have a vote in this municipalities local council which makes it less likely that local politicians will agree with new housing projects. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

Another result from the policy of the national government is that municipalities are more focusing on a facilitating land policy, which means they are less often the owner of the land. As discussed in chapter 2, this makes that municipalities also have less ways to financially gain from the development of new housing. This means that the financial incentive to develop new housing projects is low. Which is cause for the local politicians and inhabitants to be also less interested in new housing projects. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

3.2. Market interference by the government

The policy of the national government has aimed to give Provincial States and municipalities the control and responsibility on the housing production. One condition for this policy to be successful was that market parties would take the responsibility to realize new housing projects, as discussed in chapter 1. In this part there will be a closer look on the effect of this policy on market parties in connection with the local interests and policies named above.

3.2.2. Effects on the market by Provincial States

As mentioned above one of the interests of the Provincial States is to maintain open space to keep a certain quality of life, within this Provincial State. The effect on the land market of this policy is that there is a lower amount of land available to develop housing on. Therefore the prices of land that do have the permission to develop housing on, will go up. As a result of the higher land prices the possibilities for a developer

to develop a project that is financially feasible are less. A possible outcome of this could be that due to the financial feasibility of the project, the original housing program will be adjusted. For example less affordable housing than previously asked by the municipality. (Krabben & Verdaas, 2022)

Another result of the policy of the Provincial States to maintain the open space, is the development of housing within the borders of the existing city. The land positions in these areas are often more expensive or are connected to higher demands from the municipality. This makes the development of these areas often a project with a long realization time and high costs. This results in high priced projects or projects with unprofitable tops, that will therefore not be realized. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019)

3.2.3 Effects on the market by municipalities

Whereas the Provincial States are more involved in the overhead policies that might have an effect on the market, the municipality is more directly involved in the housing market itself. The municipality could be seen as a policymaker, but also as a direct stakeholder in the land- and housing market.

In the Wet Ruimtelijke Ordening (Wro) or The Spatial Planning Act, the legal framework with spatial planning for each layer of the government has been determined. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) The influence in spatial planning of the municipality is significant. The municipality writes the zoning plan and with this they can determine what the use of the land will be, but also set other demands for the development. Such as the maximum building height, building density or the amount of social housing units. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) All of these determinations, and especially the last one, have a big impact on the market as well. If for example a developer is obligated to develop 40% of the total development in the segment of social housing this has a big impact on his financial gains. A house in a higher segment is of course more profitable than a house that is regulated by the rules of the social housing segment or the Woning Waardering Stelsel (WWS).⁶ This determines a maximum

⁶ The WWS system works with scores based on the characteristics of the housing unit, like its facilities, its value and its energy performance label. Each of these characteristics is divided in levels of performance, the higher the level the higher also the score. The maximum rent to be charged for a housing unit gets

amount of rent which is most of the time lower, than what it would be on the unregulated housing market. By connecting this demand to a certain plot of land, the profits that can be made become lower. Therefore the price of this land will also decrease. This is also why it is important that these policies are made by parties outside of the market.

As previously described in chapter 2 the municipality can have different roles in the housing development process. Besides the role as policy maker, the municipality can also be a player on the land market. The municipalities already own land or could be interested in buying land. If the municipality owns the land there are two advantages for the municipality. On one side they have complete authority over what will be realized and developed on this land. Another advantage is that the municipality will be able to collect the extra value of the land when the land-use is changed. (Centraal PlanBureau, 2019) It is then possible for the municipality to change the zoning plan of the land and connect a set of demands to the plot of land. This then determines what can be built on this land by the person or party that buys the land.

This does not always give the best result for the development or market parties involved. Due to the fact that the municipality is then a policy maker, but also benefits from the financial gains made with this land. Their interests might conflict with each other. For example it could be that the municipality sets the goal to develop 40% social housing on this land. But because this makes the land less valuable they might decide to lower this amount in negotiations with the developer. In that way they will keep the profits that they make of the land high and that might be seen as more important at that point. (Boelhouwer & Heijden, 2022) With the move of the national government to a housing market where municipalities are responsible for the production of housing, the funding by the national government also disappeared. To compensate for this loss of income the national government steered on a restrictive spatial policy. Because there were less locations to develop available the prices of development locations would rise. This meant that the profits of the sales of land would increase for municipalities. (Tijdelijke Commissie Huizenprijzen, 2013)

determined by the score of the unit. (The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2023)

By making the lower governmental bodies and market parties more responsible, their interests have also become more important. The contradictory in interests will be worked out in compromises in negotiations between involved parties. These negotiations take time and for every development public and private parties needed to negotiate about the price. (Tijdelijke Commissie Huizenprijzen, 2013) This leads to small scale developments organized between market parties and municipalities. (Boelhouver & Heijden, 2022) With this the governmental policies have had a significant influence on the building process of houses in the Netherlands. It resulted in a building process where the realization of housing projects with a high spatial quality and the highest possible profits became more important than realizing enough housing units for the increasing demand. (Tijdelijke Commissie Huizenprijzen, 2013)

Recommendations



Figure 16 Hugo de Jonge on a field trip as Minister of Public Housing and Spatial Planning in The Hague. (ANP, 2022)



Figure 17 The cover of the 'Nationale Woon- en Bouwagenda' by the Minister of Public Housing and Spatial Planning: Hugo de Jonge. (Jonge, 2022)

Since January the 10th of 2022 there is a new Minister of Housing and Spatial Planning, Hugo de Jonge (CDA) (figure 16). He is on behalf of the national government responsible for the housing program of the Netherlands which is a department of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Hugo de Jonge presented his plans for housing development in the Netherlands with his 'Nationale Woon- en Bouwagenda' on the 11th of March 2022 (figure 17). In the introduction of this agenda he states that by handing more responsibility to market participants the national government and lower governmental bodies lost the grip on the housing market and building process. (Jonge, 2022)

They do not longer control the exact amount of houses that is build or the moment they are built. This has resulted in a situation where market participants are always looking for the financially most attractive option to develop. They aim at profitable projects and should be corrected by local governments to maintain the quality of housing and create a housing stock that gives homes to everyone. But as also seen in this thesis, local governments do not always act on this in the necessary way.

Therefore de Jonge comes with a set of goals for the housing market that will be initiated and monitored by the national government. The main goal that he discusses is the realization of 900.000 new houses from now to 2030. (Jonge, 2022) He wants to achieve this goal by making deals with local governments and by giving corporations more responsibility and possibilities to develop. They will no longer be only responsible for building houses suitable for public housing, but also affordable housing⁷ in the mid-priced segment of the market. The only real national policy that is stated in his program is the amount of houses and the distribution of segments. (figure 18) (Jonge, 2022)

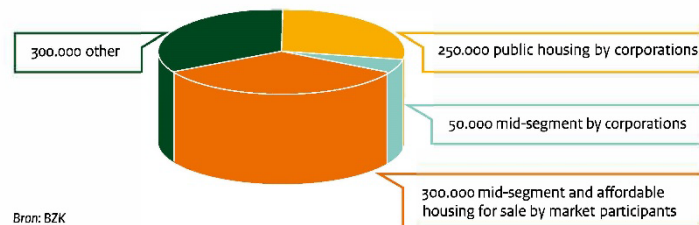


Figure 18 Division of housing by segment. (Jonge, 2022)

⁷ Affordable housing means housing with an amount of monthly rent of 1.000 euro or lower. Or for owner-occupied houses this means a maximum prize of 355.000 euro. (Jonge, 2022)

Furthermore de Jonge states that he wants to improve the housing development by extending the ‘Woningbouwimpuls’. This is a financial instrument of the national government to help municipalities realize housing development projects that are financially unfeasible without this impulse.

On the housing market there are also several interventions proposed by the national government. For example the increase of taxes from income from the rental of housing for market participants, the self-residency requirement⁸ and the proposed regulation of the unregulated part of the market⁹. All of these interventions should make sure that housing becomes more affordable. But it does not make investing in housing development more attractive. Actually it could result in the opposite which could lead to a decrease of development by market participants. This would then only result in a further increase in the shortage of housing in the Netherlands.

In general the plans presented by the Minister of Public Housing and Spatial Planning in the ‘Nationale Woon- en Bouwagenda’, are again aimed at correcting the malfunctioning housing market and interventions on the housing policies of the local governments. As seen in this thesis and the history of governmental policies of the housing market, this will not have the desired effect on the housing market and real estate development.

The national program of housing should not just correct the issues in the current situation and malfunctioning of the housing market. It should be a shift in policy where the national government takes back control and comes up with a national program for housing with targets, guidelines and rules. This national program will be the basis for local governments and market participants to realize the necessary increase of the housing stock in the Netherlands. The local governments will still be able to present their plans and needs to the Minister of Public Housing and Spatial planning. They can then find solutions for their needs that will fit in with the guidelines of the national government. By setting out certain

⁸ The self-residency requirement is a law that municipalities can install to obligate the buyer of house to also live in it themselves. This means that a real estate investor can no longer buy a house to rent it out to another party. (Jonge, 2022)

⁹ This would mean that houses that do now not quantify as public housing and are therefore in the unregulated part of the market, would also have to comply with certain regulations from the government. Such as a maximum monthly rent based on the score system of the WWS. (Jonge, 2022)

goals with already a guideline that can be enforced on local governments (such as the example in figure 18) the conflicting interests of local governments can be overcome. In this way the public interest and importance of housing for everyone will become the most important topic again in the development of housing.

Conclusion

This history thesis has given an overview of the governmental policy on the housing market and building process in the Netherlands over a time period from 1990 to 2020. This has been done based on governmental documents (issued by the members of The House of Representatives), news items, reports and scientific literature.

From 1990 to 2022 the policy of the national government has been focused on decentralization of the housing development process and policies. With this the housing corporations became independent organizations and market participants became more responsible for the development of housing. The provincial states and municipalities took the lead in making policy on the housing production process and housing market. This new perspective on the responsibility of the national government on the housing development was first brought into practice in the housing agendas of VINO and VINEX in 1990. After the completion of these agendas the responsibility for housing programs moved completely to local governments, especially municipalities. The idea was that the housing market and involved participants would function on their own and resolve any issues. By facilitating policy of the municipality market participants would be financially stimulated to develop housing. The municipality would have the best knowledge about which target groups should be addressed and what new housing developments that municipality would need. With the legal framework, as described in chapter 2 and 3, the municipalities would have the possibilities to steer the market participants in realizing the right housing projects.

By moving the responsibility for the entire housing program and spatial planning towards local governments and market participants, the interests of these have also become more important and influential. This has resulted in a development climate where the national government and lower governmental bodies aimed at scarcity and high revenues. Especially the restrictive land policy showed that the realization of housing projects with a high spatial quality and the highest possible revenues, was more important than reaching targets to build enough houses. (Tijdelijke Commissie Huizenprijzen, 2013) As seen in chapter 3 the role of Provincial States is significant in this decision making. Because they decide the amount of houses to be built in a region and what areas to keep open for green area. Their local interest to create

a province with more space for nature than others, has caused a lower housing production than necessary with the growing demand.

Because of the significant influence of municipalities on the possibilities for development it is important to take a look at the double roles they can play on the real estate land market as described in chapter 3. Municipalities are the policy makers, but can at the same time be a market participant with a financial interest. This results in situations where the goal of the municipality to realize the most optimal land revenue for the municipal land company can be in strong conflict with other public goals. (Tijdelijke Commissie Huizenprijzen, 2013) Such as the example named in chapter 3 where the municipality can gain more money from selling a plot of land with the permission to realize a development without public housing units. Municipalities are also the first authority that inhabitants will hold responsible for the housing policy. Therefore the municipality could choose the interest of their existing inhabitants over the goal to build more houses. Or they could build for more attractive target groups, as described in chapter 3. These conflicts of interest could be overcome by a national housing program that transcends the interests of individual municipalities.

The policy of the national government over the last 30 years has aimed at a decentralization of the responsibility of developing houses. With that the interests from local governments and market participants have become too important and influential in the decision-making and planning of developments. Maintaining open space, creating the most profitable development or choosing the attractive plan for existing inhabitants will not result in plans that ensure the development of enough houses for now and in the future. The interests of all the stakeholders involved in the building process, should be corrected by an overarching plan. In that way this overarching plan can set out the goals that all involved parties have to comply with. They can defend their interests in negotiations, but have to comply with the guidelines set out in the overarching plan. In this way the individual interests will have a more reasonable influence within the building process of housing. The interventions in the market did not have the desired effects. As discussed in chapter 1 the increase in loan capacity initiated by Stef Blok, lead to an increase of demand on the housing market. At the same time the effect on the supply side of the market was minimal. (Tijdelijke Commissie Huizenprijzen, 2013) The effect of governmental intervention in the

market was that the prices of houses increased, which made the development of new houses even more expensive, due to the use of the residual land value (chapter 2). The end result was not an even lower production of houses.

Instead of small interventions in the market and local governance as proposed by Hugo de Jonge, the national government of the Netherlands should take the initiative and should take back control of the building process of housing in the Netherlands. It is not for no reason that the constitution of the Netherlands states: 'Promotion of adequate housing is object of Government concern' ('Bevordering van voldoende woongelegenheden is voorwerp van zorg der overheid'). (*wetten.nl - Regeling - Grondwet - BWBR0001840, 2023*)

To make sure that the national government of the Netherlands can make sure of this promotion of adequate housing it is important to create an overarching plan to combine all interests into plans that serve the public interest.

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Illustrations

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