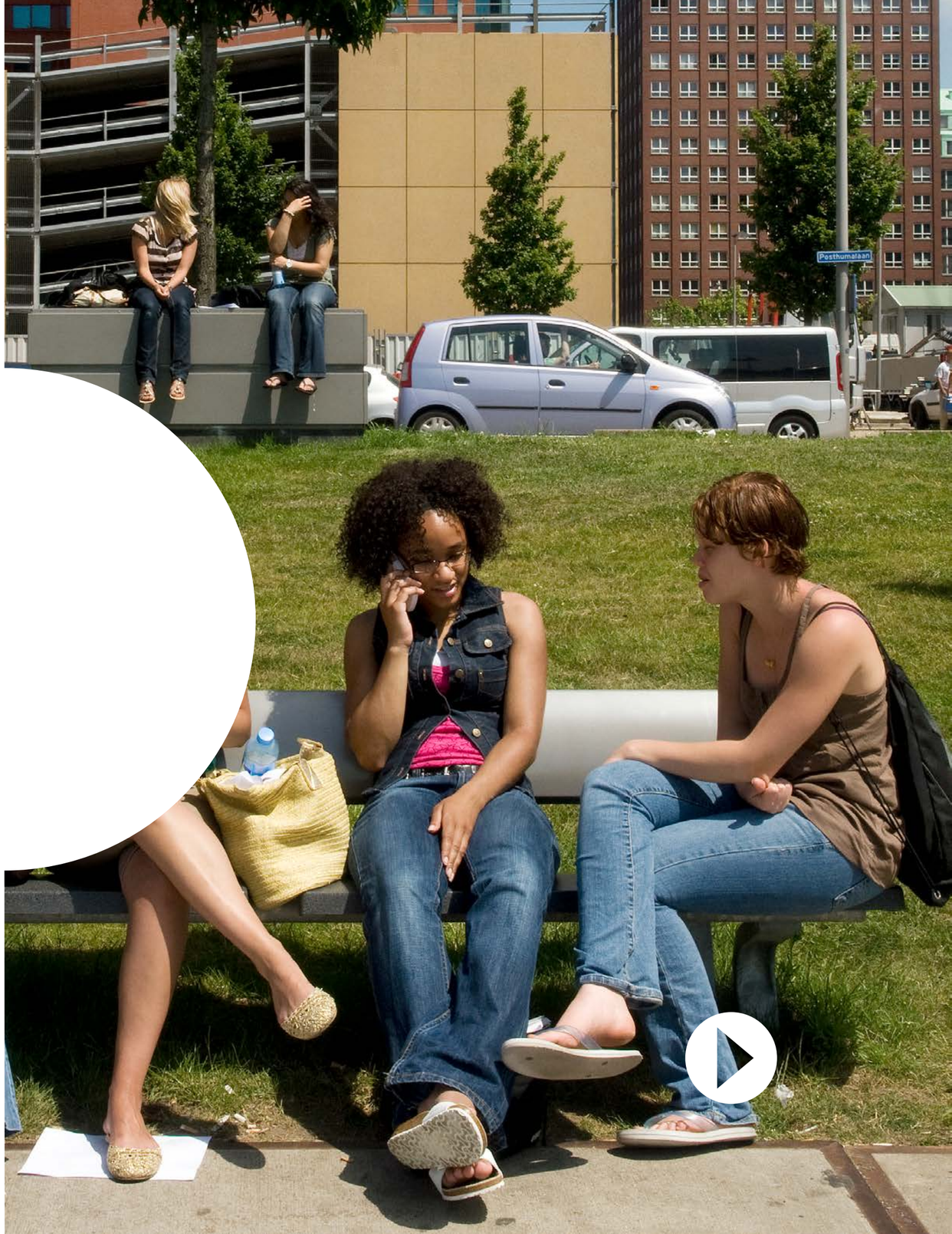
ACCESS TO THE CITY

HOW PUBLIC AMENITIES, HOUSING AND TRANSPORT ARE THE KEY FOR CITIZENS

SEPTEMBER 2020



Council for the Environment and Infrastructure

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The Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (*Raad voor de leefomgeving en infrastructuur*, Rli) advises the Dutch government and Parliament on strategic issues concerning the sustainable development of the living and working environment. The Council is independent, and offers solicited and unsolicited advice on long-term issues of strategic importance to the Netherlands. Through its integrated approach and strategic advice, the Council strives to provide greater depth and breadth to the political and social debate, and to improve the quality of decision-making processes.

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SUMMARY

The possibilities for people to participate in urban society in the Netherlands are diminishing because access to housing, transport and public amenities has declined for many of them. Living in the city is becoming steadily more expensive for tenants, while buying a house is also becoming increasingly unaffordable for large groups in society. At the same time, public amenities in cities have been scaled down, compromising access to services such as health care, a library, sport or a welfare centre for some groups. A growing number of people also face problems with the journeys they have to make in cities to reach their place of work or education; public transport is expensive, the service on many routes has deteriorated, not everyone can afford a car and cycling is not always an option. More and more people want to live in cities because of the concentration of work, education and care. To guarantee access to the city for everyone, it is essential to investigate constantly whether sufficient consideration is being given to the opportunities individuals have and the impediments they face.

A steadily larger and more diverse group of people experience problems because of the above factors, the Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli) finds in this advisory report: not only the traditional

vulnerable groups (such as people with a low income or on welfare, with a physical or mental disability, with limited digital skills, with debts and/or a small social network), but also middle-income earners, flex workers and the self-employed (such as taxi drivers, care workers and cleaners, as well as journalists, academic staff or account managers).

Unjustified differences

The diminished access to cities leads to inequality between groups of citizens. Inequality cannot always be avoided, but this form of inequality affects the accessibility and affordability of housing, transport and public amenities. These are key functions that everyone needs if they are to participate in urban society. The Rli observes that the growing differences between groups of people in the city are unjustified and will only widen further without a change of policy.

Causes of diminished access to the city

The Rli identifies various causes for the diminished accessibility of cities. Some are the result of conscious personal and policy choices; this calls for a public debate on whether such choices are still appropriate in this day and age. But many of the causes are the result of unintended consequences of the choices that are made. The Rli mentions the following:

- the retreating government in combination with austerity measures, which has led to an emphasis on efficiency and the scaling down of amenities;
- the sharp price inflation in both the rental and owner-occupied sectors of the housing market, coinciding with reduced income security for many households (as a result of the flexibilisation of the labour market);
- insufficient attention to the consequences of policy choices in one policy domain for other domains, which cause problems for people;
- the dominance of 'old values' in policy (efficiency, maximum return for minimum cost), which means that 'new values', such as 'accessibility', are only tardily reflected in the government's policies and decisions; and
- overestimation of people's independence and self-reliance, underestimation of the complexity of policy, and blind spots in the insights and information on which policy is based.

Individuals' opportunities and impediments

To guarantee access to the city for everyone, it is essential to investigate whether sufficient account is taken of the opportunities and impediments of individual citizens. Politicians, civil servants, businesses and other organisations that help to shape the city should devote more attention to this aspect. The opportunities and impediments of individuals are determined by their personal circumstances and capabilities and by environmental factors: the *physical environment* (including the availability and affordability of suitable living space, transport and public amenities), the *institutional environment* (laws, rules and organisations that citizens have to deal with) and the *socio-cultural environment* (informal codes that determine whether a person considers a location, a residential area or a mode of transport as part of 'his' domain).

Recommendations for central government and municipalities

More specifically, closer attention to all of these factors calls for changes in policies and government investments. The Rli recommends a number of specific changes.

1. Assess the impact of policy for the living environment on access to urban society

When considering policy measures for the living environment, the government and municipalities should investigate the policy's impact on the money, time and effort it costs people to gain access to urban society. What assumptions are made and are certain groups of people perhaps overlooked? Once policy choices have been made, their effects should be periodically evaluated: are some groups losing out?

In drafting planning strategies and major spatial plans (in the context of the Environment and Planning Act), for example, the impact on the public of measures relating to public amenities, housing and transport, or a combination thereof, should be assessed in advance. This 'accessibility assessment' could be embedded in the Environment and Planning Act.

2. Create room for civil initiatives that improve access

The government and municipalities should provide more room for civil initiatives that improve access to urban society. That can be accomplished by experimenting and relaxing regulation, taking into account differences in personal capabilities and environmental factors.

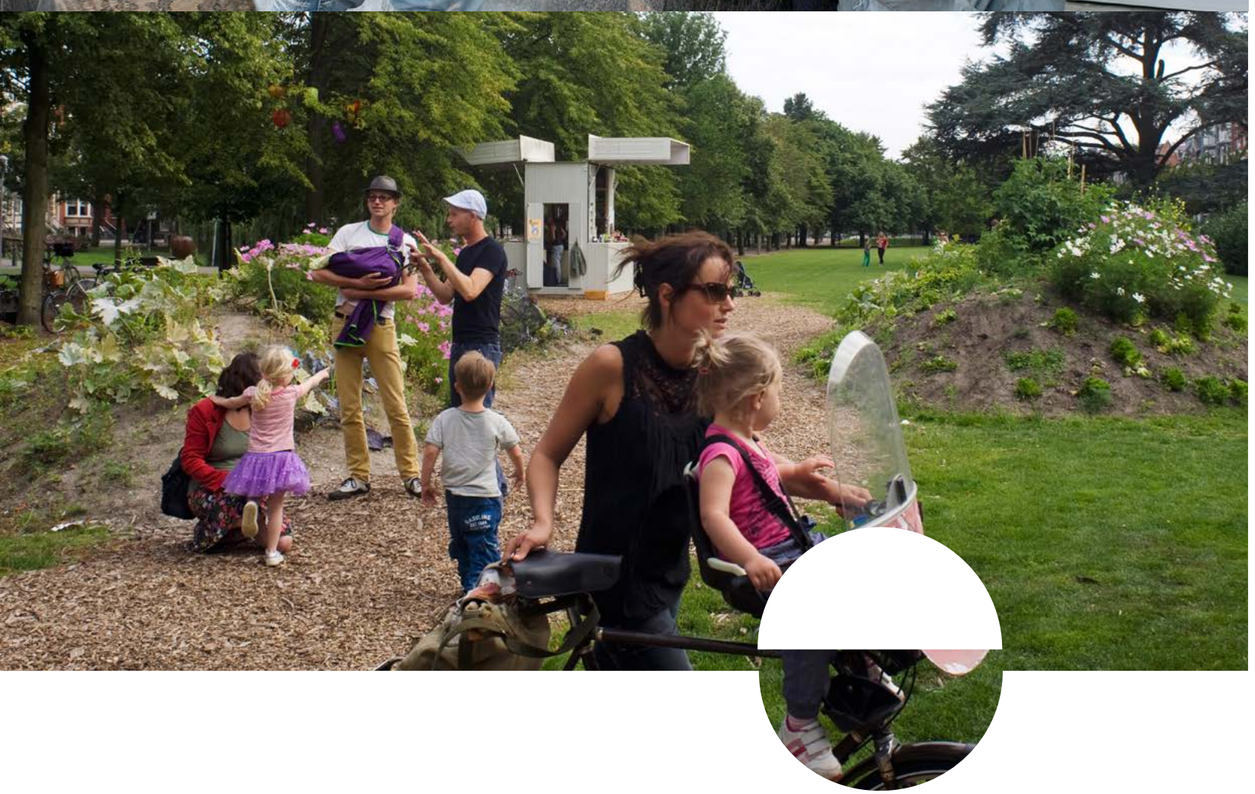
The government could support building initiatives by establishing a guarantee fund, by empowering housing associations to provide financial support for cooperative groups and by making land available for an appropriate price. The Rli advises municipalities to draw up an assessment framework that includes criteria and conditions for providing support for civil initiatives.

3. Improve access to all three key functions

Access to each of the key functions of the city needs to improve:

- Public amenities: the Rli recommends that all cities draw up an 'investment strategy for public amenities', which covers the access to urban society of different groups of people.
- Housing: the Rli recommends making better use of the existing housing stock (for example, by revising the cost-sharing standard for welfare recipients and by facilitating more efficient use of space in owner-occupied and rental housing) and increasing the stability of the free rental sector (for example, by promoting long-term commitment by landlords and moderate rent increases).
- Transport: the Rli recommends that the basic principle of transport policy should be that everyone in the Netherlands can make all of their desired journeys at a reasonable cost (in terms of money, time and effort). That translates into the goal of amenities being reachable within fifteen minutes on foot, by bicycle or with public transport. This means that measures will be needed to improve the proximity of amenities and the density of the mobility network.

PART 1 | ADVICE



1 INTRODUCTION

This advisory report discusses the possibilities for citizens to participate in urban society in the Netherlands. This participation is under pressure for many people because it is difficult for them to find an affordable home and because numerous facilities are not accessible or available to everyone. People want access to the city to work or to study, to meet kindred spirits or indeed people with opposing views, or to take advantage of the extensive range of amenities that cities have to offer. If everyone is to be able to enjoy the benefits of our cities, access to urban life must be guaranteed.

1.1 Background and urgency

Most cities in the Netherlands have grown in recent years, both in size and in importance. The heavy concentration of jobs and educational institutions and facilities such as shops, hospitals and cinemas, and the diversity of the urban population have been driving migration to the cities for decades now (PBL/CBS, 2019). However, in the last few years there have been signs that various groups in society can no longer take participation in urban society for granted. The appeal and popularity of cities have driven up the price of properties, making it increasingly difficult for a great many people to find a home. This applies in particular for people with low or middle incomes,

such as teachers, plumbers, nurses, taxi drivers and police officers. The number of homeless persons in Dutch cities has also doubled in the last ten years.

More than 90% of owner-occupied homes are unaffordable for teachers and police officers

It is increasingly difficult for firemen, teachers, police officers and nurses to buy a house or an apartment. At present, only 8.5% of all owner-occupied homes in the Netherlands are affordable for an entry-level primary school teacher or police officer with a modal income. Three years ago, the figure was around 15%.

Source: Financieel Dagblad (28-11-2019)

In addition, the residents of every city are faced with a steady scaling down of public services, such as libraries and welfare centres. Furthermore, as many as 20% of the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods have difficulty reaching essential destinations such as work, school or their family doctor, for example because these amenities have moved to the periphery of the city or to business parks or because public transport is too expensive. Finally, some social groups do not feel welcome on the street in certain parts of the city and/or in particular amenities.[1]

Everyone in the Netherlands must be able to enjoy the economic, social and cultural wealth of the country's cities. Not everyone can live in the city centre of course, but if certain key functions of the city are structurally inaccessible or less accessible for parts of the population it affects not only the individuals themselves, who can become lonely and inactive, but also society as a whole, which suffers a loss of quality and cohesion: labour potential, education programmes, health services and cultural amenities are not utilised optimally (Idenburg & Weijnen, 2018).

The accessibility of cities is one of the Sustainable Development Goals formulated by the United Nations (UN), to which the Netherlands has committed itself. Goal 11 provides that cities must ensure access for everyone to basic services such as housing, energy, transport, etc. The UN lists seven Goal 11 targets, four of which are relevant for this advisory report: access to housing, access to transport systems, inclusive urban development and access to public spaces (see box).[2]

In international terms, the basic situation in Dutch cities is good: they are relatively compact, green, safe and easily accessible. But the Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli) is concerned at signs that access to certain key functions is under pressure for several groups. The international

1 Various publications have given similar warnings in recent years: Gemeente Den Haag (2019), Coumans et al. (2019), Huysmans (2017), Van der Bijl & Van der Steenhoven (2019), PBL (2014) and Milikowski (2018).

2 The other targets, which fall outside the scope of this advisory report, are target 11.4 (relating to cultural and natural heritage), target 11.5 (mainly concerned with water safety) and target 11.6 (mainly concerned with maintaining a healthy environment in cities, a subject on which the Rli published an advisory report entitled 'The Healthy City' in 2018). See also www.sdgnederland.nl.

obligation entered into by the Netherlands underscores the need to take these concerns about the accessibility of Dutch cities seriously.

Sustainable Development Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Source: Dutch SDG Charter Foundation (2020)

1.2 Central question

In this advisory report, the Rli reviews changes in the accessibility of cities. In that context, the Rli focuses on three functions of the urban environment: public amenities, housing and transport. These functions are essential for work, education, health care and for people to meet. The Rli's concern relates to the possibilities of citizens to participate in urban society. Is sufficient account taken of personal circumstances and the capacities of individuals or groups and the environment in which they live? In this report, the term 'city' also encompasses the 'urban region'.

The Rli takes the position that everyone must have the option of participating in urban society. In the last fifteen years, the credit crisis, and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic, have demonstrated that some groups in society are particularly vulnerable and that participation in urban society is not possible for everyone. Furthermore, in our dynamic and complex society anyone can suffer misfortune because of a crisis or simple bad luck. With this advisory report, the Rli wants to raise the issue of the accessibility of cities and outline steps the government can take to ensure that cities remain accessible to everyone.

In light of these introductory remarks, the central question addressed in this advisory report is as follows:

To what extent do groups differ in the degree of access they have to housing, transport and public amenities in our cities? Are the differences between them a problem, and if so, how can it be managed?

1.3 Relationship with earlier Rli publications

The Rli has previously published a number of advisory reports on the living environment in cities and aspects of urban society, including housing and transport. Recent publications that deserve mention are Better and Different

Mobility (2018), The Healthy City (2018), Faster and Closer (2017), Changing Trends in Housing: Flexibility and Regionalisation within Housing Policy (2015) and Future of the City (2014). The advisory report *Stad en stijging* (2006) by the Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (the Rli's predecessor) is also relevant in the context of this report.

1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 of this advisory report presents the Rli's analysis of the changes that have occurred in relation to the accessibility of cities and the consequences of those changes for different groups of people. The Rli also explores the factors that impair the ability of certain groups to participate fully in urban society. Chapter 3 contains a discussion of measures that could be taken to improve the accessibility of cities and presents six recommendations. Part 2 provides further argumentation of the findings in part 1.

2 ANALYSIS OF BOTTLENECKS IN ACCESS TO THE CITY

In general, Dutch cities offer an attractive range of amenities, parks and public squares and the quality of housing is good. However, the available housing in cities has steadily become scarcer and more expensive in recent years. The range of public amenities has diminished and there are fewer possibilities to get to them. Consequently, the city has become less accessible for various groups of citizens. This situation is connected with economic and social developments and with policy choices of the government, as the Rli explains in section 2.2. As section 2.3 shows, knowing more about the factors that influence the possibilities of individuals can reveal the assumptions and blind spots in government policy.

2.1 Key functions of the city

Participating in urban society means living, working, studying, exercising, visiting the GP or the hospital, shopping and visiting a cinema, a theatre or a café in or close to the city. Other features of urban society are planned and spontaneous encounters and activities and sharing creative and innovative ideas with others. People who do not live in the city itself but in the urban region also make daily use of the city's various functions.

The living environment must meet three conditions to enable people to participate fully in urban society and to have access to activities such as work, education, care and social contact. The Rli refers to these conditions as the *key functions* of a city.[3]

The three key functions are:

1. *Public amenities*: you must be able to use public outdoor spaces such as parks, squares and streets and indoor spaces that can accommodate multiple facilities, such as libraries, supermarkets, restaurants, shops, general medical practices, community centres, gyms, etc.
2. *Housing*: you need living space (shared with family members or otherwise), as a home and a base for activities.
3. *Transport*: you must be able to move through the city to reach relevant destinations, including work, care, education, shopping, social gatherings, etc. If these destinations cannot be reached on foot, you need transport.

2.2 Changes in the accessibility of cities

Society is constantly changing and that has consequences for the accessibility of cities. Accessibility sometimes improves, for example if more houses are built, if unsafe locations are upgraded or transport options are expanded, with shared bicycles and scooters for instance. On the other hand, the accessibility of cities declines if, for example, mergers lead to fewer schools or hospitals in the city, the housing supply shrinks due to social housing units being sold off, the price of owner-occupied homes steadily increases, or buses run less frequently or there are fewer stops on a route. The impact of changes on different groups of people varies. This section provides a general outline of the most important changes that have occurred in the last ten to fifteen years and which have led to a decline in the accessibility of the city. For each key function, the Rli outlines the bottlenecks that have arisen and the groups that have been affected.[4]

3 Each of the key functions is analysed in more depth in chapters 2, 3 and 4 of part 2.

4 One has to speak in terms of groups in order to understand the actual significance of bottlenecks in the lives of citizens. However, the Rli realises that labelling groups is problematic. Groups can often not be defined precisely and the people falling into a particular group can also be diverse and different. Furthermore, the composition of groups is not constant; as time passes other people join the group, for example because their circumstances change if they cohabit, have children, divorce, change job, etc.

Figure 1: The three key functions of the city

Participation in urban society means living, working, studying, going to the hospital and visiting amenities such as a cinema or café in or close to the city. A feature of urban society is planned or spontaneous encounters and activities and sharing creative and innovative ideas with others. Three key functions in the living environment are required for a person to be able to participate fully in urban society.

Public amenities

You must be able to use public outdoor spaces such as parks, squares and streets and indoor spaces that can accommodate multiple facilities, such as libraries, general medical practices, community centres, supermarkets, cafés, etc.

Housing

You need living space, as a home and a base for activities. Access depends on the availability, affordability and suitability of housing.

Transport

You must be able to move through the city to reach relevant destinations, including work, health care, education, social gatherings, etc.

2.2.1 Problems with access to public amenities

Developments

Public amenities[5] encompass both public outdoor spaces, such as streets, squares and parks, and indoor spaces where people gather, such as shops, cafés, libraries, offices and schools. The public amenities in cities have been under pressure in recent years. Numerous places are no longer automatically accessible to everyone, for example because visitors are obliged to consume something. Furthermore, the total range of public amenities in cities has declined and been scaled down. For example, many local libraries have closed, the facilities on many squares have become more uniform, services such as schools and sports fields have been moved to the edges of the city and the number of hospitals has declined. Public real estate prices have also risen. While demand for the services of family doctors is growing, general practices can barely afford the rent for their surgery in parts of some cities.

The city is increasingly modelled on the needs of a specific group

"The city is increasingly modelled on the needs of a specific group: scenes, atmosphere and sub-cultures are created […]. But as more space is created for this new dominant, wealthier class, the space for other groups contracts. […] There is less and less room for anyone who is unable or unwilling to pay four euro for a cappuccino."

Source: Rath, in: Milikowski (2018)

Why is this? The policy on public amenities in cities is mainly determined by the municipalities. Many municipalities have cut spending on welfare work, community centres and local libraries in recent years. The transfer of tasks from central government to the municipalities in 2015 contributed to this trend, because it was accompanied by budget cuts.[6] Consequently, public amenities have contracted significantly (Reijndorp, 2020). The public property that becomes available is usually sold by the municipality to the highest bidder (Franke and Veldhuis, 2018).

The Rli also observes that municipal policy in the last ten years has frequently been guided by the desire to generate the greatest possible financial return from public amenities. In the process, they have often attached too little weight to the social value of those amenities. Many community centres, civil initiatives, sports fields or meeting places face annual rent increases or operating targets imposed by municipalities or housing associations to generate a better return on their properties. The commercialisation of public outdoor spaces is also increasing. For example, locations where members of the public used to be able to picnic free of charge have been transformed into outdoor cafés and beach pavilions where you can only stay if you consume something. Increasingly, public amenities (both public property and public space) seem to be the poor relative when it comes to planning urban transformations.

5 Scientific publications also use the terms 'public space', 'public domain' or 'socio-physical infrastructure'. For more information on this, see part 2, chapter 2.

6 The idea behind this was that decentralisation of tasks would lead to greater efficiency, and hence cost savings.

The nature of public amenities (both indoor and outdoor) is also changing. Places where well-off individuals feel at home are becoming increasingly dominant, for instance. This is at the expense of the everyday environment of other groups: the space for them is shrinking to make way for other, often hipper, locations. As a result, what is or is not tolerated and who does or does not feel comfortable in public amenities is changing. These social and cultural changes lead to marginalisation, exclusion and avoidance for various groups. In other words, to diminished accessibility of the public amenities in the cities.

"Can I see your ID?"

The introduction of mandatory identification and stop-and-search policing has a major impact on certain groups of young people, at whom these measures are (implicitly) targeted. Young people from the Schilderswijk in The Hague, for example, still visit the city centre, but do not hang around there. It has no connection with their own world. Police officers sometimes ask what they are doing there and demand to see their ID. The young people do not feel at home in the city centre and only go there to buy something specific.

Source: Abarkane, personal statement (March 2020)

Examples of affected groups

Accessible, properly functioning public amenities create enormous possibilities for sharing knowledge and information that can help people, for example to find work, to learn something or to do something, and for building bridges between 'stronger' and 'weaker' residents through informal networks (Engbersen, 2016; Klinenberg 2019). They are places where people can support one another.

Contrariwise, in neighbourhoods where the public amenities have been scaled back there are fewer possibilities for residents to meet one another, to receive formal and informal support or to do things for the neighbourhood and their fellow residents. In practice, the presence of fewer amenities sometimes means that although services still exist, their quality has deteriorated or they are no longer available locally. However, it is precisely the proximity of public amenities (indoor and outdoor) that is crucial, especially for people who cannot travel far, such as young families, children and the elderly (Klinenberg, 2019). Having services close by is also essential for people with poor health or with little money; public transport is expensive in Dutch cities and not everyone can afford a good bicycle. For these specific groups, it is important that various facilities are within easy reach on foot or with a walker (Engbersen, 2016).

With no pretence that the list is exhaustive, the Rli finds that the various groups that can experience problems from the scaling down of public amenities include:

- Children and their parents who have less access to books and information due to the closure of the local library.
- Young people who want to meet and do things together and depend on a park, a square or a shopping centre because there is nowhere else to go.

- Women, older persons and children who do not feel safe on the street or in a park at night.
- People who are less self-reliant and for whom amenities like a library or a community centre offer a range of possibilities to receive various forms of help and support.
- Social entrepreneurs and groups of citizens (such as cooperatives and collectives) who wish to launch an initiative but no longer have access to public property.

The factors behind the problems faced by these diverse social groups are discussed in sections 2.2.4 and 2.4.

2.2.2 Bottlenecks in access to housing

Developments

The number of households wishing to live in the city has been growing for some time. Housing production is unable to keep pace with the growth in demand. In addition, few houses come onto the market in either the rental or owner-occupied sector.[7]

In those circumstances, those who have a home are disinclined to move. The housing market is so tight that their situation will often not improve if they move. The new rent or the purchase price will often be a lot higher in relative terms or the property will be of poorer quality, for example smaller or in a less attractive location. These developments are leading to greater scarcity and the rents and purchase prices in the housing market are rising faster than most people's incomes. This has major consequences for the affordability, availability and suitability of the housing stock in the cities.

The underlying causes of these developments

The social rental sector has shrunk in recent years due to various measures taken by the government and housing associations. The figures show that the number of social housing units on the market falls far short of the number of households seeking such a property. The waiting lists are lengthening. Furthermore, the steady rise in the rents for social housing has had a particularly negative effect on people who have little or no entitlement to rent allowance. The income thresholds for entitlement to social housing have also been raised, so that social housing has increasingly become the reserve of the lowest income groups.

People who earn just over the minimum income increasingly have to rent a home in the private rental sector, where rents are also rising steadily due to the scarcity.[8] For many people, buying a property is not an option because prices have exploded and there is a shortage of supply in that segment of the market as well. Households that want to buy a home also face competition from private landlords who want to expand their

7 The housing market can be divided into the social rental sector (housing with rents up to €737.14), the private rental sector (rented housing with rents from €737.14 upwards) and the owner-occupied. Different rules apply for each sector.

8 Although there is some rent control for sitting tenants, landlords can fix the rent for new tenants themselves, and in the cities that usually means a substantial increase. See, for example, Blijie et al. (2019), who calculated an average increase of €105 a month on a change of tenant in a report for the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. In 20% of all cases of a change of tenant the rent rises by more than 20%, with an average increase of €415-670 a month.

portfolio – ironically enough with the intention of letting the properties to the very potential buyers they outbid for the property.[9] Other factors that limit access to the market for owner-occupied homes are the growing number of people with flexible employment contracts and the tightening up of the rules on mortgage interest relief and for taking out a mortgage.

In a nutshell, there is a high price to pay for anyone seeking access to housing in the city who does not yet have a home, who is urgently seeking a home or who has to compete in the urban housing market for any other reason: they have to pay a lot of money, and often for very little space, either because the dwelling is small or because it has to be shared with others. This is one reason why young couples put off starting a family. The high rents also make it impossible for many households to save, which keeps the owner-occupied market out of their reach for even longer. Households whose income entitles them to social housing have a different problem: they have to wait for years (and the waiting lists are steadily lengthening), especially if they are not declared an urgent case.

The RIi finds that it is difficult, if not Impossible, for a growing number of people to find accommodation In the city, and that in most cases this accommodation Is temporary, expensive or even unsuitable accommodation. The most vulnerable among them become homeless. At the same time, the RIi observes that even households without problems in other domains (work, education, health, transport options and social networks) are also feeling the squeeze when it comes to finding suitable housing.[10]

Some of the groups that face obstacles

With no pretence that the list is exhaustive, the RIi finds that the various groups that encounter obstacles in finding suitable accommodation in the city include:

- People with a modal income (a very diverse group that includes police officers, truck drivers, nurses, self-employed persons, account managers, scientists and civil servants) who are unable or unwilling to buy a house, but whose income makes them ineligible for the social rental sector. In the private rental market, they are confronted with high income criteria, steep price increases and temporary leases.
- Young people looking to rent a property for the first time.
- First-time buyers who are looking for their first home but who - if they can actually find a property - cannot afford it. Some young households are able to buy a house with financial support from their parents, but that places people without wealthy parents at an even greater disadvantage.
- Economic homeless, who do not have psychological problems or an addiction but are forced to live on the street because they cannot find rental accommodation.
- People who want to move from temporary residence in an institution to a regular dwelling but are unable to find suitable accommodation. This is a very diverse group, which includes young people in a juvenile care

9 The forces behind this buy-to-let mechanism are discussed further in chapter 3 of part 2.

10 It is not only the RIi that has observed the developments sketched in this section. Numerous reports and studies have repeatedly referred to the problems and have suggested many different solutions.

home, (former) psychiatric patients, women staying in battered women's shelters with their children, refugees who have been granted asylum status (status holders) and homeless persons who are living temporarily in a shelter.

- Labour migrants and a varied group of persons urgently seeking housing, who often have difficulty finding even temporary accommodation. In some cases, labour migrants face excesses such as being housed together in large numbers and in a small space for a relatively large sum of money and being required to leave the accommodation when the work ends.

The factors that explain why such diverse groups face problems are discussed in sections 2.2.4 and 2.3.

2.2.3 Bottlenecks in access to transport

Developments

Being able to reach relevant destinations is an important requirement for participation in urban society. At first glance, the transport system and the available transport in Dutch cities seem to be of a high standard. The urban infrastructure is designed to move large numbers of people as efficiently as possible. Nevertheless, research shows that for some groups in the cities it is difficult to get to where they need to go for activities such as work, education or care. There is also an imbalance in the access to transport. Particularly people in a relatively disadvantaged socio-economic position have less access to transport to bring them where they need to go, for example if they work in the horticulture sector, in an industrial area outside the city, or in a hospital on the edge of a city.

Government policy over the last fifteen years has helped to create this problem. Public transport planning is usually based on 'thick' lines between A and B: routes with distinct hubs on which large numbers of people are transported. A drawback of this approach is that it is relatively time-consuming, expensive and difficult to reach destinations that are a long way from those hubs. The expense (in time, money and effort) of criss-crossing the city (to combine home, work, education or care, for instance) is also disproportionately high. In recent years, the heaviest cutbacks have been made on the 'thinner' lines, the public transport routes that go to those distant destinations and criss-cross the city. Furthermore, public transport fares in the Netherlands are now among the highest in Europe.

The problems with access to transport are not very evident in the usual research into transport. Nevertheless, there is growing evidence that a small group, unnoticed by policymakers, struggles with the question how they will move around.

The North-South line is full, but for residents of Amsterdam-Noord public transport has deteriorated

The North-South metro line in Amsterdam has generated a large number of extra passengers. Paradoxically, 38% of the residents in Amsterdam-Noord simultaneously say that the quality of public transport has deteriorated. The explanation for this is that spending on services other than the North-South line has been reduced.

Source: Puylaert (2019)

In the planning of housing, schools, hospitals, sports facilities or other amenities, there is often an implicit assumption that the employees and the users of these facilities 'will be able to get there', for example by car. However, the car is not an alternative to public transport for many people because they cannot afford one or because they have no driving licence. Cycling is also not an option for many people. There are various blind spots like this in the government's transport policy.[11]

Some of the groups that face obstacles

Various groups in society are disadvantaged by the government's current transport policy. These are people with fewer options for moving around the city than others. Groups that face obstacles include:

- People with a low income and unemployed persons who cannot afford their own car.
- People who are unable to cycle (for whatever reason).
- People without a car (and with a low income) who depend on work (sometimes flexwork) on the periphery of the city (greenhouses, ports and airports, industrial areas, etc.).
- People dependent on care and people with physical disabilities whose care facilities are increasingly concentrated at just a few locations in the city.
- Juveniles and young adults for whom it is difficult to get from home to school, to other amenities and to (part-time) jobs.

The factors that explain why such diverse groups of citizens face problems are explained in sections 2.2.4 and 2.3.

2.2.4 Causes of the bottlenecks

The preceding sections have clearly shown how the possibilities of participating in urban society have declined for various groups of citizens over roughly the last fifteen years. They encounter obstacles because one or more key functions of the city are unavailable or unaffordable for them or are not properly geared to their needs. Some of the causes are the result of conscious choices made by people and policymakers. There is a need for a public debate about whether those choices are still appropriate in the current age. Many causes are also the result of the unintended consequences of the choices that were made. In this section, the Rli elaborates on five of the principal causes.

11 In chapter 4 of part 2, the Rli reviews research into access to transport and blind spots in transport policy in more detail.

1. *Retreating government: more efficiency, fewer amenities*
   To start with, the Rli sees a clear link with the retreating government. Since the beginning of the 1990s the welfare state has given way to liberalisation, the operation of market forces and the delegation of tasks. The focus of government policy in the last few decades, also in the large cities, has been on increasing efficiency. The combination of the decentralisation of competences and spending cuts has exacerbated the problems of some groups of citizens. Where the government remained in control, rules and preconditions have become more specific and more stringent, for example in relation to the allocation of social housing and rent allowance or access to facilities for the homeless.
2. *Housing is steadily more expensive in both the owner-occupied and rental sector*
   Another cause of the bottlenecks identified above are the problems in the urban housing market. The number of social housing units has shrunk and the prices of both rented and owner-occupied homes have risen sharply, partly as a result of (international) capital flows. At the same time, many people have less income security as a result of the flexibilisation of the labour market. Today, the affordability of homes is a serious problem for various social groups, for whom large parts of the urban housing market have become inaccessible.
3. *Insufficient attention to the interaction between policy areas*
   Another feature of government policy that contributes to the identified bottlenecks is the sectoral approach, by reason of which there is little attention for the effects of policies in one domain on the access of individuals to other domains. In the Rli's view, there are unintended consequences for every key function of the city from policies in other areas, and vice versa. Citizens often feel there are too many rules and that they are needlessly complex and not really coherent. This makes it difficult to secure adequate resources and help. The social costs can also be unnecessarily high.[12]
4. *'Old values' dominant in the policy*
   The bottlenecks are also connected with the mechanism that past values – what we considered important at that time – are, as it were, built into policy choices, both substantively (in research and models) and procedurally (who is involved, who can exert influence). At the moment, for example, efficiency is a value that is deeply embedded in government policy. And the value 'sustainability' is assuming an increasingly prominent place. But a value such as 'access to transport to reach relevant destinations' carries little or no weight in policy (Snellen & Tennekens, 2018).
5. *Blind spots in government policy*
   A final factor in the identified bottlenecks relating to the accessibility of urban society is that government policy is based on the model of independent and self-reliant citizens. In reality, many people are not sufficiently independent or self-reliant to participate actively in the complex urban society. Too little is known about (unintended) exclusion mechanisms and the diversity of the people who live in the city, with their diverse perspectives, opportunities and needs. There are also gaps in the policy and in the information on which policy is based: there is

12 An example is the high social cost of homelessness. The cost of providing adequate accommodation for (potential) homeless persons is significantly lower. (More information: HousingFirstNederland.nl)

little or no attention for the most vulnerable groups in the usual studies and statistics relating to housing, transport and public amenities. For example, people who do not move around but would like to be able to are absent from the transport statistics. And people who do not understand the system for registering with housing associations are missing from many of the statistics on housing. The government is therefore unaware of many of the people who do not have proper access to the city.

2.3 The perspective of the individual

What conditions need to be met to better guarantee people's access to the key functions of cities? The Rli believes that it starts with choosing to consider the problem not only from the perspective of policymakers, which is usually sectoral or territorial, but also, and above all, from the perspective of the individuals who face obstacles.

2.3.1 More attention for the 'lived city'

In the first place, to improve the accessibility of a city it is important to understand what possibilities individuals have or do not have to benefit from the functions that determine the level of welfare of their city. In that context, it is not enough to consider only the availability of things like homes, metro lines or local amenities. The extent to which people are actually able to use those facilities also has to be considered. This is a dichotomy that is sometimes referred to as 'the planned city' (as conceived and designed by policymakers and urban planners) versus 'the lived city' (as experienced and used by individual citizens).

'Planned city' versus 'lived city'

Our cities are largely planned: the houses, the roads, the public transport routes, the social and public institutions and the public space in which these functions are to be found together form an infrastructure that is conceived by policymakers: the planned city.

There is also the lived city, which is created in the here and now by the people who live and work in it. It is a space where people spend their day to day lives, regardless of the professionals. They look differently at their city. Not as an object to be made inhabitable with policy and planning, but as their everyday habitat and the place where they have to deal with policy that influences their opportunities in various domains (see chapter 1 of part 2 for a further elaboration).

The developments outlined in section 2.2 show how the planned city has changed in recent years and how the changes have created impediments in the everyday reality of the lived city for some groups in society. The RIi takes the view that designing the city in a way that allows everyone to profit from all that urban society has to offer requires a better understanding of what happens in the lived city. This calls for close observation of how the city's residents and its users deal with the city themselves (Frijhoff, 2010; Reijndorp, 2020). How accessible is the city when seen from the perspective of the individual?

2.3.2 Role of personal factors and the environment

The RIi explored the literature for an approach that provides tools for analysing impediments and opportunities from the perspective of the individual. The RIi was inspired by Sen and Nussbaum's *Capability Approach*, which focuses not on the average quality of life, but on the capabilities of individuals and the conditions in their environment that help to determine their chances of achieving a quality of life they choose for themselves (see chapter 1 of part 2 for a further elaboration). This approach helps to elucidate the factors that currently prevent certain groups of people from participating fully in urban society.

Building on the capability approach, the RIi feels that to understand the opportunities for and impediments to people's participation in urban society, we have to analyse their personal circumstances and capabilities and the conditions in their environment, including the physical environment (housing, transport, facilities and places to meet one another), the institutional environment (laws and regulations, institutions such as the government, housing associations and health care and welfare institutions) and the socio-cultural environment (informal rules and codes). As figure 2 illustrates, all of these factors have impact on each other.

Figure 2: Approach based on individual citizens

By considering a person's personal circumstances and capabilities and the conditions in their environment, an impression can be formed of the opportunities and impediments they face with respect to participation in urban society.

Personal circumstances and capabilities

This category embraces aspects such as:

- Mental and physical health
- Financial situation
- Education
- Family situation
- Personal history
- Digital skills

Institutional environment

Formal rules and conditions imposed for example by:

- Public authorities: rules for being declared an urgent case for rented accommodation, etc.
- Companies: digital job advertisements, public transport pass, entrance fees, etc.
- Organisations: digital announcement of activities and programmes, registration as a housing seeker, etc.

Physical environment

Proximity, availability and accessibility of facilities such as:

- Businesses, offices
- Schools
- Public transport stops
- Parking spaces
- Supermarkets
- GPs
- Presence and availability of housing

Socio-cultural environment

Informal rules, codes and conditions for people's social relationships such as:

- Family
- Educational institutions
- Religion
- Associations

The approach outlined in figure 2 is fleshed out in the following text box. A further elaboration is provided in chapter 1 of part 2.

Approach based on individual citizens

Personal circumstances and capabilities
Personal circumstances are an individual's mental and physical health, financial situation (income or capital, permanent or flexible work, assets), living situation and housing history (whether or not one owns a house, the length of time one has been on a waiting list) and personal history (divorce, debt problems, addictions, etc.). The culture in which a person grows up also affects his or her opportunities or impediments. Personal capabilities encompass language proficiency, literacy, education and digital skills, but also the ability to create and make use of a social network. A person who has difficulty completing forms might have an acquaintance who is good at it or a neighbour with contacts who can provide help. Public amenities can perform an important role in that respect, since a person can meet other people there who can provide help or useful information.

Physical environment
Various conditions in the physical environment also determine the extent of people's access to the city. They include the possibility of finding a home that is available, affordable and suitable given a person's personal circumstances, as well as being able to reach other destinations from home, by foot or with transport, for work, education or shopping, to go to the GP or hospital, to visit family or friends or for cultural activities. Another condition is the presence of accessible bus stops or train stations or sufficient parking spaces for the car in the vicinity. Finally, it is a question of the availability of adequate public amenities in the neighbourhood, including libraries, supermarkets, restaurants, shops, community centres, gyms, playgrounds, and miscellaneous 'free space' such as empty fields, etc.

Institutional environment
The institutional environment comprises the formal rules people have to comply with and the formal conditions within which they have to function. With respect to housing, these include the rules for the allocation of housing, income thresholds and rent allowances or the rules governing the provision of mortgages. With respect to public transport, the fares, the frequency of the service, the times at which scheduled services begin and end, the density of the infrastructure and the ability to understand how to use the public transport pass are among the decisive factors for the level of accessibility. The relevant conditions with regard to public amenities are entrance fees and age restrictions or the obligation to show identification. The institutional recognition of personal constraints, such as a person's command of the language, health or a low income, are also part of the institutional environment. With their rules, institutions such as public authorities, housing associations, transport organisations and care and welfare institutions also influence people's access to services.

Socio-cultural environment
The socio-cultural environment consists of the informal rules and preconditions that people are confronted with. These can be the codes that determine whether or not people regard a location, a living environment or a mode of transport as part of their domain. Such codes can be embodied in the clothes people wear, their behaviour and how people speak or in the design and architecture of the environment. The presence or absence of particular social groups in squares, in playgrounds or in parks can also constitute a signal that makes a person feel welcome there or not. The character of a particular amenity (a coffee house or a cappuccino bar, an office or a workplace, a kebab shop or a fish restaurant) also transmits codes that determine whether or not person feels at home there. The culture of communities can be a deterrent or an incentive for participation.

Using the above approach, the Rli identifies three groups of people that can face problems:

1. *Vulnerable citizens.* People with limited personal capabilities (for example, people with a low income or on welfare, with a physical or mental disability, with limited digital skills, with debts or with a small social network). These constraints usually also curtail their possibilities of renting or buying a house, using urban amenities and/or getting to where they want to go.
2. *'New vulnerable citizens'*.[13] Although their personal capabilities are scarcely impaired and they are economically self-reliant, many people nevertheless encounter obstacles in the physical, institutional and/or socio-cultural environment. This is a large group in the housing market, which includes people with incomes just above the threshold for rent allowance, the economic homeless and people who urgently need a home, for example after a divorce. This category also includes people from a culture where cycling is not a customary mode of transport.
3. *Groups that wish to organise a citizen initiative*. These groups are also frequently confronted with obstacles in the physical, institutional and socio-cultural environments and in their (collective) personal capabilities. This is a factor in both formal initiatives (for example, a foundation that wants to start a communal living project and needs land, financial resources or expertise for it) and informal initiatives (such as a group of status holders who wish to open a restaurant or a furniture business in a garage or a vacant property).

Each of these types of groups needs to be considered in the planning of the city. By carefully considering what individuals or groups can or cannot do to shape their own lives, the assumptions and blind spots in government policy and its implementation that unintentionally lead to exclusion mechanisms can be identified. Access can sometimes be improved with individual or collective support and sometimes with changes in the

13 This term is used by Engbersen (2020); Van Delden (2019) and Putters (Van Assen, 2020), among others.

environment (for example, relaxation of rules, public information or training and work experience projects).

2.4 Conclusions

Access to the city has diminished for some groups in society. They encounter problems connected with the affordability, availability and/or accessibility of important aspects of urban society (housing, transport and public amenities) or are confronted with a mismatch between the supply of one or more of these key functions in the city and their personal situation.

The difference in the extent of these people's access to the city leads to inequality between social groups. While inequality as such cannot always be avoided, the Rli feels that the widening gap in terms of accessibility to and affordability of key functions of the city, functions that everyone needs to participate in urban society, is unjustified.[14]

To guarantee access to the city, it is necessary to investigate whether sufficient account is taken of the opportunities and constraints of individuals. Politicians, civil servants, entrepreneurs and other organisations that try to shape the 'planned city' should devote greater attention to the existence of the 'lived city', in which the opportunities for individuals to participate in urban society are determined in part by their *personal circumstances and capabilities* and by *three environmental factors*: (a) the physical environment (such as the availability and affordability of suitable housing, transport and public amenities (both indoor and outdoor)), (b) the institutional environment (laws, rules and organisational conditions that people must adhere to), and (c) the socio-cultural environment with its informal codes that help to determine whether or not a person regards a particular environment as part of 'his' domain. These factors also impact on each another.

The Rli attributes the decline in accessibility of cities to the following causes:

- the retreating government in combination with austerity measures;
- the sharp escalation of prices in both the rental and owner-occupied segments of the housing market, which has coincided with growing income uncertainty for many households (due to the flexibilisation of the labour market);
- insufficient attention by policymakers to the interaction between the key functions;
- the dominance of 'old values' in the policy, which means that new values such as 'accessibility' are only slowly coming to be reflected in policy and decision-making by the government; and
- overestimation of people's independence and self-reliance in government policy, combined with blind spots in policies and in the information on which policy is based.

14 Here the Rli endorses a statement by the Scientific Council for Government Policy on the importance of equal access to 'essential infrastructural facilities' because it touches on ethical values of justice (Idenburg & Weijnen, 2018). The Rli extends the scope of that statement to the three key functions of urban society.

Access to the city can suffer for three types of groups:

1. vulnerable citizens with constraints in their personal capabilities;
2. ‘new vulnerable citizens’, such as the economic homeless and urgent house seekers; and
3. groups of people who wish to organise a citizen initiative.

3 BETTER MANAGEMENT OF ACCESS TO THE CITY

In the previous chapter, the Council established that there are unjustified differences between citizens in the extent to which they have access to the city. In this chapter, the Rli makes a number of recommendations for measures that central government and municipalities can take to prevent these differences from widening. The red line in the recommendations is that policy relating to the key urban functions of 'public amenities', 'housing' and 'transport' must take more explicit account of the opportunities and limitations of individual citizens. After first formulating a normative principle, the Rli presents six specific recommendations that would help to guarantee access to urban society.

3.1 Basic principle

Managing access to the city calls for a normative principle against which policy can be assessed. Based on the analysis in the previous chapters, the principle formulated by the Rli is as follows:

Everyone in the Netherlands must have the best possible access to the key functions (public amenities, housing and transport) at an acceptable cost (in terms of money, time and effort).

In the Rli's opinion, this principle should be reflected in two guarantees for citizens:

1. minimum conditions to enable people to participate in urban society;[15]
2. incentives and scope to enable individuals and groups to attain their specific wishes and needs, according to their personal capabilities.

3.2 Six recommendations

In this section, the Rli presents six recommendations. As this advisory report was being finalised, it became evident that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 will have enormous consequences for society and the economy. The policy effort required to recover from the epidemic will amount to much the same as the post-war reconstruction. A partial reshaping of the structure of society will be required. The following recommendations take that into account; they respond to the opportunities that exist to change things for the better.

15 Inspiration for the operationalisation of this aspect can be found in the UN Declaration on Universal Health Coverage in 2012. The declaration is fleshed out in various indicators derived from knowledge and experience gained in countries that already have a health care system with good coverage, including the Netherlands. Examples are our standards for the time it should take to get to general practice surgeries and policlinics and for the response time of the emergency services.

3.2.1 Assess the impact of policy for the living environment on access to urban society

Advice to central government and municipalities

The Council advises central government and municipalities to investigate, during the policy cycle,16 the extent to which policy measures relating to the living environment influence the money, the time and the effort it costs citizens to gain access to the city's key functions (public amenities, housing and transport). In that context, access is a crucial issue: what assumptions are made in policy and are certain groups of people perhaps overlooked in the process? Who are on the 'peripheries' of the groups policy is geared to and what might handicap or help them?

Once policy choices have been made, their effects should be regularly evaluated: are certain groups missing out? What aspects of policy relating to housing, transport and/or public amenities play a role in that respect? Qualitative studies could help in gathering this information and working with the public to design meaningful interventions to improve and guarantee access to the city (see also the examples in part 2).

The Rli advises municipalities to consider how measures with an impact on public amenities, housing and transport, or a combination thereof, will affect people. In other words, assess in advance the implications of the plans for the access of different groups of residents when drafting

16 The cycle comprises the formulation of goals, the choice of instruments, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

strategic planning documents and major spatial plans (in the context of the Environment and Planning Act).

Notional example of an assessment of accessibility: the relocation of a hospital

Two hospitals are planning to merge their activities at a new site on the periphery of the city. The spatial planning rules prescribe a minimum number of parking spaces in order to guarantee access for car owners. The municipal executive also stipulates that there must be a public transport infrastructure with bus stops.

It is found in the assessment of access to urban society that the stipulated requirements do not adequately guarantee the accessibility of the hospital. This leads to additional requirements: the public transport service must be organised in such a way that staff with irregular shifts can also use it and there must be facilities for visitors and staff who cycle to the hospital (bicycle paths, safe bicycle stalls).

Such an assessment of accessibility for strategic planning documents and spatial plans could be made obligatory by incorporating it in an Order in Council (*Algemene maatregel van bestuur*, AMvB) pursuant to the Environment and Planning Act.[17] In this way, the municipal executive would be required to explain its decision, so that the question of how to ensure that particular groups do not have less access to the city as a result of the planning process will always be considered. By prescribing the assessment in law, people will also be able to provide input and appeal if they feel the reasons given for the decision are inadequate.

17 The Rli sees a parallel with the so-called 'Ladder of sustainable urbanisation', which public authorities are required to apply when drafting environmental plans, and with the 'public transport accessibility assessment' at new building locations.

3.2.2 Create room for citizen initiatives

Advice to central government and municipalities

In many cities, groups of citizens come up with creative solutions for problems they face. These formal and informal citizen initiatives expand the opportunities for people to participate in urban society. The Rli advises central government and municipalities to create more room for citizen initiatives of this type and to provide the organisers of the initiatives with the support they need to achieve their goals. This can be accomplished in general terms by removing institutional obstacles faced by the originators of initiatives. In that context, it is important to take account of differences in personal capabilities (for example, differences in the skills required to participate in policy discussions and the political debate or to gain access to capital) and environmental factors. That could be a pretext for creating room for experiments or deregulated zones and for labelling citizen initiatives as experiments from which to gradually learn what works and what rules are needed. The availability of 'free space' promotes new initiatives and innovation in the city.

Cooperatives building affordable rental housing: an example from Zurich
In Zurich in Switzerland, there are cooperatives (*Genossenschaften*) that build houses and rent them out to their members at cost price. This type of organisation has existed for some time in Switzerland, but was rediscovered about twenty years ago as an alternative in places where house prices and rents were exploding. The principle is simple: people form a cooperative and become shareholders of it. The housing costs are fixed for a very long period, which gives the residents financial certainty. *Genossenschaften* now account for a third of all new-build housing in Zurich and can apply for a subsidy from a fund for planning costs. The land is leased from the municipality for 70 years, thus guaranteeing the supply of rented housing for middle-income groups in the long term. The cooperative is obliged to make a percentage of the high-quality dwellings available to special target groups, such as people returning to the workforce, status holders and disadvantaged families. In this way, these vulnerable people are absorbed into a co-housing structure and have access to the capabilities of others in the community.

Initiatives for building projects are a special category as they benefit especially from increasing access to money, knowledge and land. The government can help in this by setting up a revolving fund[18] or a guarantee fund, by expanding the possibilities for housing associations to provide financial support for cooperatives and by making land available for an appropriate price. The Rli advises municipalities to adopt an assessment framework, with transparent criteria, for determining which initiatives will be supported and the conditions that will apply.

3.2.3 Formulate investment strategy for access to public amenities

Advice to central government and municipalities
The Rli advises all cities to include an 'investment strategy for public amenities' in their strategic plans, which also addresses the issue of the access of different groups of people to the urban society. The feasibility of the strategy can be guaranteed by earmarking funding for it in the municipality's multi-year budget.

The investment strategy should devote attention to the regulation of public property. In the process, it might be decided to reconsider the operation of market forces in relation to public property or to build in a counterweight to it. The investment strategy should also devote attention to the spatial planning of amenities and the connections between them. This means that the spatial planning process for each individual neighbourhood or district must explicitly consider the presence and accessibility of shops, sports fields, hospitals, libraries and community centres, but also whether there is 'free space' for citizen initiatives. This would also be a way of giving effect to the government's basic principle that everyone in the Netherlands should have access to a complete library within a reasonable distance.[19]

18 With a revolving fund, the money lent is provided in the form of new loans for the same purpose as soon the initial loan is paid off.

19 Letter from the minister, Ingrid van Engelshoven (Ministerie OCW, 2020).

In the Rli's opinion, the central government should play an active role in every respect. In the first place, it should provide some of the funds needed to implement plans (for example, by incorporating this recommendation in the agreements on urbanisation that the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is making with various regions). Secondly, the government should revise the rules for the valuation of municipal property. Those rules compel municipalities to write down their property to a book value of zero over a specific period. Meanwhile, the market value of land and buildings is rapidly appreciating. In practice, this puts pressure on municipalities to realise the fictitious excess value by selling. Thirdly, the Rli advises the government to reconsider the principle of 'cost-covering rent' and to give municipalities more discretion to take social values into account and to reflect them in a lower rent.

3.2.4 Make better use of the existing housing stock

Advice to central government and municipalities

The huge demand for housing in cities will continue in the coming years and housing production will not be able to keep pace with it. There is considerable public debate on this subject and the Rli endorses the view that new building must continue even during this crisis (anti-cyclical building) and that there are reservations about the strength of housing associations, partly as a result of the landlord tax. However, the Rli focuses in its recommendations on other measures to increase the housing stock in the short term. The Rli suggests that one way is by making better use of the existing housing stock. At the same time, something needs to be done about the significant differences between groups of people in the social rental, private rental and owner-occupied segments that are caused by legislation. The Rli proposes measures in the short term and the medium term.

- *Review the cost-sharing standard for welfare benefits*
  The Rli observes that the current cost-sharing standard, which is intended to prevent welfare fraud, leads to inefficient use of the housing stock (particularly in the social rental sector). The rule leads to adult children (over the age of 21) being asked by their parents to leave the home and becoming homeless20 and to couples living apart in order to avoid having their benefits cut. This restricts people in their ability to shape their own lives, while at the same time there are fewer homes for other people. The Rli therefore recommends revision of the rules.
- *Addition of residential housing*
  The creation of additional residential housing, temporary or permanent, is an issue that demands constant attention. It can be accomplished by converting offices and other commercial properties, but extensions can also be built onto many dwellings. Municipalities could provide targeted incentives for this. Despite the measures that have already been taken in this area in recent years, the Rli observes that there is still a lot more that could be done.
- *More efficient use of residential housing*
  There is considerable underutilisation of residential housing because households are becoming smaller. The existing rules and regulations

20 This is one explanation for the sharp rise in the number of young 'avoidable' homeless in the last ten years (Coumans et al., 2018; SZN, 2020).

stimulate independent living and the use of more space. This has an impact on the supply and restricts people in their search for affordable alternatives. The Rli recommends promoting more efficient use of residential housing per person, which could be achieved by dividing up a property, moving house, house sharing or other constructions that can contribute to more efficient use of existing residential housing. A system that provides incentives for people to take such steps could help to improve the utilisation of the housing stock.

In the social rental sector, (institutional) rules stand in the way of more efficient use of living space. The Rli recommends exploring the conditions under which multiple single-person households could be housed in a single property using 'friends' contracts'. The Rli also recommends experimenting with rules that reduce the risk of people who are cohabiting becoming homeless if the relationship ends. A fall-back option might be to allow a declaration of urgency to be made for people who separate within a year.

The solutions described above were consciously chosen because they are not suitable only for specific vulnerable groups. Numerous groups face problems in the current housing market and solutions should preferably be relevant for a wide variety of groups. Nevertheless, the Rli also advocates one measure specifically for a particular vulnerable group: labour migrants. Members of this group regularly suffer from the fact that their right to housing is linked to their employment contract. When that contract expires, they are literally out on the street. The Rli feels that these individuals are disproportionately disadvantaged and recommends establishing an institutional separation of work and housing by law.

3.2.5 Make the private rental sector more stable by attracting long-term investors

Advice to central government

Many people who are looking for a home have no access to the social rental sector and lack the means to enter the overheated owner-occupied sector. Consequently, these households are reliant on the private rental sector. But the rapid increase in rents in this sector makes this segment barely affordable for a growing number of people and the housing costs consume a steadily larger share of their income.

The Council therefore advises the central government to make the private rental sector more stable. This would be helped by improving the institutional embedding of the sector. The sector could be made more attractive for other investors by promoting long-term involvement of landlords and moderate development of rents. This could attract various parties, since both financial and idealistic objectives can be reasons to invest in the private rental sector. In that context, the Rli is thinking not only of letting agencies and housing associations with a separate division for private letting,[21] but also of cooperatives and citizen initiatives

21 The Rli is referring here to housing associations whose properties with a value in excess of the liberalisation threshold (the non-DAEB assets) are held in a separate legal entity. DAEB stands for diensten van algemeen economisch belang (services of general economic interest).

with alternative operating models. Another option might be to study, in consultation with institutional investors, the conditions under which the stability of the private rental market can be aligned with their long-term financial objectives.

In the Rli's opinion, the government and municipalities should consider adopting a package of measures that make moderate rent development a condition for the development of building locations and which include financial incentives that reward a commitment for a period of twenty years or longer. In the latter case, one option could be a gradual reduction of property tax or the property transfer tax for owner-landlords or a scheme that gradually creams off less excess value to make rapid flipping of properties less appealing. This would attract parties that are seeking a stable return and are willing to invest for a longer period.

3.2.6 Make 'access for everyone' the basic principle of transport policy

Advice to central government and municipalities

The point of departure for transport policy should be that everyone can make the desired transport movements at a reasonable cost (in terms of money, time and effort). The focus of the policy should be on ensuring that people have sufficient possibilities to reach destinations. That represents a fundamental change compared with the current national, provincial and municipal transport policy, in which the focus is mainly on the financial and economic utility of investments in mobility.

The Rli advises central government and municipalities to review transport policy and concentrate on people's mobility options by looking at physical and financial access, necessary skills and the actual use. An interesting international trend in that context is the so-called 15-minute city, where amenities must be available within fifteen minutes by foot, by bicycle or by public transport. To put this concept into practice, special attention is needed for criss-cross movements through the city, which means that spatial policy must include measures to improve the proximity of amenities and the density of the mobility network. Indicators of accessibility should also be developed to generate accurate information in support of this policy. This is currently being done in the National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment (Novi) Monitor, although its focus on workplaces should be expanded to other relevant amenities.

Reform of the transport policy will create specific challenges for the various modes of transport. For public transport, changes will be needed to create a network with a 'radial' structure that provides better coverage, with particular attention to its affordability, frequency and suitability for groups that do not at present use public transport. More efficient use of the public transport capacity can also be achieved with an off-peak system that applies not only for the train, but also for other forms of public transport. For some vulnerable groups, access could be guaranteed by further expanding the range of reduced fares.

Cities have already taken steps for pedestrians and cyclists with the construction and improvement of footpaths and bicycles paths and

parking facilities for bicycles. However, it is also important to promote the availability of good bicycles and to encourage people to learn how to cycle and actually use the bicycle, for example with long-term publicity campaigns and projects. In the Rli's opinion, this socio-cultural aspect receives too little attention in the existing transport policy.

3.3 Conclusion

This advisory report looks at the access of citizens to urban society. To manage that access, the 'planned city' (as conceived and designed by policymakers and urban planners) must take account of the 'lived city' (as experienced and created by the residents themselves). This will produce a broader and more diverse impression of the city. By looking at people's opportunities from the perspective of the residents, removing unnecessary obstacles and reviewing the basic principles of policy, everyone in the Netherlands can gain access to the wealth of social, economic and cultural benefits that our cities have to offer. That is important for people, but equally so for the quality of our cities. This method will need to be deepened and fleshed out in the coming years, as will some of the recommendations that the Rli makes in this advisory report.

PART 2 | ANALYSIS

1 ACCESS TO THE CITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

To what extent is urban society accessible for everyone, particularly with regard to the key functions of public amenities, housing and transport? In this chapter, the Rli explains how an awareness of everyone's individual opportunities and constraints and the conditions in the environment that influence them is essential for guaranteeing that access. How accessible is the city when we look at it through the eyes of the individual? To make an accurate assessment, the Rli has taken inspiration from the capabilities approach, a method that has added value for the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating policy.

1.1 Access to the city further explored

1.1.1 Delineation of the terms 'city', 'access' and 'key functions'

In this advisory report, 'the city' is defined as the urban region within which people move to conduct their everyday activities (in the jargon, the 'daily urban system'). People live, work and use a wide range of amenities

in the city, where there is a concentration of jobs, knowledge institutes and services such as health care and cultural activities. Most cities in this country have grown in recent years, both in size and in importance (PBL/CBS, 2019).

The Rli defines 'access to the city' in this advisory report as *the opportunities that people in the Netherlands have (or lack) to enable them to participate in urban society*. 'Participation' can mean finding work or education, meeting people who share one's views or in fact have different opinions, while using the various amenities in the city.

The Council distinguishes three 'key functions' of the city in this report: conditions in the living environment that influence one's ability to participate in urban society. To start with, people must be able to *live* in the city. They must also be able to use the *public amenities:* (public) outdoor spaces such as streets, parks and squares and indoor spaces such as libraries, supermarkets, bars and restaurants and gyms. Finally, it is essential that people can use *transport* facilities to reach all of these destinations.

1.1.2 Access for whom?

In principle, everyone in the Netherlands should be able to profit from the strength of Dutch cities: anyone who wishes to avail of the qualities of the city must have access to them. Naturally, not everyone can live in the city centre, not everyone can visit an urban beach, a square, a shopping area, a hospital or a library at the same time. But it is important for the individual and for the city as a whole that all these functions are in principle available and accessible to everyone.

> "If part of the population cannot reach work locations, society is letting down not only the individuals concerned, but also itself by failing to make full use of the productive labour potential. The same applies for access to education for young people and further education for the elderly, for health care and for cultural activities. If part of the population is forced to seek social contact mainly in the virtual world, there is a reasonable chance that people who are physically unable to move around will become lonely. That also affects not only those individuals, but also society as a whole, which suffers a loss of quality and cohesion." (Idenburg & Weijnen, 2018).

1.1.3 Relationship with UN's Sustainable Development Goals

In recent years, the debate about the future of cities has generally focused on inclusivity and justice. One of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, to which the Netherlands has committed itself, is devoted specifically to the inclusivity of cities. Goal 11 provides that the city of the future must, through progress and innovation, provide opportunities for everyone and ensure access to basic services such as clean drinking water, housing, energy, transport, etc. The UN lists seven targets, four of which are relevant for this advisory report (see box).

Sustainable Development Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.[22]

Source: Dutch SDG Charter Foundation (2020)

1.1.4 Relationship with the broad definition of welfare

Goal 11 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals indicates a basic level of accessibility for cities. The extent to which urban society is accessible (particularly in terms of access to education, health care, housing, transport and the labour market) is closely connected with the society's broad level of welfare, as monitored every year for the Netherlands by Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2020). The Monitor of Broad Welfare sketches the state of welfare in the Netherlands using a number of indicators – not just the economy and incomes, but also health, leisure time, standard of education and the quality of the environment. The monitor reports on the trends in these indicators. For example, has there been an improvement or a deterioration in the quality of housing, the labour participation rate or the level of education in the Netherlands?

The Monitor of Broad Welfare gives an impression of the level of well-being in our society. It shows that on every aspect of welfare the well-educated are the winners and the unskilled are the losers, but does not show why individual members of society are unable to attain a particular level of welfare.

1.2 Importance of insight into individual opportunities and impediments

To gain a clear impression of the accessibility of the city, it is also important to know what opportunities people have or what impediments they face, given their personal circumstances and capabilities, and how those factors are influenced by the conditions in their environment. The interaction of these factors influences the possibilities people have to benefit from the functions that determine the level of welfare in their city. In other words, it is important to consider the accessibility of the city also from the perspective of the individual.

22 The other targets that fall outside the scope of this advisory report are: target 11.4 (relating to cultural and natural heritage), target 11.5 (mainly concerned with water safety) and target 11.6 (focusing mainly on the (environmental) health of the city, a subject on which the Rli advised in The Healthy City in 2018).

An approach that lends itself well to discovering this is the capabilities approach, based on the ideas of Sen and Nussbaum. This approach looks not so much at the availability of things like a home, a car or amenities in a neighbourhood, but rather the extent to which people have the facilities and opportunities to gain access to those things if they want them. This approach builds on the distinction, introduced and fleshed out by the French philosophers Lefebvre and De Certeau, between 'the planned city' and 'the lived city'. In making this distinction, De Certeau uses the terms 'strategy' and 'tactic'. Strategies create, arrange and control space. Tactics are used to manoeuvre within that space (Reinders, 2013). The planned city refers to the city as devised and designed by policymakers and urban planners and embraces policy on both social and physical aspects of urban development: emancipation, education, health care, architectural features such as green zones for pedestrians and cyclists, etc. It is important to think about the city in planning terms in order to formulate strategies for achieving long-term goals for social and physical aspects of the urban society.

The lived city is the city as created by people. This is not the city as an object to be made inhabitable by science, the knowledge or policies of professionals, but the city as a space lived in by people, regardless of professionals. At its heart lies the everyday reality. To better understand the lived city, one has to look at how the city's residents and users deal with it themselves. What tactics do they use that we can recognise in their everyday routines, routes and rituals? (Frijhoff 2010; Reijndorp, 2020). How accessible is the city if we look at it through the eyes of the individual?

In the following section, the RIi explains the capabilities approach and then elaborates on the role of personal factors and circumstances in the environment for the accessibility of the city.

1.2.1 Capabilities approach

The capabilities approach emerged from the criticism of the solely economic approach adopted by policymakers in their efforts to improve the quality of life. Income alone is not decisive for whether people can or cannot improve the quality of their lives, it is also a question of the capabilities they possess to make choices (Sen, 1999). Nussbaum further refined this theory to address the question of how a just society can be guaranteed (Nussbaum, 2011). A 'good life' is not easy to define. Its contours are determined by individual capabilities and ambitions and by the cultural, institutional and social context (Den Braber and Tirions, 2016). The capabilities approach is in fact an appeal to take people's quality of life as the point of departure for policy, rather than economic parameters such as production, growth and profit. In this approach, what counts is not statistical results and averages, but the actual possibility for people to participate in urban society. The approach highlights differences between people and provides tools for further analysing and understanding identified problems with qualitative research (Nussbaum, 2011).

The approach starts with two simple questions: *What are people actually able to do and to be? and What real opportunities are available to them?* (Nussbaum, 2011). It starts with the individual: it is not concerned with the average quality of life, but the opportunities that are available to people to

attain their own quality of life (Nussbaum, 2011). The quality of a human life encompasses numerous mutually connected and interdependent elements, including a person's material resources, but also the legal rules and social standards that can impose constraints (Robeyns, 2017).

Policy is then mainly a question of creating opportunities and/or possibilities for people that enable them to freely develop according to their own standards. To discover what is needed, it is important to look at what people can actually do or be and what genuine opportunities they have. This is a question of people's personal capabilities and the conditions in the environment: the physical environment, the socio-cultural environment and the institutional environment (for an explanation, see section 1.2.2).

The distinction between opportunities and options ('capabilities') and their realisation ('functionings') is key (Den Braber & Tirions, 2016):

- *Capabilities* are the opportunities and options that people have to lead the life they wish to lead.
- *Functionings* are activities, circumstances or situations that people regard as important and worth pursuing. Examples might be visiting a parent every day or having a beer with colleagues every Friday afternoon, but also the aspiration of following a course of study. What precisely a person's 'functionings' are is therefore subjective and depends on the context.

The capabilities approach also distinguishes 'resources' and 'conversion factors'. These are things that help people to do what they have chosen to do:

- *Resources* are specific tools such as means of transport (if a person wants to visit his parents) or access to the internet (if a person wants to register online for a course), but also basic necessities of life such as access to housing, health care and education, an adequate income, safety or being consulted.
- *Conversion factors* are those things that enable people to put their choices into practice. Conversion factors embrace personal factors (circumstances and capabilities), environmental factors (such as public amenities and infrastructure), institutional factors and socio-cultural factors.

Example: Cycling in the city

A simple example illustrates the relationship between these basic concepts. If being able to move around the city quickly and in an eco-friendly manner is important to you (*capability* as an option), you need a good bicycle (resource as a means). You must also be willing, able and have the courage to cycle (personal *conversion factors*). The city must offer you a safe infrastructure for cycling and cycling must be part of the culture of mobility (social *conversion factors*).
The presence of these factors allows you to make the choice to travel everywhere by bicycle in future (*functioning*). If you put that choice into practice, it brings satisfaction, and perhaps even happiness. If you are unable to, it leads to dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

Source: Den Braber and Tirions (2016)

The capabilities approach has gained in popularity in Europe in recent years. Robeyns (2017) concludes that there are various versions of the approach that can be used, depending on the envisaged goal. A broader variant of the approach focuses not only on people and what they are able and willing to accomplish, but often has a more ambitious goal such as social evaluation or policy development.
The approach is being more widely used in various domains in the Netherlands:

- Social work. The focus is on strengthening and supporting people in their own environment by creating the freedoms, opportunities and possibilities that allow them to live the life they want to live (Den Braber & Tirions, 2018).
- Housing and homeless policy. The capabilities approach highlights the need for policy to focus more on increasing the possibilities and opportunities for people to achieve what is important to them rather than being confined to material resources such as money and income (Kimhur, 2020; Haffner & Elsinga, 2019).
- Social sustainability in area development. The main focus in urban development is still on the physical aspects of the living environment. Interestingly, there is growing attention in research to the possibilities of using the capabilities approach to pinpoint what is needed to integrate social sustainability into area development (Janssen et. al., 2019).

1.2.2 Role of personal factors and conditions in the environment in relation to access to the city

This advisory report builds on the capabilities approach to analyse the accessibility of the city from the perspective of the individual, starting with the extent to which individuals have access to urban society, and more particularly to the key functions of housing, transport and public amenities.

To understand the choices and opportunities people have to participate in urban society, it is necessary to examine people's personal circumstances and capabilities and the conditions in the environment. That environment embraces the socio-cultural environment (personal background and culture), the physical environment (housing, transport, amenities, places to gather) and the institutional environment (laws and regulations, institutions such as public authorities, housing associations, health care and welfare institutions). These aspects are discussed further below. (See also figure 2: Approach based on the individual on pages 26.)

Personal circumstances and capabilities

Personal capabilities are first and foremost *individual*. They include a person's mental and physical health, income, financial assets, mental ability, reading and language skills, education, age and - increasingly importantly - digital skills. Closely connected with the personal capabilities is the individual's personal situation, including his or her living conditions (owning their home or not, renting in the social or private sector, the length of time on a waiting list) and personal circumstances (divorced, debt

problems, an addiction, etc.). The culture within which people grow up also influences their personal opportunities or impediments.

Secondly, personal capabilities are *relational*: the capacity to form and make use of a social network. A partner, the family or 'extended family', but also an association or informal networks supplement an individual's capabilities. For example, someone who is bad at filling in forms might have a relative or an acquaintance who is good at it or a neighbour with contacts who could help. Public amenities can also play a role in this respect, since people one meets there may be able to provide assistance or useful information.

Personal capabilities also extend to a person's capacity to act in a variety of situations. In this context, the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 2017) stressed the importance of 'life skills'. Contemporary society imposes huge demands on people's self-reliance and requires alertness in crucial aspects of life. Many people are unable to do so under all circumstances:

> "It is no longer enough to file the letter with the annual pension overview away in a folder. You have to take action and make choices well before retirement date. A lengthy career with the same employer is no longer the norm. Employees and the self-employed are expected to keep themselves employable with an eye to new opportunities and threats. In health-care policy, autonomy and personal responsibility are the priorities. The self-reliant patient is well-informed, follows a healthy lifestyle, chooses their own physician and actively helps to decide on the treatment" (WRR, 2017).

People's capacity to manage their environment through their own actions depends in part on their relationships with others. These include functional relationships with employees of amenities and services, as well as informal relationships with family, friends and acquaintances.
In our society, social skills are essential for participation. People with less well-developed social skills are at greater risk of exclusion. People whose social network breaks down (or is entirely lacking) can very easily find themselves in a process of marginalisation (Van Delden, 2019). At-risk groups mentioned by Van Delden in that context are people with uncertain and poorly paid work, people who have been out of work for a lengthy period, people with debts and people with personal disabilities such as dementia or a psychiatric disorder.

Besides these 'traditional' vulnerable groups, there is nowadays also a risk of marginalisation for self-employed persons, part-time workers, call centre employees and interns or trainees who remain in office jobs only to be transferred or laid off when there is a reorganisation of the work procedures. These are also known as the 'new vulnerable groups' (Engbersen, 2020; Van Delden, 2019; and Putters (Van Assen, 2020)). In a study in 2014, the Netherlands Institute of Social Research found that there were more vulnerable people in the Netherlands than was believed (SCP, 2014).

Socio-cultural environment

The socio-cultural environment comprises the informal rules and conditions that people have to follow. These can be the codes that determine whether or not a person regards a location, a living environment or a mode of transport as part of 'his' domain. Such codes can be revealed in the clothes people wear, their behaviour and the language they use, or in the design and architecture of the physical environment. The presence or absence of particular social groups in squares, in playgrounds or in parks can serve as a signal that determines whether a person feels welcome or not. The character of a particular facility (a coffee house or a cappuccino bar; an office or a workshop, a kebab shop or a fish restaurant) also projects codes that determine whether or not a person feels at home in a particular location. A community's culture can form an impediment to participation, or actually provide a stimulus for it.

Physical environment

In the first place, the physical environment comprises the *public amenities*, both the public outdoor spaces and the indoor spaces where people gather. Secondly, the physical environment consists of the *residential housing* that people (with their family or otherwise) use as a home and a base for other activities. Thirdly, it also includes the *transport* options for people to move around the city.

All three aspects of the physical environment influence people's opportunities to participate in urban society:

- The decisive aspect with respect to public amenities is whether there are sufficient public spaces (such as streets, parks, squares and undefined 'open space' such as empty fields) and indoor spaces (such as libraries, supermarkets, restaurants, shops, GPs, community centres, gyms) that people can use.
- In the case of housing, the decisive factor is the presence and availability of housing with the specifications that match an individual's personal situation (large/small, lifetime-compatible, cheap/expensive). People who have access to a safe and affordable home of good quality will save money for other purposes, such as education or social activities (Haffner and Elsinga, 2018). It is important to note in this context that the universal right to housing is anchored in the constitution.[23] Nevertheless, the situation has arisen in many cities where people are unable to find a home near their place of work in the city. For example, many nurses and teachers who work or want to work in the city cannot find suitable housing.
- With transport, the decisive factor is whether people can get to where they need to go. Is there sufficient infrastructure and means of transport present and available in the vicinity (roads, railway, bus stops and train stations, bicycle paths, cars, buses, trams, trains, bicycles, scooters, etc.) and to what extent are they accessible to people with an impediment?

23 The right to housing is laid down in Article 22.2 of the constitution: 'It shall be the concern of the authorities to provide sufficient living accommodation'. The Council of Public Health and Society referred to the significance of this right in a recent advisory report on the homeless (RVS, 2020b).

Institutional environment

The institutional environment comprises the formal rules that people have to adhere to and the framework of formal conditions within which they have to function. Every element of the physical environment is subject to these formal rules and conditions. Examples are entrance fees, age limits and/or a duty to provide identification for various *public amenities* in the city. With respect to *housing*, there are rules for the allocation of housing, income thresholds and rent allowances, the rules for providing mortgages (mortgage interest relief, the repayment regime, the debt-to-income ratio) and the rules governing private landlords (such as rent protection). *Transport* in the city is also subject to numerous conditions, such as tax rules for the use of vehicles, public transport fares, the rules for the use of the public transport pass on the tram, bus and metro, the timetables of tram, bus and metro services, the safety requirements and insurance rules for bicycles, scooters, cars etc.

Institutional recognition of personal impediments, such as limited command of the Dutch language, limited digital skills, physical disabilities and/or a low income, is also part of the institutional environment. Institutions such as public authorities, housing associations, health-care and welfare institutions must create the basic conditions to ensure that people have sufficient access to amenities.

1.3 Conclusions

It is important to look at the accessibility of the city from the perspective of the individual. More specifically, the focus should be on the influence of personal factors and the conditions in the environment on people's opportunities to actually use the available amenities. The capabilities approach has added value in that context. The approach offers a perspective that helps to reveal more about the factors that currently prevent certain groups from fully participating in urban society. The approach highlights the (policy) rules and implicit codes that impact on the opportunities and barriers that affect individuals' ability to shape their lives as they see fit. The assumptions and blind spots in policy and its implementation that unintentionally lead to exclusion mechanisms can then be identified.

Guaranteeing access to the city for everyone calls for investigation of whether sufficient account is taken of the accessibility of essential functions in society, by looking at individuals' capabilities and impediments. This needs to be done for every policy plan that is drafted in relation to public amenities, housing and/or transport, and must continue to be assessed during the implementation and evaluation of policy. This is a task of the authorities, businesses and organisations that operate in the city, and of individuals themselves.

Urban society evolves over time under the influence of changes in the economy and in collective and individual values. The basic principles adopted by policymakers change with them. Consequently, urban society

today is not the same as it was ten years ago, and it will be different again ten years' time. The changes inevitably lead to an increase or decrease in the accessibility of the city for various groups of people. The Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) has noted in this context that inequality as such is not unacceptable and is not always avoidable:

> "There is a significant degree of inequality in our society, and society accepts that. However, where inequality affects the accessibility and affordability of essential infrastructural facilities, which everyone needs to function in society, it touches on moral notions of justice" (Idenburg and Wijnen, 2018).

When moral notions of justice are threatened, the issue needs to be addressed, with public debate, and government intervention if necessary. Access to urban society is primarily an issue of inclusivity and justice. By including the perspective of the individual in urban policy, the Netherland can demonstrate that it is pursuing Goal 11 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

1.4 Application of the approach based on individual citizens

The two following intermezzos provide examples of groups that can no longer take access to urban society for granted. The aim of the intermezzos is to illustrate how the approach based on the individual described in this advisory report can be applied.

Both intermezzos address a number of issues. Why is the access of this group not self-evident? What obstacles do they face if they wish to participate in urban society? What precisely are the opportunities and impediments they encounter? The scenarios in the intermezzos encompass personal circumstances and capabilities and the environment. Are there obstacles in the physical environment that make finding housing or using public amenities and transport difficult or impossible? Are there institutional constraints due to legislation, because of assumptions made in the policy, or because certain groups are passed over or overlooked by the policy? Are there constraints of a socio-cultural nature in terms of what is expected of these individuals or what they are not allowed to do? Both intermezzos begin with a number of examples and then go on to reviewing the opportunities and impediments, before finally indicating where the situation is urgent and what the policy principles are, providing some statistics, mentioning some inspiring approaches and providing tips for further reading.

INTERMEZZO 1: THE ELDERLY

EXAMPLES

Nieuw Waldeck
In the Nieuw Waldeck district of The Hague – which has a relatively large elderly population – various small-scale amenities have disappeared. Although the elderly population in the district is varied (from active to having impaired mobility, with a large or very small social network, etc.), many experience this loss of services as an impediment. The aim of the *Ervaar Waldeck* project is to increase the self-reliance of older persons by improving the public amenities in consultation with them. By creating inviting and accessible routes and creating physical, social and technological conditions to enable them to meet their everyday needs: doing shopping, having a chat or doing things with others.

We are not dead yet
Many older people in the *Oude West* district of Rotterdam live in dwellings that are no longer suitable for them, for example because the property has no lift or is now far too big for them. However, for various reasons they want to remain in their own neighbourhood. In the community group 'We laten ons nog niet kisten', a number of combative older persons have joined together to conduct a campaign to draw attention to this problem. Together with the housing association, they also organise meetings for older residents to make sure they are aware that they will eventually have to move. Older people give each other tips on how to prepare for a move and visit suitable properties (that have a lift) in the neighbourhood.

OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES

Personal circumstances and capabilities
- Financial worries
- Health problems: often complex health problems
- Poor command of the language, reading skills and literacy
- Many older people lack digital skills, which leads to problems in terms of access to the housing market, care, finance, etc.

Physical environment
- Suitable housing (adapt or move)
- Accessible living environment (wide pavements, no steps)
- Proximity of amenities in the public space: Triple A amenities: doctor, chemist, supermarket and bus stop within walking distance, but also social activities

Institutional environment
- Digital skills required for making applications
- Regulations are an obstacle to establishing alternative forms of housing
- There are standards for the accessibility of bus stops, but not for their presence and proximity
- Information about public transport is difficult to read
- Obstacles connected with the public arrangements in our society

Socio-cultural environment
Negative: Decline in action radius → fewer activities → smaller network and greater isolation → greater dependence on contacts and amenities in the neighbourhood.
Positive: Dense social infrastructure → fewer problems of loneliness and non-participation → improved quality of life.
Positive: 'Open' public spaces → encounters, informal networks, various forms of community organisation, building of bridges between strong and weak and the development of support structures with 'others'.

Urgency
From 2.4 million over-65s in 2018 to 3.2 million in 2040
In 2030, more than two million over-75s, 600,000 more than now; the number of over-85s, with relatively large care needs, will grow from 380,000 now to approximately 540,000
In 2017, 92% of the over-75s lived independently
Income differences: 25% have less than € 21,500/year, 25% have more than € 44,500/year

Basic policy principle
The basic policy principle is that older persons should live independently for longer: personal control and self-reliance. People are called on to rely on their own strengths and opportunities.

Reality
Vulnerable older persons with few health skills, few social skills or low literacy have difficulty in finding, understanding and asking for information about care and support.

Inspiration
Rotterdam approach: *Langer thuis programme*
What obstacles do people face (now) and what do they need to be able to live independently for longer (in the future)?
Tools developed on the basis of qualitative research as a guide to a local approach:
Six personas: described on the basis of their network, home, care network, health, neighbourhood, modifications, willingness to move, information, approach and urgency.
Key moments: crucial moments when needs change or when relevant agencies can encourage preventive change to enable people to live independently for longer.

Sources and further literature
Cie Tzto (2020), Oud en zelfstandig in 2030. Een reisadvies. Daalhuizen et al., PBL (2019), Zelfstandig thuis op hoge leeftijd. RVS (2020a), De 3e levensfase: het geschenk van deze eeuw. De Klerk et al., SCP (2019), Zorgen voor thuiswonende ouderen.

INTERMEZZO 2: HOMELESS JUVENILES

EXAMPLES

Eva (20) is looking for a new home. She has been living with her girlfriend because she cannot move in with her mother and her father has no permanent address. The municipality has repeatedly rejected her request for a correspondence address. Because she has no formal address, her study financing (she has almost completed her programme) is at risk (RVS, 2020b).

Vaish (24) grew up in various foster homes, rooming houses, children's homes and family homes. When she was eighteen, she could no longer stay in this type of care home. She moved in with her mother, but it was not a success. A short while later she was out on the street. She stayed with people she knew from work or via the rooming house. Vaish was finally admitted to an assisted living programme run by the Salvation Army. She is now thinking about following a course (RVS, 2020b).

Monique's (54) dilemma: 'To live with dignity again I have to kick my four children out of the house. I will then be entitled to rent subsidy and other allowances'. She is legally obliged to pay the costs of the children's upkeep and studies until they are 21. But since they turned eighteen, the children's income from part time jobs has been added to hers. The children can´t afford a room and she doesn´t want to put them out on the street. There are no rooms to rent for around € 300 in the city (Goemans in Volkskrant Magazine, 4 April 2020).

OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES

Personal circumstances and capacities
- Problems in raising children: family conflicts, assault and abuse, foster family, placement in care
- Family composition: absence of father, low level of education of parents, divorce, foster parents, parents´ addiction
- School career: bullying, truancy, the wrong friends, poor results at school, dropping out of school
- Life events: traumatic/dramatic events, depression, behavioural problems, addiction, teenage mother
- Finance position: (parents with) a modest income or on benefits, debts, flexible work, small jobs.

Physical environment
- Availability of cheap rooms/dwellings
- Suitable and adequate shelters

Institutional environment
- Limited stay in crisis shelter, few opportunities to move on
- Permanent residence is often a condition for health insurance, registering for a course and applying for study financing or a benefit
- A child over the age of eighteen living at home is a financial burden for parents (reduction of allowances and benefits, the age limit differs per scheme) → sometimes a child is put out on the street by the parents
- Uncertainty due to changes in the social security system in relation to work and income: changes in the disability benefit for young people and the closure of social work places
- Applying for support is a digital maze

Socio-cultural environment
- The number of young homeless with an immigration background is growing, and on average they are younger
- The majority are boys, ¼ to ⅓ are girls, of whom ¼ to ½ have a child or are pregnant

Urgency
Number of young homeless (between the ages of 18 and 30) trebled between 2009 and 2018: there are now 12,800, 7,100 of whom have a non-Western background.
In 2016, the number of homeless juveniles up to the age of 18 was approximately 3,960

Basic policy principle
Self-reliance from the age of 18: taking personal control over financial and housing situation and being able to participate independently in society. Few young people are self-reliant at that age, which applies even more for vulnerable young people.

Reality
60% of homeless young people have a history of juvenile care. Youth care ends at the age of eighteen. When mandatory help becomes voluntary when they reach the age of eighteen, they often reject the help and decide to take care of themselves. They often incur debt or use alcohol and drugs, without anyone warning them of the risks of these choices. These liberties can lead to serious problems, particularly among vulnerable young people.

Inspiration
´Don´t just place these young people in a programme, but start with a safe place to live. In other words: invest in Housing First. Accommodation is the biggest problem for a homeless juvenile. And if you do not first solve that, the situation will quickly deteriorate. Young people who are at risk of becoming homeless are a vulnerable group who precisely at that moment are mentally unable to cope with the whole bureaucratic chain´ (Paul Hofstra, director of the Rotterdam Court of Audit).

Developments
In June 2020, the government announced that it would allocate an extra € 200 million to municipalities for shelter for the homeless. Housing First was the inspiration. Goal: 10,000 extra places in homeless shelters by the end of 2021. It is not known how many of these places will be for 18- to 23-year-olds. The municipality of Rotterdam calls for amendment of the national rules to prevent young people ending up on the street unnecessarily.

Sources and literature
Movisie (2017, 2020), Factsheets zwerfjongeren en daklozen. Sneep (2020 a and b), Toename dakloosheid jongeren Rotterdam. RVS (2020b), Herstel begint met een huis. Goemans (2020), Fulltime werken en arm, Volkskrant (4 April 2020).

2 ACCESS TO PUBLIC AMENITIES

Public amenities play an important role in enabling people to play a full part in urban society. People meet on the street and in community centres, parks and squares where they can share knowledge and information. Information that helps them to find work, for example. It is also important for public amenities to be available nearby: parks, playgrounds, local supermarkets, libraries, community centres, etc. However, access to public amenities is under pressure due to mechanisms such as consolidation, commercialisation and the urgent shortage of building locations. At the same time, the nature of public amenities is changing. Places where the more prosperous individual feels at home are increasingly dominant, and that is at the expense of the environments of many other residents. The challenge of preserving or creating a diverse range of public amenities that are inviting for different groups of people is therefore becoming more urgent, the Rli observes in this chapter.

2.1 The value of public amenities

What precisely are a city´s 'public amenities' and what is their value for urban society?

2.1.1 Definition of 'public amenities'

'Public amenities' is a broad term. It includes outdoor spaces, such as streets, parks and squares. These outdoor spaces form a connection through which people can get from one place to another, but are also places for people to linger. The definition of 'public amenities' also covers indoor spaces that can accommodate a range of facilities (such as libraries, schools, community centres, hairdressers, football club canteens, (local) stores and metro and train stations). Both types of space can be publicly, semi-privately or privately owned. Public transport (metros, trams and buses) can also be seen as a public amenity. In the literature, the terms 'public spaces' (covered or uncovered) or 'public domain' are also used instead of ´public amenities´. The term 'public amenities' is also sometimes replaced with 'the socio-physical infrastructure' of cities and neighbourhoods (see also section 2.1.6).

An important feature of public amenities is that we can meet the proverbial 'other' there. They are places where we can come into contact with and have to adapt to their other behaviour, their other ideas and their other preferences. It is therefore also a domain of surprise and reflection and the locations must be interesting to different people (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). There have been many studies and a lot has been written about what is required to create public amenities (indoor and outdoor) that invite large numbers of people to visit them and to remain there. They have yielded a wide range of principles that can be consciously used in the design and structure of amenities, as well as for their use and management.[24]

Besides physical locations in the city, there are a growing number of digital locations where people can meet others. These platforms are also public amenities. Some of these online exchanges then lead to physical encounters (Franke et al., 2014; De Waal, 2012). Newspapers, television and discussion forums with public debates are also part of the public domain (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001).

Residents' organisation '*Aktiegroep het Oude Westen*'

A public amenity that brings together a very diverse group of people (from various cultural backgrounds, skilled and unskilled, with paid jobs and unemployed) is the premises of the Aktiegroep Het Oude Westen, a community group in the Oude Westen, a city district in the centre of Rotterdam. The action group's premises provide a convenient location where the group has been working for fifty years with and for local residents to strengthen the neighbourhood and its inhabitants.
The many volunteers form a sort of 'humus layer' on which new contacts can be formed, information can be shared and initiatives can flourish. The centre is open every day and visitors can buy a cup of coffee or tea for 25 cents. Residents who wander in are listened to and offered help,

24 Studies devoted to the requirements for properly functioning public amenities (indoor and outdoor) include: Whyte, W. H. (1980), The social life of small urban spaces; Gehl, J. (2016), Steden voor mensen; Van der Zwaard, J. (2010), Scenes in de copycorner; Specht, M. & Van der Zwaard, J. (2015), De uitvinding van de Leeszaal.

for example with filling in forms or in searching online for social rental housing. Karmidjoh Siman: “When I retired two years ago, I wanted to remain active in the neighbourhood. After a meeting about sustainability organised by residents one evening, I joined the awareness working group. I now provide advice to neighbours about how they can reduce their energy bill. This is a win-win situation. Good for the wallet and the environment”.

Source: Desmet & Linssen (2019)

2.1.2 Beating heart of local communities

Public amenities (indoor and outdoor) enhance people’s quality of life. Parks, green spaces and water features are valuable features in the city where residents can relax, exercise, meet each other, play, rest and cool off, all free of charge. Research in the Schilderswijk in The Hague shows that public amenities can be important places for people to learn and do things and to help to make improvements in their living environment (Franke et al., 2014). According to the American urban sociologist Oldenburg (1989), these spaces form the ‘beating heart’ of local communities and are central to social vitality and the development of a functioning democracy. They are spaces where initiatives by residents are born and various forms of support can be offered to individuals and communities.

2.1.3 Feeling at home thanks to ‘small encounters’

Encounters in the public domain between people who don’t know each other are usually brief affairs, which sometimes consist solely of seeing and being seen, listening and being listened to. A glance or a quick nod. On the basis of her observations in the trams and shops in Antwerp, urban anthropologist Ruth Soenen referred in this context to ‘the small encounter´: a brief conversation, having a laugh or complaining about something together or helping each other. It also refers to greetings and brief chats you sometimes have with neighbours or people on the street (Van der Zwaard, 2010). These ‘small encounters´ are not unimportant, because you get to know more about each other through them. The strange becomes less strange and threatening. They enable people to learn things from others that alter their views and/or creates more empathy. This has a positive effect on the relationships between people and on their sense of safety and of ‘feeling at home’ (Van der Zwaard, 2010; Blokland, 2008). Residents feel happy and want to establish roots in neighbourhoods where small encounters can take place: with the employee at the checkout in the supermarket, the bicycle repairman on the corner and the guy selling herring on the square (Gadet, 2020). People often don’t need much more than that; after all, an important unwritten rule of urban life is to mind your own business, which is not to be confused with indifference (Van der Zwaard, 2010).

2.1.4 Access to information, new insights and support

The key function ‘public amenities’ can play an important role in expanding people’s personal capabilities, thus making them better able to participate in urban society. Unplanned meetings and conversations in public amenities can yield new information, knowledge and insights (Blokland, 2008; Gadet, 2020). Informal networks can be formed through encounters in

clubs, in community centres or even in the doctor's waiting room (see box) which can strengthen a person's personal capabilities. Conversations in the public domain can in this way enhance people's self-reliance by enabling them to acquire various skills that will help them further, for example in finding a job, an internship or a course.

Expanding local networks also has demonstrably positive effects on people's well-being: on their health, feelings of (social) safety and the chance of finding paid work. Regardless of their capabilities, people with larger networks feel less stress and have more trust in others. They have more energy to get involved in things. Public amenities (indoor and outdoor) are consequently a fertile breeding ground for a positive local social dynamic (Engbersen, 2016; Specht, 2016).

Fleeting meetings yield new information and insights

A young Antillean mother of a premature baby starts a conversation with a well-educated Dutch mother of six-month old twins in the waiting room of the child health clinic. They start making small talk with remarks such 'it's lovely but hard work, having twins.' The first mother is on her own. Her baby demands a lot of attention and she also has to care for her depressive father, with whom she has moved in. She is exhausted. The second mother asks whether she is not entitled to a personal budget for care arrangements. The first mother has never heard of it, but says she will enquire at the social services office, which she has to visit anyway. Several months later, the mother of the twins runs into the Antillean mother in the supermarket. The latter reminds her of the conversation at the clinic and says that she is delighted to have the chance to thank the mother of the twins for her useful tip. She now has a personal budget from which she can pay for support and things are going much better than they were, for both her and her child. It was nothing more than the result of small talk – in a public amenity that happened to be in a location visited by people with a variety of resources.

Source: Blokland (2008)

2.1.5 Proximity of public amenities

The proximity of public amenities is crucial for people with a limited action radius, such as young families, children, older persons and people with poor health. It is also important for people whose freedom of movement is constrained for other reasons or who do not have a car and/or have little money. Public transport is expensive in Dutch cities and not everyone has a good bicycle. For these specific groups it is important for various public amenities to be within reach on foot or with a walker (Klinenberg, 2019; Engbersen, 2016). But it is also important for the numerous self-employed persons and flex workers with no job security to operate in environments where contacts can be made quickly and support services are available close by. Housing is therefore far more than a dwelling, and a neighbourhood is far more than the place you live. It is important that there are public amenities in the immediate vicinity that provide people with access to a job, voluntary work, social networks, leisure, support, a chat and care facilities such as a GP and a physiotherapist, school and child care (Gadet, 2020).

2.1.6 Strength of density and diversity

Instead of public amenities, one sometimes speaks of the socio-physical infrastructure of cities and neighbourhoods; a collection of places that facilitate various forms of social interaction. Research in the United States, based on an impressive database with figures covering a period of more than four decades, has shown that the existing socio-physical infrastructure in neighbourhoods is a far better predictor of active involvement of citizens than the socio-economic status of a neighbourhood or the characteristics of its residents (Specht, 2018). Studies into the resilience of cities during disasters, natural or otherwise, in the United States also show that fewer people experience very serious problems in neighbourhoods with a vibrant social and physical infrastructure. It is not about a specific type of amenity or organisation in a district, but about having a dense social and physical infrastructure of various (small) communities with overlapping networks of citizens (Specht, 2018; Klinenberg, 2019). A diverse range of public amenities contributes to mutual support, the creation of informal local networks, the development of new forms of collective action and the activation of citizens. People can be encouraged to become active by making local public property available (Specht, 2018). A well-functioning public domain can build bridges between 'stronger' and 'weaker' residents and combat loneliness and non-participation (Van der Lans, 2020a; Engbersen, 2016). Various experts therefore call for the creation of a dense infrastructure of public amenities (indoor and outdoor) to facilitate opportunities for people to meet (Klinenberg 2019; Blokland 2008). It is important to consider the conditions that will enable the social infrastructure to grow and flourish in districts and neighbourhoods (Van der Lans, 2020b).

2.2 Public amenities under pressure

The public amenities in cities have been steadily scaled down in the last few decades. Various mechanisms have played a role in this: commercialisation, austerity and consolidation. Civil initiatives are also confronted with this.

2.2.1 Growing influence of commercial interests

Municipalities have a huge interest in creating an urban environment in which the economy can thrive (Milikowski, 2018). This strategy increasingly leads to public amenities being dominated by commercial interests. In today's urban transformations, the public amenities usually lose out (Franke & Veldhuis, 2018). The urban landscape is increasingly dominated by shops, pavement cafés, kiosks and pavilions; places where you can stay only if you consume something. Consequently, the city's everyday function as a place for people to meet and improve themselves is threatened (Rli, 2014).

Various trends illustrate how commercial interests are putting pressure on public amenities. For example, more and more characteristic public buildings in cities such as the courthouse, the city hall and the post office are acquiring a commercial function, for example by being converted into hotels or shopping centres. Schools, churches and even windmills and pumping stations are being transformed into hospitality venues. Alternatively, the buildings are often sold for conversion into homes (Franke

& Veldhuis, 2018). With new-build developments, property developers are not usually inclined to reserve space for people to gather or for public amenities because it will not generate an adequate return (Beuzenberg et al., 2018). Informal 'open space' in the city, green spaces, allotments and/or sports fields are regularly sacrificed to meet the urgent need for building land (Franke & Veldhuis, 2018).

In the last few years, cities have also facilitated more and more festivals and allowed the organisers to hold them in city parks. As a consequence of this 'festivalisation' of the public space, green and cool city parks are increasingly frequently temporarily closed and are only accessible for those who buy a ticket. This marks a transformation of city parks from quiet green public spaces where you can exercise, have a picnic and walk to private, fenced in, busy and noisy festival sites with food trucks.

'It raises the question: what are we making improvements for? The inhabitants of the city or the profit in the annual financial statement?"[25] Various experts call for a paradigm shift to a system in which the collective interest has priority (Milikowski, 2019).

GP practice has to make way for a residential tower

It is scarcely possible for GPs in large cities to find affordable space for their practice any longer. For the Rotterdam GP Thao Nguyen the problem is becoming acute. He will soon have to leave his practice on Blaak because the building is being demolished to be replaced with a residential tower. For the future residents of the apartment complex, it will be very difficult to find a GP. After consulting colleagues, Nguyen reached the conclusion that three additional family doctors are needed in the centre of Rotterdam alone. He doesn't expect they will come: a family doctor receives € 170 to € 180 per square metre per year from the health insurer for the surgery. "If I look for new premises here, it will cost me € 400 euro a year. I can't afford that".

Source: Trouw (2020a)

2.2.2 Austerity and increasing scale

Due to spending cuts on welfare work, numerous public amenities (clubhouses, community centres, branch libraries) have disappeared from neighbourhoods in recent years. The public property that becomes vacant is usually sold to commercial actors. The large return on commercial use is often too tempting for municipalities, housing associations and churches to resist (Franke & Veldhuis, 2018). Consequently, the number of local amenities that people used to be able to visit to deal with various practical matters and where there was automatically contact between groups has declined (Van der Zwaard, 2010). And while in the past housing associations ensured that a facility such as a health centre was built so that tenants would have a general medical practice and a chemist nearby, today, because of the wider range of tasks they have to perform and the cuts in their budget, they devote far less attention to developing this type of social

25 Statement by Marleen Stikker during an interview (Milikowski, 2019).

amenity in districts. It is unclear who is now going to assume that task (Beuzenberg et al., 2018).

Increased regulation and stricter rules, partly as a result of tender procedures, is leading to more specialisation in various public amenities. As a result, these public spaces increasingly focus on specific target groups (such as the elderly or people living in poverty) and there could be less contact between different groups of people.[26]

One factor in the dwindling access to public amenities is the extensive scaling up of activities in some domains. For example, access to education has become a growing problem in cities due to mergers of secondary schools and universities of applied sciences (because of limited public transport services from districts to regional hubs where the educational institutions are clustered, for instance).[27] Meanwhile, many branch libraries have closed down, amenities such as sports fields have moved to the periphery of the city and the number of hospitals has declined.

The deterioration in the socio-physical infrastructure in districts has consequences for the quality of urban life. People with a limited action radius are particularly badly affected, since it is more difficult for older persons and people who require help to continue living at home on their own if the services they need are no longer within walking distance. And children can no longer go to the library or school on their own.

Fewer libraries

Public libraries are important for knowledge transfer and as a space where people can meet and debate issues with one another. But because municipalities have shut off funding in recent years, fewer libraries still provide all of the services they are required to provide by law, the Council for Culture recently found. The actual number of libraries is also steadily declining. Five municipalities have no library at all. They had to close because they no longer received any money from the municipality. The council expects that the decline in the number of libraries will continue in the coming years and that the differences between municipalities in the services the libraries provide will increase.

Source: Trouw (2020b)

With the closure of amenities, the public also loses places they are familiar with. Studies show that this aspect of the scaling down of public amenities is insufficiently recognised (Specht & Van der Zwaard, 2013). In an earlier report, the Rli observed that municipalities have too little regard for the consequences of the disappearance of amenities for the quality of urban life and that those consequences could be more serious than simply the fact that it takes longer to reach them (Rli, 2014).

26 Arnold Reijndorp, personal statement, 18 February 2020.
27 Bas Govers, personal opinion based on research for the Rotterdam municipality's public transport plan for the period until 2040, 20 April 2020.

2.2.3 Civil initiatives from the neighbourhood and district

Numerous civil initiatives and social enterprises have started up in the public domain in recent years. From residents maintaining parks to public collectives campaigning for green streets or the establishment of a reading room in the district. Or people who set up systems for sharing services and goods, who prepare meals for the elderly or who establish workshops for people with few prospects in the labour market. With these civil initiatives, social ambitions return to the public domain (Franke et al., 2015).
But even civil initiatives of this type are regularly hampered by the commercialisation of public life in the city. For example, there have been cases where civil initiatives and social enterprises that have made serious offers, based on sound investment plans and operating budgets, for public property being sold by housing associations and/or municipalities were unable to compete with commercial parties that paid more (NRC, 30 April 2020). Furthermore, a growing number of social enterprises and civil initiatives that rent a building from the municipality or housing association are confronted with substantial rent increases which threaten their survival.

Open space

It goes without saying that cultural initiatives, business start-ups and citizen initiatives need space. Incubators, empty or unused sites and cheap open space are therefore crucial for the dynamic of modern urban life; that is where new initiatives, businesses and social enterprises are born. The problem is that there is less and less space in the city that has not been built on or where building is planned.

2.3 Tensions in the public domain

Encounters in the public domain are not only constructive and positive. It is also a space where social conflicts are fought out (Reijndorp, 2012). The use of public amenities frequently causes tension. A well-designed public indoor or outdoor space must therefore not only provide opportunities for people to meet, but also to avoid each other (Linssen, 2015). In the case of public amenities, some groups are more dominant than others and can determine 'the pecking order'. What does this mean for the accessibility of the city as experienced by others?

2.3.1 Unwritten codes that make a space accessible (or not)

The socio-cultural environment can have a significant impact on how people perceive the accessibility of the city. There are various unwritten codes that determine whether a person does or does not consider a location, a square or a park as part of 'his' domain. Do I feel at home with the atmosphere here? Is this my kind of place? As discussed in chapter 1 (section 1.2.2), this type of code relates to the design and architecture of a location, the clothes people there are wearing, how they behave and the language they use, and the presence or absence of particular public amenities. The presence or absence of particular groups and the associated social interaction also affects whether or not people feel comfortable in a community centre, in a square, in a playground or in a park and like to visit it. "People have a very sharp sense of when they are in a place with their type of people, with a different type of people, with many types of people, or a private place" (Van der Zwaard, 2010).

Young people from the Schilderswijk do not feel 'at home' in the centre of The Hague

Young people from the Schilderswijk district in The Hague visit the city centre, but don´t hang around there. It has no connection with their own world. They are sometimes stopped by the police: 'What are you doing here? Can I see your ID?'. They don´t feel at home in the centre and only go there to buy something specific.

Source: Abarkane, personal statement (March 2020)

Everyone constructs their own city

In the network society, everyone increasingly constructs his or her own city. The city has become an environment that individuals use as an à la carte menu (Seghers, de Vries, 2017). People create a 'personal public domain'. This means that the city is different for everyone and does not offer the same perspectives and accessibility for everyone. More than before, people choose who they interact with. The same applies for the locations of that interaction. Appointments are made with the smartphone. The places where people meet like-minded individuals, their own kind of people, are dispersed throughout the city. Many people live in their own bubbles. There are numerous mono-cultural enclaves, many separate worlds. Specific locations that are taken over by 'urban tribes' that are characterised by common interests, lifestyles and/or background (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). We also call these parochial domains communities, such as the gay community (Reijndorp, 2012).

Naturally, the spaces of 'other groups' also make urban life interesting and appealing, provided the dominant group is not regarded as threatening or disruptive (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). Think of the spectators at the large skate park on the West-Blaak in Rotterdam or the senior citizens sitting on benches around a children's playground (Van der Zwaard, 2010).

2.3.2 Safety

Whether people feel safe at (indoor and outdoor) public amenities also helps to determine the accessibility of the city. When homeless persons, drug addicts, dealers or young troublemakers hang around in community centres and parks or on squares, other residents will feel unsafe and avoid those places. In certain neighbourhoods, children are scared to go out because the streets are dominated by loud-mouthed 'street youth'. Their presence has a negative effect on the social climate on the street and discourages other children (and parents with small children) from using the public spaces in the district. Every city also has streets, squares and parks where people, women and the elderly in particular, feel less safe in the evening and at night. These feelings, valid or not, diminish their access to the city. A frequent problem in this context is the absence of structural attention to proper maintenance of the public outdoor spaces. Run down, dirty and poorly maintained locations are less attractive and accessible and are therefore avoided, which in turn leads to more undesirable situations. To facilitate positive interaction in the public domain, this vicious circle has to be broken.

In areas of the city where criminal and undesirable activities occur, the police and local authorities usually respond with disciplinary and repressive measures, such as prohibiting groups from gathering or consuming alcohol in the area and conducting stop-and-search operations. These repressive measures can create tensions with certain groups. They also curtail access to the city for certain groups, who are no longer able to move freely in the city. Boutellier et al. (2019) advocate for a new district approach. The strategy they suggest features a combination of repressive and social measures, including improvements in the social position of residents of districts where crime that undermines society is prevalent and where social problems are accumulating.

2.3.3 Little room for 'being different'

The question is how urban societies deal with 'being different' and 'acting differently' in the public domain. Is there still room for people who do not match up to the 'middle class standard'? Nowadays, there is no place for some groups in public amenities because they disturb the normal state of affairs or social order, for example people with psychological problems or beer-drinking East Europeans in a city park. How should we deal with these tensions in (indoor and outdoor) public amenities, where the social order has to be enforced to some extent, but there must also be room for the diversity of the people who live in the city?

Tackling nuisance around two benches in Amsterdam

In October 2019, there was uproar over two benches on Hugo de Grootplein in Amsterdam. After complaints about alcoholics hanging around the benches during the day, the city district decided to remove the benches. The measure led to criticism from the city council, which argued that removing the benches was harming the social cohesion in the neighbourhood because senior citizens regularly gathered there for a chat. The decision was reversed and the benches were put back. However, the municipality said it would consider banning the drinking of alcohol near them as an alternative measure.

According to Floor Milikowski, the author of the book *Van wie is de stad; De strijd om Amsterdam*, the example symbolises the changing views on public space and the position of the various users of the city. "Whereas a few decades ago it was perfectly normal for tramps to sleep on benches or in sheltered doorways, that nuisance was part and parcel of the complexity of urban life and that living in the city automatically means sharing space with others, there is now a strong tendency to strictly regulate the urban space".

Source: Milikowski (2019)

Compared with many other cities in the world, rules of public order and formal rules are strictly followed In Dutch cities. People must possess the correct diplomas to perform various types of work and businesses have to comply with numerous rules and requirements. Consequently, various

groups of newcomers, including labour migrants, status holders and the undocumented, can find It difficult to develop their capabilities. There is little room in our cities for informal commercial activities: putting a table out on the street or renting a few square metres of space in a hall to sell your wares, for example. The amount of 'empty space' in the city is also literally shrinking. These are sites that have not yet been 'requisitioned', where initiatives, business start-ups, social enterprises and artists can find room to develop their activities, both formal and informal. Creating more dynamic, space and freedom on the underside of city can give people greater opportunities to participate in urban society.[28]

2.3.4 Exclusionary nature of popular groups

Various experts have observed that the nature of (indoor and outdoor) public amenities is rapidly changing. The places where the well-off feel at home are increasingly dominant. Cities also like to promote their appeal to this target group. However, the dominance of the prosperous individual comes at the expense of the living environment of many of the city's other residents. Parts of the public space that urban planners consider unattractive for prosperous individuals are redesigned. Professor of urban sociology Jan Rath refers in this context to the changing housing market, the many work places for self-employed persons, the coffee bars and the design stores that have replaced traditional offices, local bars and Turkish vegetable shops. Although this is a partially organic process, local authorities consciously foster it. "The city increasingly models itself on the needs of a specific group: scenes, atmospheres and sub-cultures are created for a newly dominant wealthier class." This trend has consequences for groups of residents who did enjoy the less hip locations. "There is less and less room for anyone who is unable to pay € 4 for a cappuccino" (Milikowski, 2018).

A growing number of experts in the field of urban development are very concerned about the exclusivity and 'exclusionary nature' of popular cities and their effect of squeezing out large groups of residents.

2.4 Conclusions

Generally speaking, Dutch cities offer an attractive range of amenities, parks and squares. However, mechanisms such as consolidation, commercialisation and the demand for building locations impair access to the key function 'public amenities'. At the same time, the nature of public amenities is changing.

Changes that are considered separately, together reinforce the negative effect on people's access to the key function of 'public amenities'. The government and local authorities consciously and unconsciously contribute to the erosion of public amenities, for example by selling public property to the highest bidder (so that social entrepreneurs and civil initiatives are outbid for properties), with the large annual increases in rents for public property (which makes it more difficult for social enterprises and civil initiatives to survive), or by refining the mission and restricting the finances of housing associations (which means they no longer develop

28 Maarten Hajer, personal statement, 18 February 2020.

social amenities in districts). Other examples are permitting more outdoor cafés on squares and festivals in city parks (thus steadily curtailing the opportunities for people to exercise, have a picnic and walk for free) and restricting the amount of 'free space' where social initiatives could be developed.

Places where the well-off feel at home are also becoming increasingly dominant in cities. Consequently, the public amenities for many other inhabitants of the city are diminishing in favour of those for their prosperous co-residents. The form and structure of (indoor and outdoor) public amenities, the decisions on whether or not to support particular civil initiatives, the lack of tolerance towards people who are or behave 'differently' and the strict rules, frameworks and solutions that are formulated all suggest that professionals and policymakers are insufficiently aware of the 'exclusionary' mechanisms at work and that they pay too little attention to the diversity of people who live in the city and their varying perspectives, opportunities and needs. The professionals often underestimate the value of public amenities and the importance of their being close by.

If the range of public amenities declines, there are also fewer opportunities for citizens to help one another, to develop mutual trust, to develop new forms of collective action, to exchange knowledge and to learn. In recent years amenities such as schools and sports fields have moved out of neighbourhoods. This affects not only people with a limited action radius, but also the quality and resilience of urban society as a whole. After all, housing is far more than a home and a neighbourhood is far more than the place you live.

To guarantee access to urban society for a very diverse community, a dense infrastructure of properly functioning public amenities that attract people from various backgrounds is needed. Places where people can learn things and do things and make a contribution to their living environment and which they can use free of charge for recreation, exercise and peace and quiet. It is important that these spaces are nearby, especially for people whose movement is restricted.

The factors that are putting pressure on the public amenities and increasingly making the city less accessible for the diverse groups of people who live in it will not simply disappear. Thought will have to be given to meaningful interventions that could be made to improve access to the city, particularly for those groups whose access has been compromised in recent years. This is a challenge that needs to be addressed by the government, science, business and organisations operating in the city, and by citizens themselves.

3 ACCESS TO HOUSING

A home provides more than just shelter. It is also a place to work and to receive others and a base for your activities. It is therefore a 'key' to urban society. Three aspects determine access to this key function of the city, housing: its *availability, affordability* and *suitability*. The availability of housing is problematic, because there is a structural shortage in most urban regions in the Netherlands. The affordability of housing is also a problem for many groups of people, because the prices (both rents and purchase prices) have risen sharply and income uncertainty has increased. Finally, the suitability of housing is also a problem for many people, because there is frequently a mismatch between their personal circumstances and desires and the housing supply. In this chapter, the Rli analyses the problems associated with access to housing in the city, building on numerous advisory reports and studies that have been published on the subject in recent years.

3.1 Availability: tightness on the housing market

By the beginning of 2020, the housing shortage in the Netherlands had risen to 315,000 dwellings, i.e. 4% of the housing stock (Capital Value, 2020). The growth of the housing stock has for some time been unable to keep pace with the rise in the number of households. The Amsterdam region has one of the severest housing shortages in the Netherlands at 7.4%, but the greatest deficit (8%) is in Delft and the Westland (Capital Value, 2020). It is likely to be some time before the shortage recedes to any extent. That will require years of substantial housing production, while construction is actually under pressure due to factors such as high building costs and bottlenecks in the spatial integration of housing.[29]

The dearth of housing might have been mitigated somewhat if houses would have been built after the financial crisis (anticyclical). Housing associations had assumed that role in the past, but the landlord tax (for landlords with at least 50 social housing units) introduced by the government in 2013 forced them to make choices between adequate, affordable and suitable (sustainable and lifetime-compatible) housing. In the last few years, housing associations have invested heavily in improving the sustainability of dwellings,[30] but the number of newly built social housing units has lagged behind the ambitions and the demand.

29 An additional factor is that fewer building permits are being issued, in part because of the Council of State's rulings on PFAS and nitrogen in 2019.

30 The expectation is that 50% of the social housing stock owned by housing associations will have at least energy label B by 2022 (Capital Value 2020).

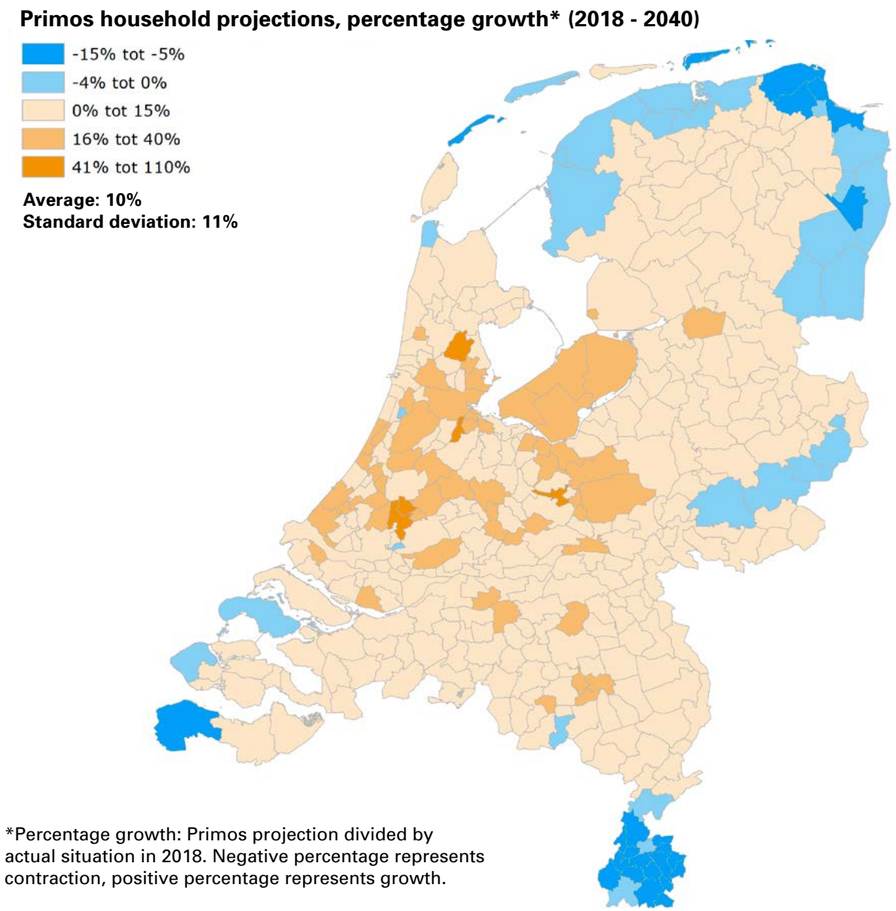
3.1.1 Fewer moves, growing housing demand in cities

The post-war baby boom lasted for roughly 25 years. Many people of this generation now form a family, but in the coming decades this group will increasingly consist of singles, because the children will leave home and one of the partners will eventually die. What these people do when they no longer form a family will be an important factor in the number of existing homes that come on the market through mobility in the housing market. If, for example, they downsize and move to an apartment, their houses will become available for (prospective) young families. Otherwise, it could be a long time before the dwelling comes free in the natural course of events. In that case, the ageing of the population will lead to a growing number of family homes being inhabited not by families, but by singles and couples without children. As a result, the use of existing housing will become less efficient. Recent research has shown that there are already many properties with lofts and rooms standing empty. The living space of households whose members are over the age of 50 is particularly large. The research also shows that the group between the ages of 35 and 50, households that are usually in the family phase, have relatively little living space (Crutzen & Hagen, 2020). Accordingly, for the time being there will continue to be huge demand for family homes, since new families are being formed all the time.

The demand for family homes is not evenly divided in the Netherlands, because the population and the number of households is not growing at the same rate throughout the country. There are regions of contraction and of growth. This means that there are regions in the Netherlands where there is less demand for housing; see figure 3. But particularly in urbanised regions

the number of households, and hence the demand for housing, is expected to continue rising.

Figure 3: Projected growth of the number of households per municipality between 2018 and 2040



*Percentage growth: Primos projection divided by actual situation in 2018. Negative percentage represents contraction, positive percentage represents growth.

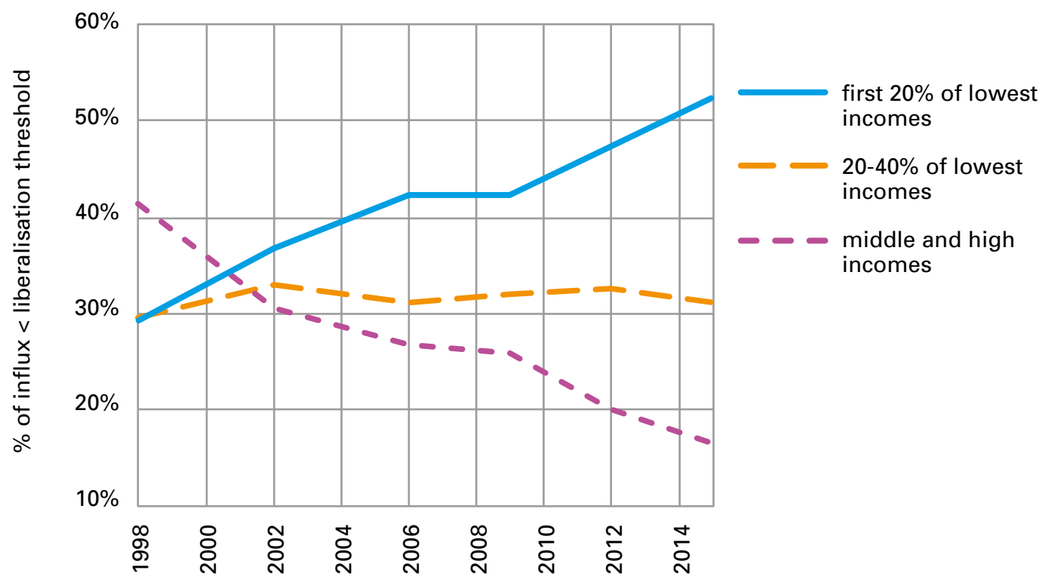
Source: Primos (2019), edited by RIGO

3.1.2 Smaller social rental sector

For the last twenty years, housing policy in the cities has been targeted at making the structure of the social housing sector more efficient. The social housing stock had to be geared to the size of the group that really needed this affordable accommodation. That meant less social housing for a smaller target group. The social housing stock was reduced by selling houses, by raising rents (above the rent liberalisation threshold of € 737.14) or by building fewer houses than were demolished (Leidelmeijer et al., 2018). Because of these developments, the housing association sector has contracted by at least 15% during this period. The contraction has been greatest (20%) with dwellings below the liberalisation threshold (analysis of WBO/WoON data for 1998-2018; Leidelmeijer et al., 2020).

People were also encouraged to move out of these homes. At the end of the last century, people whose income meant that they did not depend on social housing were already being encouraged to buy a home with premiums and mortgage interest relief. In 2010, the income-dependent rent increase was introduced. It was intended to get people with higher incomes to move to properties that were more appropriate to their income. Finally, the number of people eligible for social housing was reduced with the introduction of an income assessment as part of the system of 'appropriate assignment', which was regulated in the new Housing Act in 2015. The result of this series of measures is that since the beginning of this century the social housing stock has shrunk and people with higher incomes have moved out of this segment of the housing market; see figure 4.

Figure 4: Influx into the social housing segment, by income



Source: Leidelmeijer et al. (2018)

The housing policy of the last twenty years has led to housing associations selling off many former social housing units, particularly properties in attractive neighbourhoods. And they continue to sell properties, to generate additional income to compensate for the landlord tax and to invest in their housing stock. As a result of the policy, the number of people with a middle or high income exiting the social housing sector has doubled, while the number of newcomers in the sector (which has remained stable in absolute terms) comprises mainly people with lower incomes (Leidelmeijer et al., 2018).

Resilience of districts with a lot of social housing is under pressure

Many social housing units that were in mixed districts have been sold or are now in the free rental sector. Consequently, social housing is highly concentrated geographically. Because the eligibility criteria for social housing have been raised, vulnerable groups constitute a relatively larger proportion of the influx than formerly. People with psychological problems and mild mental disabilities stand out in that respect – they are not referred to an institution or only stay in one for a shorter period and are expected to receive out-patient help at home (Leidelmeijer et al., 2018).

The social resilience of these districts is under pressure. The residents are on average less well educated and more of them have physical and psychological health problems and consequently cause a greater nuisance for each other (Leidelmeijer et al., 2018). The decline in the quality of life prompts an exodus of less vulnerable people from these districts, which means there are fewer people on whom those who remain behind can rely on for help. The neighbours who can still provide that help are overwhelmed by the demand.

3.1.3 Problems with waiting lists and the allocation of housing

The diminishing stock of social rented housing in the cities has created scarcity in the social rental sector. Although fewer people than formerly qualify for this type of housing, few properties become available because the sitting tenants have practically no alternatives outside the sector. In

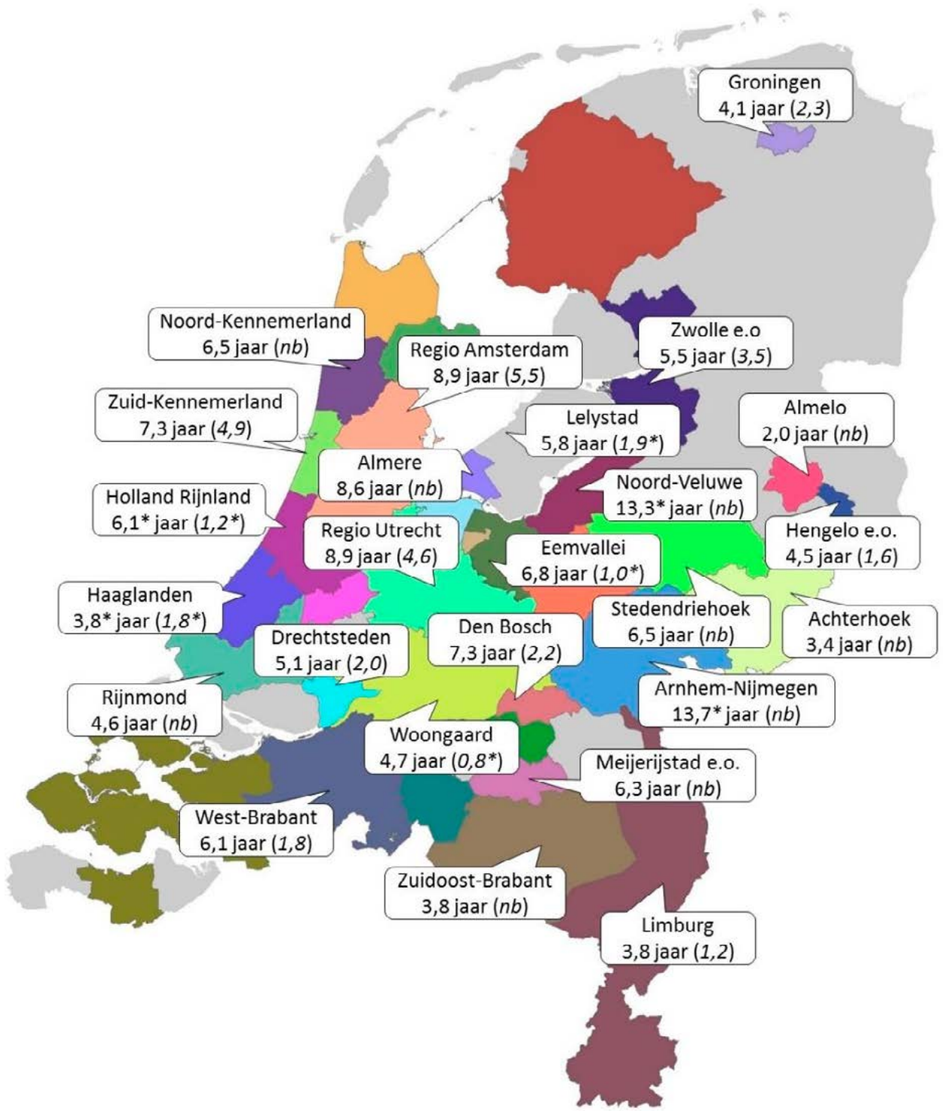
combination with the stalling housing production and the disparities in the pressure on the national housing market, this leads to lengthy waiting lists and problems with the allocation of housing. Who should receive priority in the allocation of the scarce housing that becomes available? And are there any alternatives for those who risk falling between the cracks in the system?

Waiting lists

The shortage of (available) affordable housing is particularly severe in urban areas, as is apparent from the waiting lists for home seekers who qualify for social housing; see figure 5.

The 'registration period' is the length of time that a person has been registered as a home seeker and the 'length of search' is the period between the first response by a home-seeker to an advertisement for rental accommodation and successfully renting a property. The registration period is important because it is the criterion on which social housing is generally allocated. A home seeker must have been registered for a number of years in a particular search area to have any chance of success. The search involves personally applying for dwellings advertised by housing associations. This system gives home-seekers a certain level of control, but also requires personal skills that not everyone possesses. The importance of the registration period ensures that there is little mobility in the social rental sector, because anyone who moves has to start anew in building up a registration period. Accordingly, the registration period is a disincentive for people with a home to move.

Figure 5: Waiting lists in the social rental sector: average registration period and (between brackets) length of search in years (='jaar') (2017)



Source: Kromhout & Wittkämper (2019)

The systems for allocating housing are regional, not national. This means that the registration period that a person has accumulated in one region does not apply in another, which places home seekers who suddenly want to move to another region, for example because they have found a job there, at a disadvantage.

Housing for urgent cases and special target groups
In most urban regions, there are more people looking for a home than there are social housing units available. This can already be a handicap for people who simply want to move, but is an acute problem for people who need a home urgently (after a divorce, for instance). People who have to move for social or medical reasons or because their home is being demolished or renovated can receive a declaration of urgency. In the regular housing allocation model, municipalities give these urgent cases priority (provided they are not too choosy). There are also groups for which housing associations mediate directly outside the allocation system, for example status holders or people who are leaving public shelters or juvenile care facilities.

Altogether, at least 20% (but in some cities as much as 50%) of the available housing is allocated to urgent cases and special target groups. Nevertheless, these groups also experience problems in finding housing (Kromhout & Wittkämper, 2019). Regular home seekers and people who are in dire need of accommodation but have not been declared an urgent case, such as divorced parents or labour migrants, often have to wait for years. A bright spot for these groups is the lottery system that housing associations have adopted, whereby some of the dwellings are allocated regardless of the length of time a person has been registered.

Management and location ties
Municipalities can manage the allocation of housing by incorporating rules in a housing ordinance. Half of the municipalities use the housing ordinance for this purpose and almost always include rules that give priority to home seekers with links to the locality or the region. Most municipalities only have policy rules for the allocation of properties owned by housing associations (Kromhout & Wittkämper, 2019). But there is another way. In The Hague, a 'permit' is required for properties with rents of up to just over € 950 a month[31] (Municipality of The Hague, 2019). The municipality uses this policy to reserve this segment of the housing stock for middle-income tenants.

3.1.4 More pressure on the housing stock in other rental segments

Overall, the total stock of rental housing remained the same during the period when the housing association stock contracted, because there was more private rental accommodation. Meanwhile, however, the rents have risen (see section 3.2 below). Consequently, there has also been a significant decline in the proportion of social rental housing in the private housing stock. Between 2012 and 2018, the proportion of 'free sector'[32]

31 The rent with 185 points under the housing valuation system (woonwaarderingstelsel, WWS).
32 The 'free' sector encompasses properties for which no legal maximum rent is prescribed and there are no government-imposed income criteria.

properties in the private rental sector increased from 32% to 41%; see table 1.

Table 1: Trend in the share of social housing in total rental sector, 2012-2018

	housing associations			private landlords			Total		
	2012	2015	2018	2012	2015	2018	2012	2015	2018
up to quality discount threshold (*kwaliteitskortings-grens*)	20%	14%	14%	20%	20%	16%	20%	15%	15%
up to capping threshold (*aftop-pingsgrens*)	59%	53%	57%	24%	21%	23%	51%	45%	47%
up to liberalisation threshold	16%	24%	20%	25%	22%	21%	18%	23%	20%
average rent (up to € 1,000)	5%	8%	8%	24%	27%	30%	9%	13%	14%
expensive rent (above € 1,000)	1%	1%	1%	8%	10%	11%	2%	3%	4%
total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

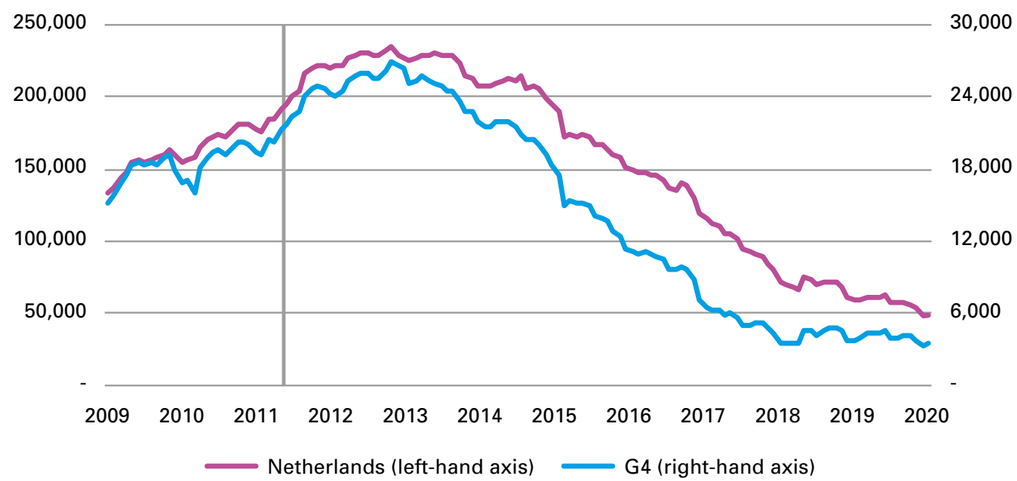
Source: Companen (2019)

On balance, there has been a shift within the rental sector in recent years. There are 120,000 fewer housing association properties and the number of privately let social housing units has also declined by 50,000. Meanwhile, the number of properties in the free rental sector has increased by 70,000 (De Vries, 2019). An example illustrates this trend. In 2015, 18% of the housing stock in Amsterdam was comprised of privately let social housing and 4% of private rental accommodation in the free sector. Two years later, in 2017, the proportion of 'social' housing had declined to 13% and the 'free sector' share had risen to 11% of the total stock of rental housing (Booi et al., 2019).

3.1.5 Scarcely any owner-occupied housing available

Many home seekers in urban areas have been driven towards the owner-occupied sector in the last ten years. This was the result of a combination of factors: population growth, sluggish mobility in the rental sector, an exodus from the social rental segment, the increasing cost of alternatives in the rental sector and tax breaks for owner-occupiers of homes (Damen & Buys, 2020). However, the demand for owner-occupied homes quickly exceeded the supply and the owner-occupied market became overheated. The most visible sign of this overheating is the small number of houses for sale. The number of houses on the market in the last three years was smaller than it has been in a long time; see figure 6.

Figure 6: Supply of properties for sale, 2009-2020



Source: Huizenzoeker (2020), edited by RIGO

The number of transactions is also falling slightly. With so few properties for sale, it could hardly be otherwise. Estate agents refer in this context to a market that has 'dried up'. In the large cities, but also in the rest of the Netherlands, the supply of owner-occupied homes is starting to run out (Damen & Buys, 2020).

The depletion of the supply of owner-occupied homes is partly connected with the phenomenon of 'leave to let' (Damen & Buys, 2020). Some homeowners who move (because they have bought another house or to move in to live with someone else) do not put their house on the market, but keep it and let it. The property is then removed from the stock of owner-occupied housing.

3.2 Affordability: rising prices in rental and owner-occupied sector

The housing shortage in Dutch cities has resulted in high prices for owner-occupied homes and rented properties in the free sector. Rents have also risen in the social housing sector.

3.2.1 Steadily rising rents in the social housing sector

Although dwellings in the social rental housing sector are intended for people on low incomes, the rents in the sector have risen steadily in recent years. The reason for this is the government's amendment of the rules on rent protection in 2015. The value of a property for tax purposes (the WOZ value) now plays a role in the calculation of the maximum rent for rented properties. In this way, the attractiveness of the property's location has become a component of the rent. Because of the ensuing increase in rents for social rental housing accommodation in desirable locations, these properties could be 'liberalised'; in other words, they moved into the free sector where they were no longer accessible for the target group. Even if the rent was just below the liberalisation threshold, the properties were less accessible for people with lower incomes, because the higher the rent for a social rental housing unit, the smaller the proportion of the increased rent

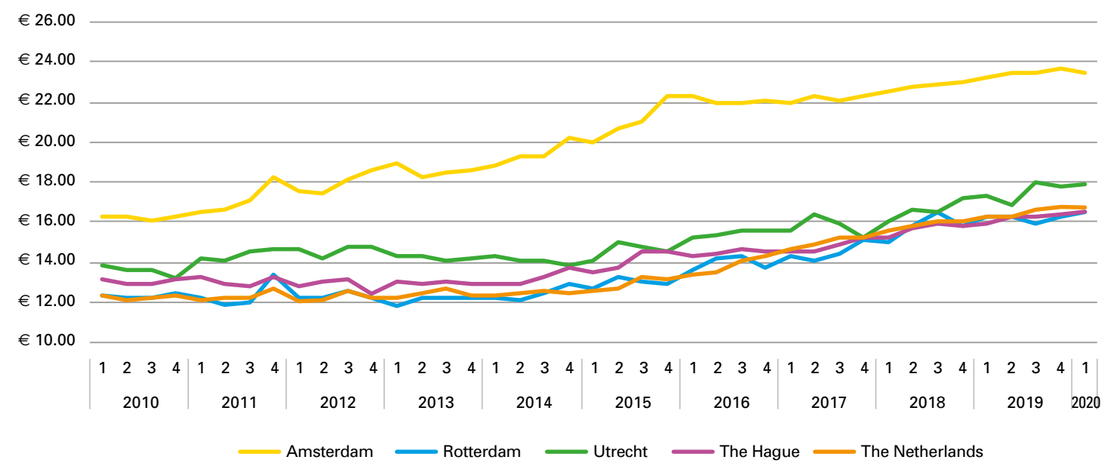
that is compensated with rent allowance.[33] At the same time, the rent for many properties in the social housing sector has risen due to the so-called 'harmonisation', whereby on a change of tenant the new tenant has to pay far more than the previous tenant (Leidelmeijer et al., 2018).

3.2.2 Tenants 'captive' in the free sector because of high rents

The supply in the free rental sector has increased substantially in recent years, not least because of the growing number of private landlords (Hans et al., 2019). The free rental sector is an ideal solution for anyone who needs to find a home quickly. A positive feature of this sector is that, in contrast to the social rental housing sector, there are no waiting lists. Nevertheless, for many home seekers renting privately in the free sector is a necessary evil. There is no alternative. They have only limited access to the social rental housing segment because of the income criteria (the 'appropriate allocation') and there are long waiting lists, while in the owner-occupied sector the amount of initial capital they have to provide for a property is high, and is steadily increasing. Anyone who is compelled to look for a property in the free sector is confronted with very high rents. Particularly in Amsterdam, where rents are frequently € 20 to € 25 per square metre; see figure 7.

33 In June 2020, the government announced that it would cap the effect of the WOZ value on the rents in the regulated segment (up to € 734.14) (Ministerie BZK, 2020a).

Figure 7: Average rents per m², 2010-2020



Source: Pararius (2020), edited by RIGO

The persistent scarcity in the housing market keeps the rents high and thus keeps these home seekers 'captive' in the free rental segment. Captive, because the high rents leave them with too little money to save for a move into the owner-occupied market after a few years.[34] The housing expense ratio of tenants (the proportion of disposable income that is spent on the monthly housing costs) has also increased in recent years; in 2012 tenants spent an average of 33.1% of their income on housing costs, in 2018 the figure was 34.7% (analysis WBO/WoON, data from 1998-2018).

34 Buyers have to provide money of their own due to the stricter rules for securing a mortgage.

Although rent increases for sitting tenants are restricted to a certain extent (Ministerie BZK, 2020b), landlords can determine the rent for new tenants themselves, and in cities that usually means (very) large increases. Statistics point to an average increase of € 105 a month on a change of tenant. In 20% of all cases, the rent increase on a change of tenant is more than 20%, representing an average increase of € 415-670 per month (Blijie et al., 2019).

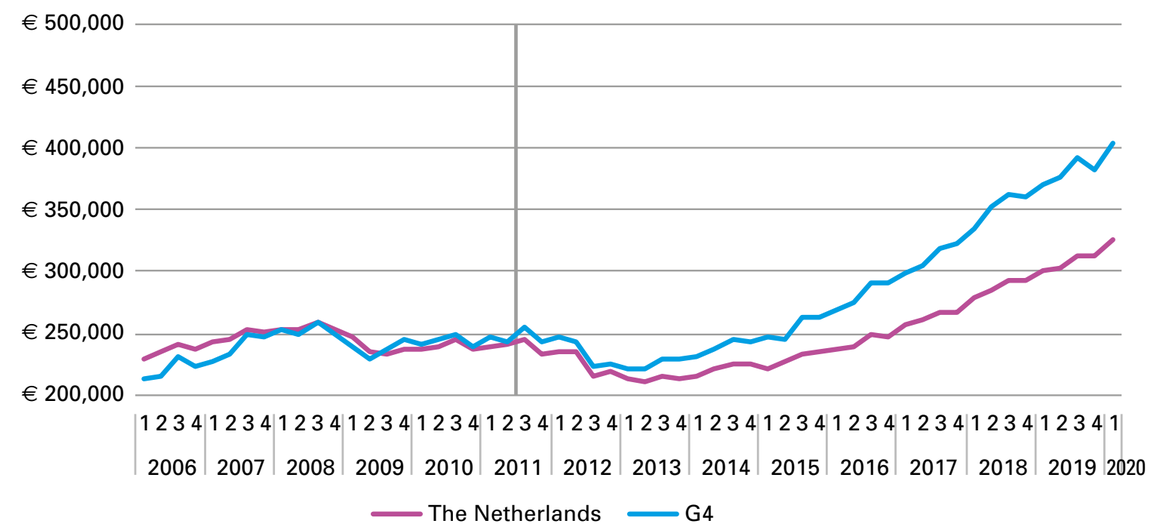
Many tenants in the free sector say they want to leave that sector (WiMRA, 2019). The group that can 'escape' from the free sector have parents who can help financially in the purchase of an apartment, for example. However, they face competition in the overheated market for owner-occupied homes (see also section 3.1.5. and section 3.2.3) from the providers of private rented accommodation who wish to expand their portfolios and bid for the same properties as the first-time buyers – ironically enough with the intention of letting them to the group for whom those properties are too expensive to buy: 'buy to let' (Bosma et al., 2018).

It is therefore impossible for many people to leave the free rental sector, even people who can afford to pay € 1,000 or more a month. People would prefer to buy, but without supply they are unable to. Furthermore, the stricter rules make it particularly hard for self-employed persons and people with a flexible employment contract to secure a mortgage. It therefore seems as though 'high rents' are very popular and that there are shortages in this segment, but households have no access to any alternatives (Hochstenbach et al., 2018).

3.2.3 Owner-occupied homes too expensive for first-time buyers and middle-income groups

As already mentioned, the supply of owner-occupied homes in cities is far from sufficient to meet the demand. This situation has led to sharply higher house prices. Based on the development of prices, the conclusion is that the owner-occupied housing market in the Netherlands has become overheated in the last few years.

Figure 8: Average price of owner-occupied homes sold to individuals, 2006-2020



Source: CBS (Statline), Land Register (monthly statistics for price development), edited by RIGO 2020

Figure 8 shows that the average price of properties sold to individuals has risen steeply since 2015. The increase has been greatest in the large cities – particularly Amsterdam and Utrecht (the average price has doubled in Amsterdam).

The competition between buyers (owner-occupiers) and private 'buy to let' investors has a particularly strong effect in inflating prices (Hochstenbach et al. 2018). Properties are 10% more expensive in districts where 25% of the transactions are concluded by investors (De Vries, 2019). This upward trend only makes the market more interesting for investors (Lennartz et al., 2019), which puts the owner-occupied homes even further out of reach for middle-income groups and first-time buyers (Damen & Buys, 2020). The number of first-time buyers in the housing market reached a low point in the last quarter of 2019, when it was lower than at any time since the housing crisis in 2008. At 30%, the proportion of house buyers in their twenties and thirties (the young households) was the lowest since 2006 (Wisman & De Vries, 2020). For these young households, it is scarcely possible to buy a home without help or by saving for a long time (but by then they are no longer young households).

Housing as an international investment object

In the last few decades, a growing number of properties have become collateral in a chain of financial products. The mortgage has become an international investment product through what is known as securitisation: the onward selling of mortgage loans to other financial institutions. As a result, the money invested in the property, which used to be linked directly to the home and was therefore 'fixed', can 'fluctuate'. Consequently, properties have become an international investment object. This leads to greater influence of international capital flows, including investments by venture capitalists looking for a quick profit, in both the private rental market and the owner-occupied market. These capital flows reinforce the escalation in the price of housing (Bosma et al., 2018). Some of these investors consciously leave properties vacant, treat tenants badly, increase rents and invest less in the maintenance of properties. In 2019, a special rapporteur for the United Nations was highly critical of these international developments, because they put pressure on the right to housing. A number of cities are working internationally to curb these negative developments. In the Netherlands, the value of properties owned by international investors is approximately € 9 billion (FD, 19 June 2020).

3.2.4 New initiatives for affordable homes

Against the background sketched in the preceding sections, it is no surprise that there are initiatives to create new and affordable forms of living in cities, for example through housing cooperatives. The *Rotterdams Woongenootschap* is one such example (see box).

Initiative for affordable housing in Rotterdam

The *Rotterdams Woongemeenschap* was founded in 2017. The cooperative is dedicated to building affordable apartments in the city, which can be operated by the community and are suitable for families and people with the lowest middle-incomes, groups that are currently unable to find suitable housing in the city. A feature of the initiative is that the association has a cooperative structure and the members are joint owners of the properties. They invest capital and receive non-tradable shares. As members, they rent an apartment for a rent that is calculated on the basis of the cost price. The property is therefore a consumer good rather than an investment asset and is therefore permanently protected against speculation.

The model was inspired by the success of the Swiss housing cooperatives (the *Genossenschaften*). In Zurich, the *Genossenschaft* accounts for a third of the total building output in the form of high-quality family homes that are affordable for middle-income groups such as firemen, police officers and flexworkers.

Source: Lengkeek, personal statement (March 2020)

At present, it is difficult for people who launch this type of initiative to actually build properties. To proceed they need three things: (1) pre-financing of the planning costs, (2) access to land in the city and (3) access to long-term financing. In a nutshell, the institutional environment should support the initiatives in order to allow the projects to proceed (Lengkeek, 2019). This happens here and there, on a modest scale. For example, the municipality of Amsterdam has decided to facilitate twenty building projects by housing cooperatives in the city by allocating building locations and creating a fund to provide loans (Het Parool, 14 May 2020).

3.3 Suitability: no suitable housing for various groups

The persistent growth in the number of households wishing to live in the city continues to outpace building production. People with a home are usually disinclined to move because it will not mean an improvement: the available properties are more expensive and often also smaller. The suitability of housing is also a problem for many people, because the available housing often does not match their personal circumstances (think of co-parenting, the location of their work and/or education, caring for relatives or personal impediments).

3.3.1 Older persons: shortage of lifetime-compatible housing

Older people today continue to live independently for longer and their life expectancy is longer than it used to be. There is now a large group of baby boomers, almost at the end of their housing career, who live (alone or as a couple) in a family home that is not suited to a future with physical impairments. Nevertheless, many of these occupants do not move.

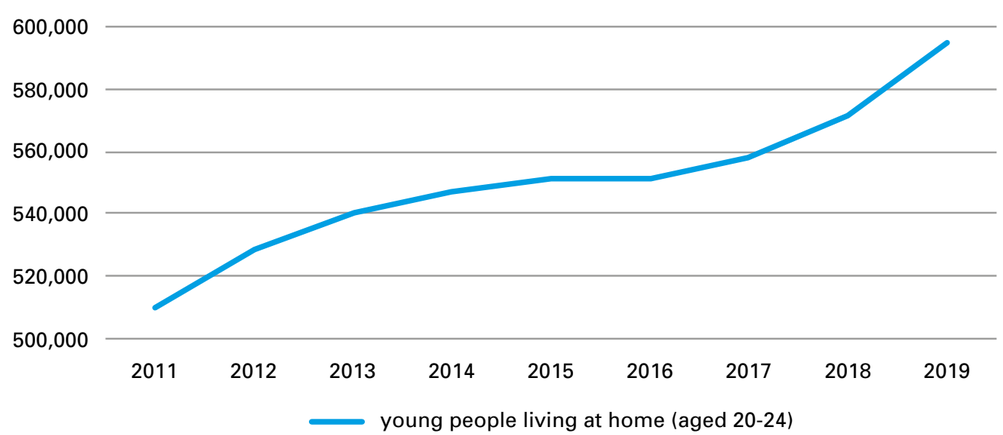
Most of these older persons see no good alternatives and/or are happy where they are. In many cases, they still do not move when modifications to the home become inevitable and the home is therefore no longer suitable. This is because of the shortage of accessible and lifetime-compatible housing. And because moving to where there are such properties might

mean the loss of the local network of friends and family. Moving to a rented apartment almost always means higher living costs and less space. The result of this situation is that many older persons stay far longer than they used to in a house in the regular housing stock, which has caused mobility in the market to stall for some time now (Buys & Hu, 2018).

3.3.2 Middle-income groups, first-time buyers and young households: expensive rent

For middle-income groups and young households (in their twenties and thirties), finding affordable and suitable accommodation in the city is difficult. Young people increasingly choose (or are compelled) to remain at home longer. The number of young people between the ages of 20 and 24 still living at home has been rising since 2011; see figure 9.

Figure 9: Young people living at home in the period 2011-2019



Source: CBS Statline (2020)

In section 3.2.3., it was found that the average age of first-time buyers (the young households) is rising steadily. It seems plausible that this causes them to postpone starting a family and to live in a smaller property until they do. Others choose to continue living with their parents for longer or to share accommodation and the costs with friends or colleagues who are in the same situation. They surrender independence, space and privacy in order to somewhat limit their housing costs.

Many people, even if they give up a lot in terms of space and privacy, still have to pay a high price for accommodation. This is even true for people with a good (but not always stable) income. People who have no problems in any other aspect of their lives (income, work, education, mobility, health, social networks, skills) can nowadays still feel the pressure when it comes to housing.

3.3.3 Varied group of home-seekers with urgent needs

There is a diverse group of home seekers with urgent needs for whom it is difficult to find even temporary housing. They include labour migrants, separated parents and status holders (Kromhout & Wittkämper, 2019). This situation sometimes leads to homelessness. The number of homeless in Dutch cities has risen sharply in recent years (Coumans et al., 2019), also among people who do have a job, the so-called economic homeless. These home seekers also face excesses, such as having to share a small space with many others (sometimes with only a sleeping bag) for a relatively large sum of money. Labour migrants often have to leave their accommodation when the work ends (Van der Velde et al., 2019).

Households that would like to move from an institution to regular housing also experience problems: they can sometimes have to stay in the institution for longer than necessary because there is no suitable housing for them, and may eventually end up on the street. This group includes young people in a juvenile care centre, (former) psychiatric patients, women with children in battered women's shelters and homeless persons who have temporary accommodation in a shelter.

In urban regions, housing for home seekers requiring accommodation urgently is created mainly by private landlords who let rooms in their properties or divide large properties into multiple separate lettable units. This can be a temporary solution, but also means that family homes are lost in the process, and more and more municipalities prohibit the renting of rooms or the splitting up of properties in entire districts (or throughout the city) in order to safeguard the quality of life (Kromhout et al., 2020).

3.4 Conclusions

A home offers more than shelter. It is also a place where you can relax, work and receive others and provides a base for your activities. It is therefore a 'key' to urban society. Access to housing is under pressure for a growing number of households.

Tightness in the housing market and lack of movement

For some time now, the growth of the urban housing stock has failed to keep pace with the increase in the number of households. As a result, there is structural tightness in the urban housing market. The housing shortage has major consequences for the possibilities people have, but does not have an equal impact on everyone. Households that already have a home that meets their wishes experience few problems. It is people who for one reason or another are looking for a home that face problems. Those who have a home are not inclined to move because a change is often not an improvement. This causes mobility in the market to stall and prevents better utilisation of the housing stock. In particular, many households whose members are over the age of 50 live relatively spaciously and cheaply and their alternative options are scarce, often smaller and more expensive and not in their own neighbourhood.

Social rental sector locked down

The social rental sector has shrunk in recent years due to measures taken by the government and housing associations. Figures show that there are far fewer social rental housing units on the market than there are people looking for such a home. The waiting lists are lengthening. Due to the tightening up of income criteria, the social rental housing sector is increasingly becoming the domain of the lowest income groups. It is no longer a segment that people can use temporarily on their way up the housing ladder. The vast majority of the current cohort of tenants of social housing depend permanently on the social rental housing sector. There are few alternatives: the purchase prices and rents in the free sector have risen enormously and there are scarcely any intermediate forms (such as buying a social housing unit). The result is that the social rental housing sector is locked up; here too, mobility has stalled.

Price increases: growing group of households affected

A growing group of households are facing problems. Due to the limited access to the social rental housing sector, many households depend on the free rental sector where there is also scarcity. Private landlords respond to this demand by raising rents. A flight to the owner-occupied sector is also impossible for many of these households, because the tightness of supply means that prices have also exploded there. Furthermore, households that want to buy a property face competition from private landlords who wish to expand their portfolio – ironically enough with the intention of letting the properties to the group of potential buyers who have been outbid by them. At the same time, the requirements for getting a mortgage have become stricter and a growing number of households are faced with income uncertainty, due, among other things, to an increase in the number of flexible employment contracts.

Access has a price

Access to housing has a high price for those who do not yet have a home, who are urgently seeking a home or who have to manoeuvre in the urban housing market for any other reason: they have to pay a lot for less room because the dwellings are small or because they have to be shared with others. The high rents also prevent households from saving, which pushes the possibility of buying a home further out of their reach. Households whose income gives them entitlement to a social housing unit have a different problem: people who are not declared to be urgent cases already have to wait for years, and the waiting lists are lengthening.

Households that have no problems in many other aspects of life, such as work, education, health, transport and social networks, do face tribulations when it comes to the key function of housing. The very weakest in society are also under pressure and become homeless or only find a temporary, expensive or actually unsuitable accommodation with difficulty.

4 ACCESS TO TRANSPORT

A good transport system is crucial for the accessibility of a city. It allows people to participate in society without necessarily having to live in the city centre. Dutch cities have good transport systems: everything is designed to move large numbers of people around as efficiently as possible. Nevertheless, some groups have difficulty reaching their destinations in the city. Nor does everyone have equal access to transport. In this chapter, the Rli observes that this aspect of the government's transport policy needs to be reviewed. Mobility policy contains incorrect assumptions about people's self-reliance and freedom of choice, as well as some blind spots.

4.1 High-quality and efficient transport system

The transport system and means of transport that people can use in Dutch cities are of a high standard. The system is designed to move large groups of people around efficiently, as has been confirmed by various international comparative studies and by the OECD.[35]

35 See, for example, OECD (2014), Territorial Reviews: Netherlands 2014; World Economic Forum (2019), Global competitiveness report. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf; Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (2016), Investment in infrastructure.

Efficiency first

Greater capacity and higher speeds or shorter travelling times have traditionally been major driving forces in the design of the Dutch transport system – also in and around cities. The vast majority of the financial resources are therefore devoted to expanding the capacity of the infrastructure for cars and public transport. At the same time, the most important motivation for the investments is to ease congestion and the ensuing economic damage.

From a spatial perspective, the compact structure of our cities is also a positive factor, especially compared with the situation in many other countries. There are footpaths and cycle paths, the public transport network is reasonable to good and there is an extensive network of roads in, around and between cities. The urban infrastructure allows people to move around in various ways.

However, the places where activities occur within urban regions are far more widespread now than they used to be (Rli, 2016; PBL, 2014). Consequently, people need a dense transport network and to be able to travel when it suits them (Rli, 2018b).

Because people move around mainly within their (urban) region, many journeys are over a short distance. The car and the bicycle are the most popular forms of transport and are capable of meeting the demands of a dense (fast and frequent) network. Public transport is focused mainly on connecting city centres and towns and – within urban regions – connecting districts, neighbourhoods and peripheral municipalities with the heart of the urban region.

4.2 But: access to transport cannot be taken for granted

Although, on average, many people benefit from the transport system in Dutch cities, research has shown that some social groups have difficulty reaching their destinations in the city (such as places of work, education and care) (Bastiaanssen, 2012; Bastiaanssen et al., 2013; Van der Steenhoven & Van der Bijl, 2019; PBL, 2018). People's access to transport in the city is also unevenly divided. Their socio-economic position in the society plays an important role in that. In the literature this phenomenon is denoted by the term 'transport poverty'.[36] It is also referred to as the issue of 'transport justice' (see section 4.3 below).

People who do not have the means of transport they need, or who cannot understand how to use the modes of transport, for example because they are illiterate or 'digitally illiterate', are at serious risk of diminished access to the city.[37] Part of the urban population struggles with the obstacles that the transport system creates for them. They include the elderly, people with physical and cognitive disabilities and people without a car – the latter

36 'Mobility poverty' and 'accessibility poverty' are other terms that are used in this context. Different terms and definitions emphasise a particular aspect: social exclusion (Lucas, 2012), social capital and social assets (Kaufmann et al., 2004) or justice (Martens, 2017b).

37 An estimated 2.5 million people in the Netherlands have difficulty with language, arithmetic and digital skills (source: https://www.ser.nl/nl/Publicaties/samen-werken-aan-taal).

category comprising mainly people with lower incomes and young people (Martens, 2017a). Although attention is devoted to people with physical and cognitive disabilities and people who are illiterate or digitally illiterate, the size of these groups and the problems they face have still not been clearly identified.[38]

4.3 Research into transport justice

4.3.1 Critical scientific contributions

In the scientific literature, the issue of transport justice was raised by K. Lucas (2012), who coined the term 'transport poverty'. Transport poverty arises from a combination of a disadvantaged personal situation and a disadvantaged transport situation.

It is not necessarily a bad thing to be living in a place where there is little public transport. Provided you have the financial resources to order a taxi every day or the family has two cars so that both partners can get to work and/or other activities at the same time, there is no problem. On the other hand, if you have limited financial resources but live in an easily accessible location from where you can easily cycle to all the important amenities and to your workplace, accessibility is again not necessarily a problem. It only becomes a serious problem for people who have insufficient financial resources and poor accessibility by public transport or bicycle (see, for example, Van der Bijl & Van der Steenhoven, 2019; PBL, 2018; Bastiaanssen et al., 2020; Wever, 2018; Verdus, 2018; Jeekel, 2019).

In the Netherlands, K. Martens has written a lot on the subject of transport justice in recent years. He has found that there are no well-developed principles of justice in relation to traffic and transport, as there are for other sectors. He advocates a fundamental rethink of the principles on which mobility policy is and should be based (Trouw, 2017; Martens, 2017a). In his view, the demand for justice has never been properly addressed and there has been no fundamental consideration of the role of the government in the area of mobility. Martens feels that the government should focus its attention more on accessibility for everyone:

> "The question in the mobility domain should be whether everyone is properly served by the mobility system as a whole. That some have access to all modalities, while others can only use part of the system is not a problem, just as long as everyone has access to a broad and rich set of destinations, just as long as everyone has sufficient accessibility within a reasonable budget in terms of time, cost and effort. The modality is the means, the focus should be on the goal of the mobility policy" (Martens, 2020).

The goal of a just mobility policy must be to create a mobility system that enables everyone to participate in (urban) society, according to Martens.

38 See, for example, A. Durand et al. (2019).

4.3.2 Practical research

In 2018 and 2019, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) carried out joint studies into transport poverty. The two knowledge institutes are developing a set of indicators to measure and analyse transport poverty (Kampert et al., 2019). The Research Institute for Mobility Policy (KIM) concluded in a survey that it was impossible to reach any conclusions about the scale of mobility poverty in the Netherlands on the basis of existing research. The available quantitative data do not provide sufficient information. However, it found that segments of the population could be identified as having poor transport facilities, which curtailed their opportunities to participate in activities and to reach the locations of activities and increased their risk of social exclusion (Jorritsma et al., 2018).

Bastiaanssen (2012) carried out a qualitative study (on the basis of interviews) into transport poverty in Rotterdam-Zuid and observed that unskilled job seekers and employees in the health-care sector struggled with the transport available to them.

Jobs must be given up because of transport problems

The male respondents in the practical study by Bastiaanssen (2012) said that they regularly turned down jobs because public transport is concentrated in the centre of the city, while the work locations relevant for them are actually on the periphery of the city or well outside it, often close to motorways. Many of the female respondents working in the health-care sector said they had difficulty keeping their jobs because public transport started too late on Sundays and public holidays and they were unable to get to work on time.

Source: Bastiaanssen (2012)

Van der Steenhoven & Van der Bijl (2019) also conducted qualitative research in vulnerable districts in the four major cities. They estimated that around 20% of the population of the Afrikaanderwijk/Bloemhof district of Rotterdam genuinely suffered from transport poverty. The percentage was similar for the Transvaal/Schilderswijk district of The Hague. The situation in Slotervaart (Amsterdam) and Overvecht (Utrecht) was slightly better.

Using a new method, Bastiaanssen et al. (2020) carried out quantitative research into the accessibility of different types of work location in and around urban areas in the Netherlands. They concluded that people without a car in the lower income groups and/or with a low level of education (but also young people, who usually also do not have a car) would have a greater chance of finding work if work locations were more accessible by public transport and bicycle.

4.4 Assumptions in transport policy that hamper access

Why does everyone in the cities not have equal access to transport? The Rli finds that the government's investment decisions on transport and infrastructure and the analytical models on which they are based contain

a number of assumptions that largely determine how the transport system is organised. This section discusses the assumptions that impair access to transport for certain groups.

4.4.1 'Social benefits of transport system can be determined generically'

The government gears decisions on transport and infrastructure to the generation of maximum social return. On the basis of cost-benefit analyses and market and capacity analyses, the government calculates likely developments and the relative scenarios of various alternatives.[39] This method helps to arrive at the maximum social advantage, but the drawback is that it does not consider the allocation of the benefits and takes no account of the fact that some groups cannot bear the estimated costs. All road and public transport networks and bicycle paths are designed to move as many people as possible as quickly and as cheaply as possible. But people with lower incomes, whose workplace is usually located on the periphery of the city or even far outside it, are less well served.

With this focus on collective social benefits and efficiency, the Netherlands has one of the best infrastructure networks and transport systems in the world, but some groups of people who badly need good connections, the people with lower incomes, are often disadvantaged (Van der Bijl & Van der Steenhoven, 2019). These people are themselves disadvantaged, but so are the cities they are part of, since they also function better if teachers, cleaners, taxi drivers or health workers can travel around at an acceptable cost (in terms of time, money and effort).

39 This is done with scientifically proven models, or the social cost-benefit analysis (SCBA) and the National Market and Capacity Analysis (NMCA). The Rli advisory reports 'Better and different mobility' (2018; chapters 4 and 5 of part II) and 'Faster and closer', (2016, Chapter 3.3 of part II) clearly explain government policy and the Multi-year Programme for Infrastructure, Spatial Planning and Transport (MIRT), the policy of local authorities and the financial planning. They also discuss the use of models in the decision-making process.

4.4.2 'Potential traveller is digitally skilled'

The transport sector is highly technology-driven. Public transport and systems for sharing cars, bicycles or scooters frequently use digital applications. The assumption is that the potential traveller possesses sufficient digital skills to understand the application and management processes, but also the planning and payment processes. Examples are the public transport pass (which to a large extent has to be requested and managed online), route planners (that can only be consulted on websites or the apps of public transport providers) and sharing systems such as the rental bicycles available at train stations, Greenwheels, etcetera (which also use a digital system for collecting and returning the vehicle and for making payments). All of these transport services are based on the assumption that travellers can register online, understand what they are or are not agreeing to and are then capable of using the application. People who do not possess these skills are therefore being sold short.

4.4.3 'Passengers have alternatives to manage costs'

Another assumption in transport policy is that travellers can manage the costs themselves, for example by taking the car on particular routes. But for many people the car is not a viable alternative to public transport, simply because they cannot afford to buy and insure a car or have no driving licence. The relative costs of this lack of choice are rising steadily. The CBS

has found that public transport fares in July 2019 were almost 30% higher than in 2009. In the same period, the cost of driving your own car rose by an average of 25%, while the prices of consumer goods and services rose on average by 18%. Meanwhile, public transport fares in the Netherlands are among the highest in Europe (CBS, 2019). Since the accessibility of jobs by car is a factor of four higher than with public transport (Bastiaanssen et al., 2020), this is a serious issue.

4.4.4 'Pricing of public transport per kilometre is fair'

The transport system is based on the assumption that it is fair to charge passengers per kilometre for the use of public transport. At first glance, charging fares per kilometre does indeed seem reasonable. However, it ignores the fact that many people do not freely choose where they live: people who live in social rental housing in a remote suburb, far away from their work, have very little choice (Van der Bijl & Van der Steenhoven, 2019; Van der Veen, 2017). Furthermore, the public transport routes are not the most efficient for many people, who therefore have to travel further and have to pay more.

4.4.5 'Everyone in the Netherlands can cycle'

The design of the transport system in Dutch cities is based on the assumption that the bicycle is a good alternative on many routes. But that is not true for many people. Studies in large cities have shown that fewer people than is assumed are able to cycle. 'A quarter of Amsterdam children cannot cycle', was the headline in the Parool newspaper in April 2020. There are similar warnings from Rotterdam. There are various factors in this: finance (not everyone has the money to buy, secure, maintain and insure a bicycle), culture (not everyone has grown up with bicycles and cycling has a low status in some cultures), perception (some people regard cycling as physically and socially unsafe) and ignorance (some people do not know how to have their bicycle repaired and maintained, what the cycling culture in cities is, what cycling networks there are, etc.).

Cycling cannot be taken for granted: how problems accumulate

"Many children do not have a bicycle. We once asked the children to bring their bicycle to school. Only a third of the children brought one. But you couldn't cycle on many of the bikes. They had a flat tire or the brakes were damaged. Parents regard cycling as unimportant and children are not encouraged to learn to cycle. This is partly explained by the cultural background of the parents. But there are also native Dutch people who cycle little if at all, while cycling is one of the cheapest ways of getting around.

Promoting cycling is not as easy as it seems. A person first has to have a bicycle, and perhaps have it serviced. This can easily cost € 50 in the bicycle repair shop. That is of course not an option for families with a low income. You then have to maintain the bicycle, make sure it is not stolen, be able and willing to cycle in the busy traffic and know the rules of the road. In many post-war neighbourhoods the cycling infrastructure is not optimal".

Source: Van der Steenhoven, personal statement (9 March 2020)

4.5 Blind spots and mechanisms in the transport system

In this section the Rli discusses blind spots in the transport system and then explains the mechanisms they lead to.

4.5.1 Blind spots

There are various blind spots in the current transport system: relevant information and insights that the government is not sufficiently aware of and that are consequently not considered in determining how transport is organised in cities.

People with 'transport poverty' are not included in the statistics

People who remain at home because they have no access to transport or for whom arranging transport is difficult are not represented in existing studies. They do not complete questionnaires and are therefore not included in the national survey *Onderweg in Nederland*, for example. They literally and figuratively don't count (Martens, 2020). Even if they do complete the questionnaire, there is a problem. The study looks mainly at people's transport patterns, but not the latent demand. Nor does it cover the transport problems that people actually experience or, for example, the question of whether people have turned down jobs or missed medical appointments because of transport problems. Since 2006, the National Survey in the United Kingdom has included these questions and the consequences of the transport problems of unemployed persons, the elderly and other groups are becoming increasingly clear (Bastiaanssen et al., 2020)

Insufficient knowledge about accessibility of work location for unskilled workers

Little is known about where certain groups of people depart from to reach their destination (work, activities).[40] Consequently, there is no clear picture of the journeys made by unskilled people from their residence to their place of work. It is therefore also not known what aspects of the current transport system might not properly facilitate these people in their commuting. It is important here to differentiate according to the type of work. Schiphol, for example, provides work for skilled and unskilled workers. Employment for unskilled workers is concentrated in Schiphol-Oost and in the distribution functions around it, so not in the arrival and departure halls that are easy to reach with public transport. Better insight into the accessibility of work locations for unskilled workers is important for the individuals concerned, but also to make better use of the society's entire labour potential (Idenburg and Weijnen, 2018). After all, even in periods of economic growth the unemployment rate among unskilled workers remains high.

Transport system takes insufficient account of people's opportunities

The right to education, care and a home is embedded in Dutch law. However, these rights cannot be properly exercised without transport. Children must be able to reach their school, people requiring health care must be able to get to the hospital, and living somewhere implies the possibility of travelling to and from home. The design of a transport system

40 Source: J. Ritsema van Eck and J. Bastiaanssen, oral communications, 9 March 2020.

must therefore take account not only of capacity and reducing travelling time, but also the extent to which the system enables people to reach their destinations. Policy should be based far more on the opportunities people have (Martens, 2020).

Hidden effects of poor access to transport remain unseen
Access to and affordability of infrastructural services help to determine people's opportunities. That applies not only for work locations that need to be reached, but also for access to education for young people, access to further training for older persons and access to health care and to cultural facilities. Virtual alternatives bring the risk of loneliness, particularly for people who are physically unable to move (Idenburg & Weijnen, 2018).

4.5.2 Mechanisms

The incorrect assumptions and blind spots discussed above result in a number of undesirable mechanisms in the government's decision-making on the transport system. The Rli discusses those mechanisms in this section.

'Traditional' values dominant in decision-making
The organisation of the decision-making process with respect to infrastructure is not neutral in terms of the content: certain themes and some social groups receive greater priority than others. Past values – what we found important in an earlier time – are, as it were, embedded in the policy choices, both substantive (in research and models) and procedural (who will be involved, who can exert influence). These rules and models determine both the definition of the problems and the types of solution that are suggested. At this point in time, a value such as efficiency is deeply embedded in government policy. And the value 'sustainability' is becoming increasingly important. But a value like 'access to transport to reach relevant locations' carries little or no weight in policy (Snellen & Tennekens, 2018). A first step is to identify the consequences for different groups. An initial attempt was recently made with *Kansrijk Mobiliteitsbeleid* (CPB and PBL, 2020).

Users of facilities 'will get there one way or the other'
When housing, schools, hospitals, sport facilities and other amenities are being planned, it is often implicitly assumed that employees and the users of these facilities 'will get there one way or the other'. It is then left to transport policy to sort it out. The Rli observes that the concentration and consolidation of various urban amenities is leading to a decline in the accessibility of those amenities for various groups. This problem can be mitigated with a smart, compact spatial planning process, in which the transport of the users has been considered in advance. Fortunately, the Rli has also found many good examples and observes that this point is also addressed in the NOVI[41] and was also recently made by the CPB and PBL (2020).

41 In the letter of 23 April 2020, on the theme of 'Building on an Urban Network in the Netherlands' the government indicated with a number of choices that access by public transport, by bicycle and by foot would have to be taken into account in the building or construction of new homes and work locations (Ministerie BZK, 2020c).

Car is dominant in the design of cities and traffic facilities

In the last few decades, the design of many cities and amenities has focused on the car. This was reflected in policies to promote the smooth movement of road traffic and abundant parking. Many investments ensuing from government policy also helped to enhance the circulation of road traffic in urban areas, because motorways form an important part of the road capacity around cities (Jeekel, 2011; 2019; Van der Steenhoven & Van der Bijl, 2019; Verkade & Te Brömmelstroet, 2020). Some municipalities are now devoting more attention to other forms of transport, but the dominance of the car will continue to have an effect for decades and policymakers need to be aware of that.

We reason as though we are looking through the windscreen of a car

"The IJtunnel is 'closed' for the Dam to Dam race. Closed? To whom? To motorists. But hasn't the tunnel actually just been opened for 50,000 runners? This is logic from the perspective of the car. Another example: we talk about vulnerable traffic participants, but they are only vulnerable because of fast and heavy traffic. So why don't we call these fast and heavy vehicles dangerous traffic participants? We constantly reason as though we are looking through the windscreen of a car."

Source: Verkade & Te Brömmelstroet (2020)

Focus in public transport planning 'thick lines'

Public transport planning is based on 'thick' lines between A and B with distinct hubs: routes that transport a lot of people. A major drawback of this approach is that journeys within a city that do not follow these lines are relatively costly in terms of time, money and effort. A radial model, based on connected circles of public transport services around an urban centre (as in London and Paris) would greatly reduce these constraints.

Little attention to connections of transport with other domains

The transport community is a fairly closed world, one in which financial and economic logic weighs heavily. No consideration is given to problems in other domains, for which transport could provide an answer. This means that opportunities are missed, also with respect to people's access to the city. The Rli takes the view that it would be useful to treat the fact that it is more difficult for people with a low income to find suitable jobs not only as a poverty issue or a labour market issue, but also a transport issue. And since cycling and walking provide exercise and cause less pollution, some of the investments in them could be consolidated with investments in health and environmental policy. There is still also too little attention devoted to relationships between access to care, education or sport and transport issues.

4.6 Possible solutions

Greater focus on proximity to improve accessibility of work and activities

There are three policy levers that can be pulled to improve the transport position of particular groups in the city. First, the place where people, in particular vulnerable groups, live in relation to their work, school and other amenities. Second, the locations of relevant activities, such as education

and work. Third, the transport options for connecting those locations.[42] The Rli finds that the current mobility policy does not focus sufficiently on the proximity of amenities and activities. In an earlier advisory report, the Rli called for far more emphasis on proximity as an instrument to improve accessibility to work and activities instead of investment in the transport system (Rli, 2016).

Create a dense public transport network

In addition to the proximity of amenities, the density of the transport network should also receive closer attention. In that context, the government could look at the international development of the so-called 15-minute city, where all amenities must be reachable by foot, by bicycle or by public transport within 15 minutes. The concept is already being fleshed out in cities such as Paris, Melbourne and Adelaide. Transport experts say that to implement the concept, special attention will have to be devoted to criss-cross movements through the city.

Critically review the consequences of upscaling in spatial plans

There is too little discussion in the Netherlands about the consequences of the consolidation of amenities for certain groups of people – particularly people without a car. The current practice in spatial planning reinforces the car-oriented society. For example, almost every spatial plan includes requirements for parking, but many contain no criteria for accessibility with public transport. At best, they consider bus stops and infrastructure, but not the quality of service the public transport system should provide. People without a car are therefore left to their own devices; they have to sort it out for themselves (Martens, 2020). The Rli has recently observed this neglect of accessibility for non-motorists in the relocation and merger of hospitals in the regions of Amsterdam (merger of AMC and UMC, bankruptcy of Slotervaart Hospital), Lelystad (bankruptcy) and The Hague (merger to form the Haaglanden Medical Centre).

Take account of service in rural areas in awarding concessions

Most concessions awarded to public transport companies in urban regions do not focus on services for more rural areas around the city. A positive exception is the public transport service in the Groningen-Assen region, where attention has been devoted to the relationship between the bus and regional train networks and the possibilities of improving the quality of service with shared transport (such as scooters, cars and bicycles). 'Transport hubs' are being developed where passengers can switch between different forms and modes of public transport (Kerssies, 2020). The concept of transport hubs is now also central to Gelderland's mobility policy (Arnhemse Koerier, 2020).

Consider socio-cultural aspects of cycling

Cycling does not come naturally to certain population groups in the cities. However, it is a solution for many problems relating to transport. A useful strategy might therefore be to focus on the socio-cultural aspects in the policy on cycling in the coming 15 to 20 years. Improving peoples' skills and offering them extra alternatives for mobility. Areas in which policy could

42 J. Bastiaanssen, oral communication, 9 March 2020.

be targeted at these socio-cultural aspects include setting up programmes to teach primary school children to cycle properly, consideration of the availability of good bicycles, and affordable maintenance. These could easily be addressed in combination with health policy.

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APPENDICES

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Céline Janssen, Delft University of Technology
Paulus Jansen, Woonbond
Mechtild Linssen, Independent consultant
Frans Schilder, Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency
Jeroen van der Velden, Platform 31

Expert meeting on the theme of public space, Tuesday 18 February 2020
Hans Boutelier, Verwey-Jonker Institute
Maarten Hajer, University of Utrecht
Arnold Reijndorp, University of Amsterdam
Maurice Specht, Researcher, publicist and initiator
Irma Stroet, Municipality of Zaanstad
Lotte Vermeij, Netherlands Institute for Social Policy
Patricia Wijntuin, Utrecht University of Applied Sciences
Joke van der Zwaard, Researcher, publicist and initiator

Expert meeting on the theme of transport justice, Monday 9 March 2020
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OVERVIEW OF PUBLICATIONS

2020
Stop Land Subsidence in Peat Meadow Areas: The 'Green Heart' Area as an Example. [Stop bodemdaling in veenweidegebieden: het groene hart als voorbeeld]. September 2020 (Rli 2020/05)

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Changing Tracks: Towards Better International Passenger Transport by Train. ['Verzet de wissel: naar beter internationaal reizigersvervoer per trein']. July 2020 (Rli 2020/03)

Soils for Sustainability. ['De Bodem bereikt?!']. June 2020 (Rli 2020/02)

A Grip on Hazardous Substances. ['Greep op gevaarlijke stoffen']. February 2020 (Rli 2020/01)

2019
Towards a Sustainable Economy: The Governance of Transitions. ['Naar een duurzame economie: overheidssturing op transities']. November 2019 (Rli 2019/05).

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2018

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National Environment and Planning Strategy: Litmus Test for the New Environmental and Planning Policy [‘Nationale omgevingsvisie: lakmoesproef voor de Omgevingswet’]. November 2018 (Rli 2018/06)

Accelerating Housing Production, While Maintaining Quality [‘Versnellen woningbouwproductie, met behoud van kwaliteit’]. June 2018 (Rli 2018/05)

Better and Different Mobility: Investing in Mobility for the Future ‘[Van B naar Anders: investeren in mobiliteit voor de toekomst’]. May 2018 (Rli 2018/04)

The Healthy City: Delivering Health Through Environmental and Planning Policy [‘De stad als gezonde habitat: gezondheidswinst door omgevingsbeleid’]. April 2018 (Rli 2018/03)

Sustainable and Healthy: Working Together Towards a Sustainable Food System [‘Duurzaam en gezond: samen naar een houdbaar voedselsysteem’]. March 2018 (Rli 2018/02)

Electricity Provision in the Face of Ongoing Digitalisation [‘Stroomvoorziening onder digitale spanning’]. February 2018 (Rli 2018/01)

2017

A Broad View of Heritage: The Interactions Between Heritage and Transitions in the Physical Environment [‘Brede blik op erfgoed: over de wisselwerking tussen erfgoed en transities in de leefomgeving’]. December 2017 (Rli 2017/03)

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2016

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2015

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Room for the Regions in European Policy [‘Ruimte voor de regio in Europees beleid’]. September 2015 (Rli 2015/05)

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2014

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