



REFLECTION

Quid pro quo

Exploring the effect of increased rent regulation and taxation on the investment behaviour of private landlords in the Dutch housing market and the position of private tenants

A thesis submitted to Delft University of Technology for the degree of Master of Science in Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences

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Colophon

Quid pro quo: Exploring the effect of the Affordable Rent Bill and Tax Plan 2023 on the investment behaviour of private landlords in the Dutch housing market and the position of private tenants.

MSc graduation thesis

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Chapter 11

Reflection

11.1 Introduction

The aim of this reflection is to assess the journey of my master's thesis, focusing on the 'how' and 'why' of the chosen approach, evaluating the effectiveness of the methods employed and explore the relationship between research and design. Furthermore, it examines the academic and societal value of the project and the potential for transferring results.

11.2 Relevance

As stated in the introduction of this research, I am convinced this research is significant for the Department of Management in the Built Environment (MBE) as it aligns with MBE's mission to create sustainable built environments that prioritise end-users and stakeholders. Specifically, the Graduation Lab Housing Inequality focuses on the mounting housing disparities observed worldwide, encompassing divisions between gentrified and underdeveloped neighbourhoods, landlords and tenants, and generations. The research theme delves into the root causes and consequences of housing inequality while seeking potential solutions.

This thesis narrows its focus to the inequality between private landlords and tenants, examining recently proposed rent regulation and taxation measures. It addresses a critical gap in existing knowledge with a societal impact, given the housing market's pervasive issues of availability, affordability, and housing quality. The primary beneficiaries are mid-market segment stakeholders, including middle-income households, as it aims to enhance their access to this segment. However, the implications of this research extend to other housing market submarkets and stakeholders, as the dynamics of the Dutch housing market are interconnected.

11.3 Research and design relationship

In essence, my initial intention and interest were to investigate the implications of the Affordable Rent Bill on the positions of private landlords and their tenants in the mid-market segment. However, as I designed my research, I discovered the intricate interplay between this

policy and other external factors, such as the introduction of Tax Plan 2023.

Considering the predominant concerns and objections raised by private landlords regarding the Affordable Rent Bill and Tax Plan 2023, I decided to focus on both of these influences and structured my research accordingly. Hoewel dit al een realistischer beeld geeft dan enkel te focussen op de Affordable Rent Bill zijn er echter ook tal van andere maatregelen ingevoerd de afgelopen jaren die het gedrag van particuliere kunnen beïnvloeden.

Considering the pronounced emphasis on the Affordable Rent Bill, I have pondered whether it might have been more prudent to concentrate exclusively on the Affordable Rent Bill. This approach would involve building upon the broader context in which it was introduced, encompassing elements such as the Tax Plan 2023, while placing heightened emphasis on pertinent aspects like escalating rental rates, the Good Landlord Act, sustainability requirements, and more. Evaluating the data received from the online consultation, where the combination of the Affordable Rent Bill and Tax Plan 2023 was frequently explicitly mentioned, I am inclined to believe that the current decision has proven to be a judicious one.

Upon reflection, I realise that I initially had a limited understanding of how to carry out research. While I could outline that I would conduct surveys, analyse existing databases, and use interviews, I had never created or analysed a survey, making it challenging to gauge the practical possibilities and limitations. Even after creating a research plan in P2, I still struggled with concrete details, particularly when formulating survey questions. Trying to align the research methods with specific sub-questions made it increasingly difficult to maintain focus on the main objective of this study.

11.4 Approach and Methodology

Lacking a definitive reference for conducting research, I encountered difficulties in crafting a research paper that would give rise to a thoroughly substantiated research approach. Ultimately, I opted for a wholly inductive logic, a choice I thought aligned well with making predictions and employing Grounded Theory. However, it deviates somewhat from the conventional approach, particularly in my omission of explicit hypotheses, a realisation that only came to me when I reached the stage of drawing conclusions, especially within the qualitative part of my research.

Besides, my limited experience with research likely contributed to numerous adjustments during the research process. I realised that the Housing Survey did not provide insights into the characteristics of private landlords; instead, it focused on their tenants, which I intended to investigate through a survey. Additionally, we recently concluded that an expert panel was not the ideal approach for assessing the effects on tenants.

Yet, some aspects unfolded differently from what I had initially planned. Strikingly, my emphasis on the perspective of private landlords, coupled with the timeliness of the topic, brought a significant advantage. When I approached Vastgoed Belang to explore the possibility of conducting a survey to assess the impacts of the Affordable Rent Bill and Tax Plan 2023 on the behaviour of private landlords, as per my research design, it turned out that Vastgoed Belang had already distributed a questionnaire among its members for this purpose.

In hindsight, I can acknowledge that Vastgoed Belang's survey was not flawless. For instance, it contained issues with categories that did not exclude each other (e.g., one to ten, ten to twenty, etc.), and it had a certain bias since the survey aimed to demonstrate that the policy measures were not favourable for all parties involved. However, I wonder if, had I conducted my own survey, I would have addressed these shortcomings in advance.

Nevertheless, I believe that using Vastgoed Belang's survey was beneficial for this research, not just for these reasons, but also because I couldn't have reached such a large sample size if I had conducted the survey myself. However, I did question whether using someone else's survey made the research easier and potentially led to a less comprehensive outcome. Simultaneously, managing the sample's size and the questionnaire's structure posed their own set of challenges. Moreover, given my earlier admission of my lack of expertise in conducting research, the analysis of results was a significant hurdle. I had never used SPSS or conducted statistical analysis, and this added complexity to the research process.

11.5 Feedback and learning

The lack of practical research experience made it challenging, I believe, to incorporate feedback into both the design and research process because it was difficult for me (and perhaps still is) to grasp the concrete implications of certain feedback for the research's execution.

Furthermore, I found that planning became exceptionally tricky when dealing with something I had never done before, especially when tasks took twice as long as anticipated. The initially intended schedule already posed challenges since I had to interrupt the research midway to retake a course.

I notice that during the execution of the qualitative research, especially during the analysis, I became too focused on this aspect and lost sight of the bigger picture. Additionally, I found this topic challenging, which made it more time-consuming and hindered my progress. I realise that I find the recent process, where I also look at qualitative analyses, much more enjoyable.

11.6 Transferability of results

Additionally, the transferability of the research results is a significant aspect to the reflection of this study. While the primary focus has been on understanding the consequences of increased rent regulation and taxation on the behaviour of private landlords and the positions of mid-market segment tenants in the Netherlands, the insights generated may hold relevance far beyond these boundaries.

The complexity of the housing market and the interplay between various policies and market dynamics suggest that the findings of this research can offer valuable insights and lessons for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders worldwide. The Affordable Rent Bill and Tax Plan 2023 are not isolated measures; they exist within a broader context of housing regulations, market conditions, and socioeconomic factors. As such, understanding their impact on one segment of the market in the Netherlands can shed light on similar dynamics in other regions and contexts.

On a more personal note, the research journey has been marked by challenges and a steep learning curve, particularly concerning the practicalities of conducting research. However, these challenges have also presented opportunities for growth and development, and the experience gained through this process will hopefully be transferable to future research endeavours.

11.7 Personal goals

As outlined in the introduction of this thesis, I established specific personal study goals for this research: (1) advance my proficiency in conducting scientific research, encompassing the practical application of research methods such as quantitative data analysis using SPSS and qualitative data analysis using Atlas.ti and

Grounded Theory, with the aim of fostering a deeper understanding and heightened confidence in my ability to engage in scientific research; (2) acquire a more profound comprehension of the dynamics and significance of the Dutch privately owned rental market; and (3) derive enjoyment from the entire research process.

I believe I can confidently say that I have achieved all three of these goals. I have learned a great deal about conducting research, particularly in its practical execution. Before this, I had limited experience with SPSS, never had to apply statistics, and had a relatively modest grasp of the theory. Additionally, I had not systematically conducted qualitative research, and data analysis had never really been a strong suit. As a result, I was thrown into the deep end after P2, but through the process, with its ups and downs, I ultimately learned a great deal. And that's not even considering the wealth of knowledge I gained about the private rental sector and private landlords. Whether I enjoyed the process, I'm not sure, but at the very least, I currently look back on it with a positive perspective and am very pleased with all that I have learned.

If I were to administer a questionnaire in the future, I now know how to do it. When it comes to analysing the results, I not only understand how to recode them for meaningful analysis but also how to conduct the analysis itself, etc. In retrospect, I wish I had possessed this knowledge before embarking on this research. However, I believe that my personal learning curve involves learning by doing, and those journeys are rarely without its share of challenges and setbacks.