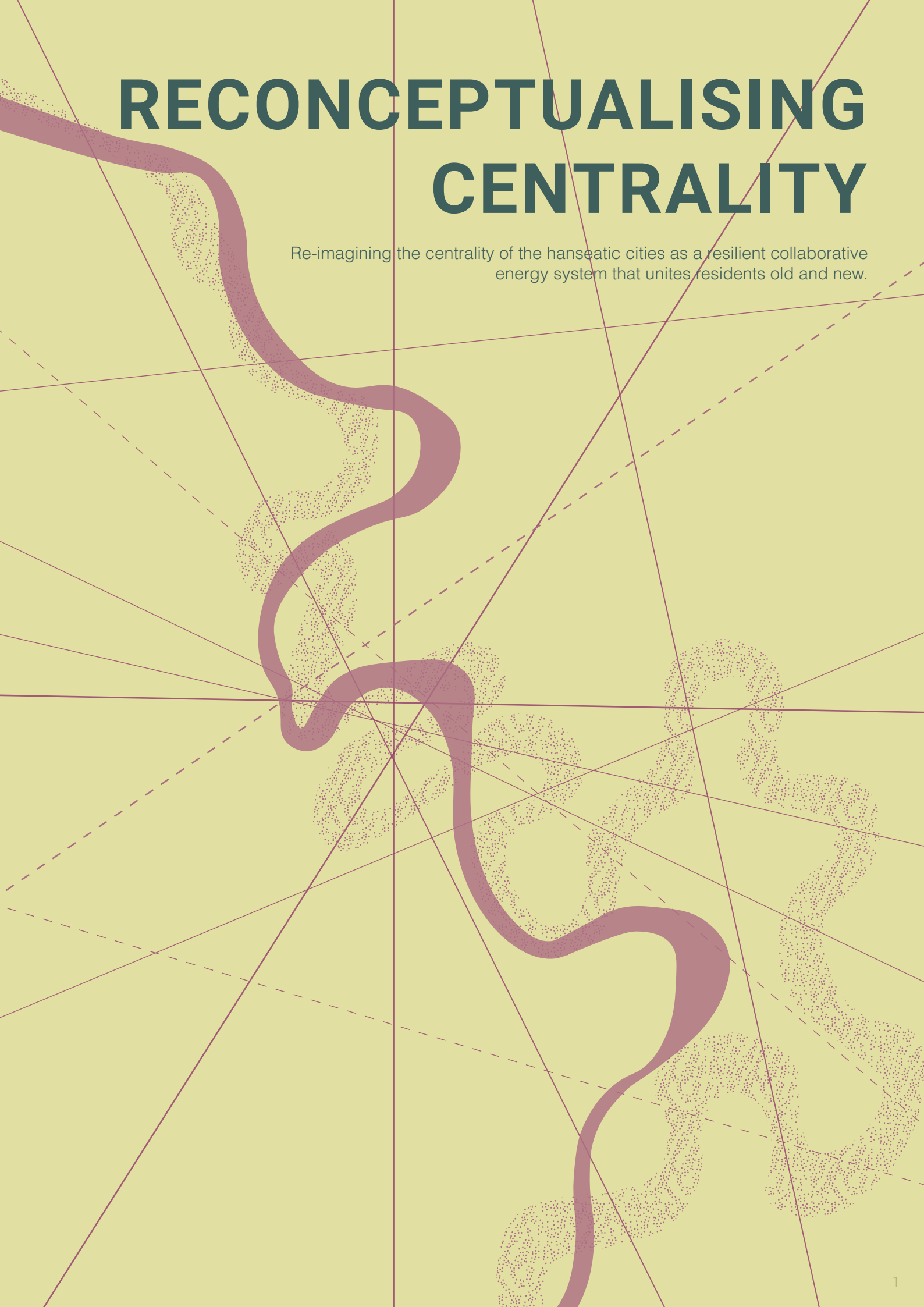
RECONCEPTUALISING CENTRALITY

Re-imagining the centrality of the hanseatic cities as a resilient collaborative energy system that unites residents old and new.



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AR2UO88 Research and Design Methodology for Urbanism

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Delft, April 2026

Chinouk van den Berg | Kati Brandl | Jochem de Kok | Sanika Pai

Team Inspiration and Reason for Project

From the onset of our project, we found ourselves questioning the obvious choice. The Randstad, with its global recognition and dense urban fabric, seemed too familiar, too popular…

We were curious about what lay beyond. This curiosity led us down several paths, from open landscapes of Friesland to the planned urbanity of Lelystad. Each option carried its own intrigue, yet none fully captured our collective imagination.

That is when the Hanseatic cities entered the conversation, sparked by a team member hailing from Zutphen. Through their perspective, the region began to take on a new depth and relevance. What started as one option among many quickly became a shared direction. As we explore further, we realised the potential these cities hold not only to rethink regional spatial strategies but also to approach the main theme this quarter, “energy transition,” in fundamentally different ways from larger metropolitan contexts.

Figure 1: Historic shopping street in Zwolle during fieldwork observation

Abstract

The future of the Dutch Hanseatic cities—Kampen, Zwolle, Deventer, Zutphen, and Doesburg—is examined in the context of the Netherlands' evolving spatial dynamics. Historically organised around trade and collective identity along the IJssel River, these cities are now increasingly regarded as peripheral nodes relative to the expanding Randstad. Concurrently, migration flows driven by housing shortages introduce new populations, generating tensions among growth, liveability, and local identity.

This research investigates how regional spatial design can accommodate demographic and economic growth while simultaneously strengthening local identity and community cohesion in the Hanseatic region.

A research-by-design methodology, grounded in the energy transition and community-oriented planning, is adopted. The approach combines spatial analysis, mapping, stakeholder interviews, and iterative design processes such as envisioning, positioning, and strategic development. Through phases of analysis, synthesis, and design, the project integrates territorial understanding with stakeholder perspectives, with particular attention to newcomers, ageing residents, young adults, and governance actors.

The resulting vision, The New Hanseatic Pride, proposes a spatial framework that repositions the region as an interconnected and regenerative system. Key interventions include developing eco-villages as transitional zones, integrating energy landscapes with agricultural systems, preserving and retrofitting historic urban cores, and establishing a new central economic hub. The IJssel River is reactivated as both a logistical and ecological spine, and the Veluwe landscape is extended to enhance ecological continuity.

This project demonstrates that regional design can transcend the centre–periphery paradigm by leveraging landscape, heritage, and community as active drivers of transformation. It contributes to spatial planning practice by proposing an integrated approach to energy transition, identity formation, and inclusive regional development.

Key words: Centrality, Regional design, Energy transition, Spatial justice, Dutch Hanseatic cities, Community integration, Regional identity

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INTRODUCTION

In the 15th century, the Hanseatic cities were at the heart of Europe's most powerful trade network. Their river-based connections positioned them as vital nodes of exchange, culture, and collective identity. Over time, however, its relativity and purpose faded. Today, the focus has consolidated in the Randstad, where economic and infrastructural gravity dominates in the national context, and the Hanseatic cities have transitioned from global connectors to the 'periphery.' Today, they are attracting new residents, but are they also rebuilding a sense of community? Looking forward, a new shift emerges on the horizon - driven not by trade, not by economy, but by the urgency of 'energy transition.'

Honouring the theme of the course, we question, "Could this transition redefine centrality once again, fostering new forms of collective identity across the region?"

This report engages the question through a layered exploration across scales and themes, grounded in a holistic framework of ecological systems, urban development, social dynamics, and sustainable energy infrastructure. By analysing, engaging, testing, and envisioning an alternative future, it seeks to understand how these interrelated forces can birth a cohesive and resilient regional vision.

"Centrality, a story constantly being rewritten.
The centre is never still - it drifts, dissolves, and re-emerges over time.
It is an illusion - constantly shifting with power, infrastructure, and time.
What it means to be "central" is not fixed, but shaped by the forces of each era.
Centrality does not belong to a place; it belongs to a moment."

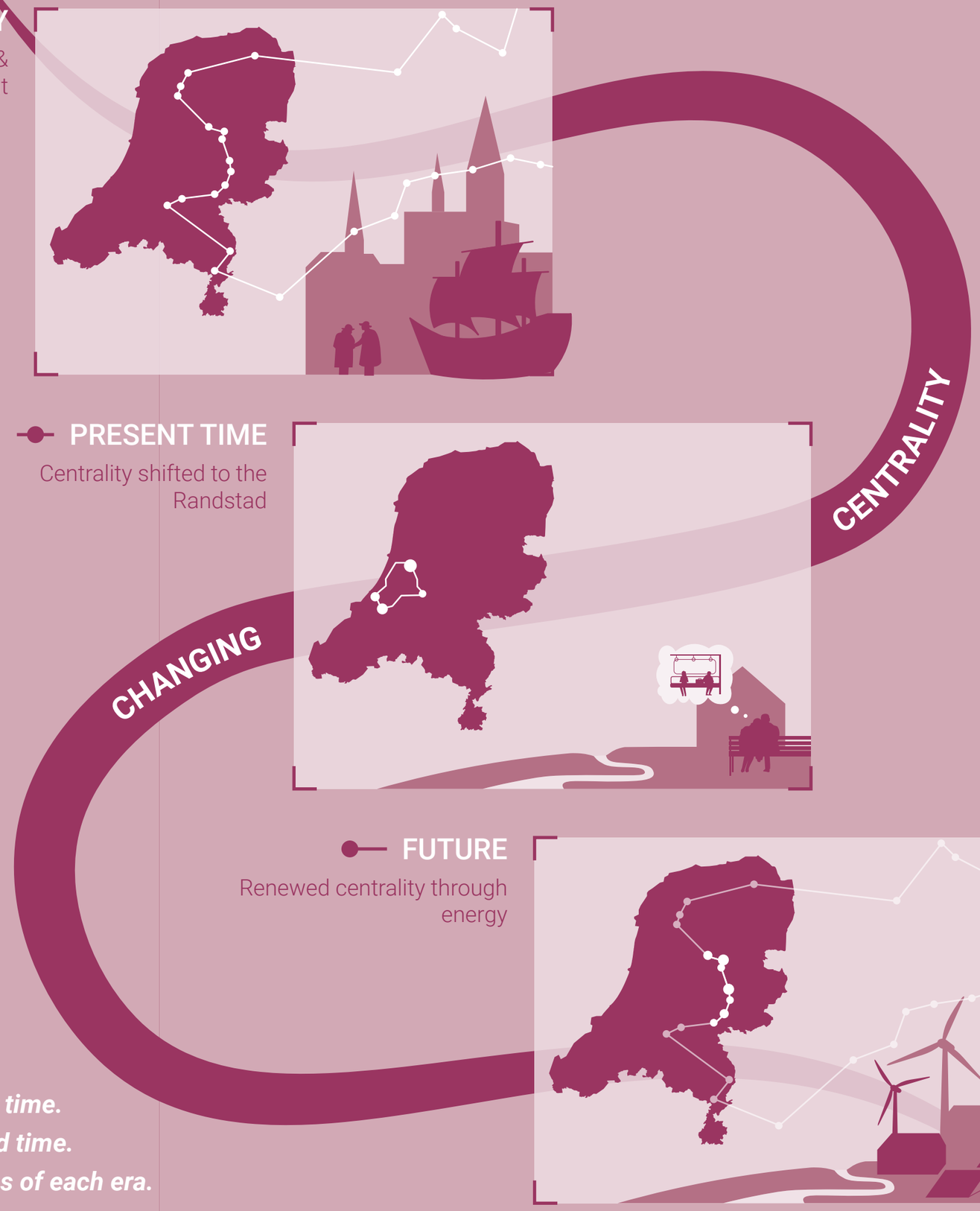


Figure 2: Illustration of transitioning focal points over the years and reason for shifting centrality

Changing Patterns of Centrality in the Netherlands

A convergence of spatial and social transitions is currently restructuring the Netherlands and shaping the Dutch Hanseatic cities. Until recently, economic and institutional centrality was concentrated in the Randstad, placing regions such as the Hanseatic cities in a more peripheral role. Now, however, this spatial hierarchy increasingly shifts as more residents outmigrate from the Randstad to peripheral regions (CBS, 2025).

This transformation is closely linked to the decentralisation of daily life patterns. As hybrid work and increased mobility reduce dependence on central urban areas, traditional forms of centrality weaken. Consequently, regions such as the Hanseatic cities along the IJssel are receiving renewed attention, as seen in the map on the top right, despite not always having the capacity to accommodate these changes.

At a national scale, this reflects a broader redistribution of population (De Jong et al., 2016). Households move toward regions offering greater affordability, space, and perceived quality of life (Bailey & Biggs, 2012). Although this shift offers potential for regional growth, it also leads to uncoordinated development and affects spatial cohesion (OECD, 2014).

Building on these demographic shifts, tangible social effects are emerging. Long-term residents face increasing housing pressure, demographic changes, and shifts in local identity as newcomers introduce varying needs and expectations (Franz et al., 2025). Simultaneously, young adults remain limited in their access to higher education, which often leads to outmigration and contributes to an ageing population structure (Das & Nollet, 2026).

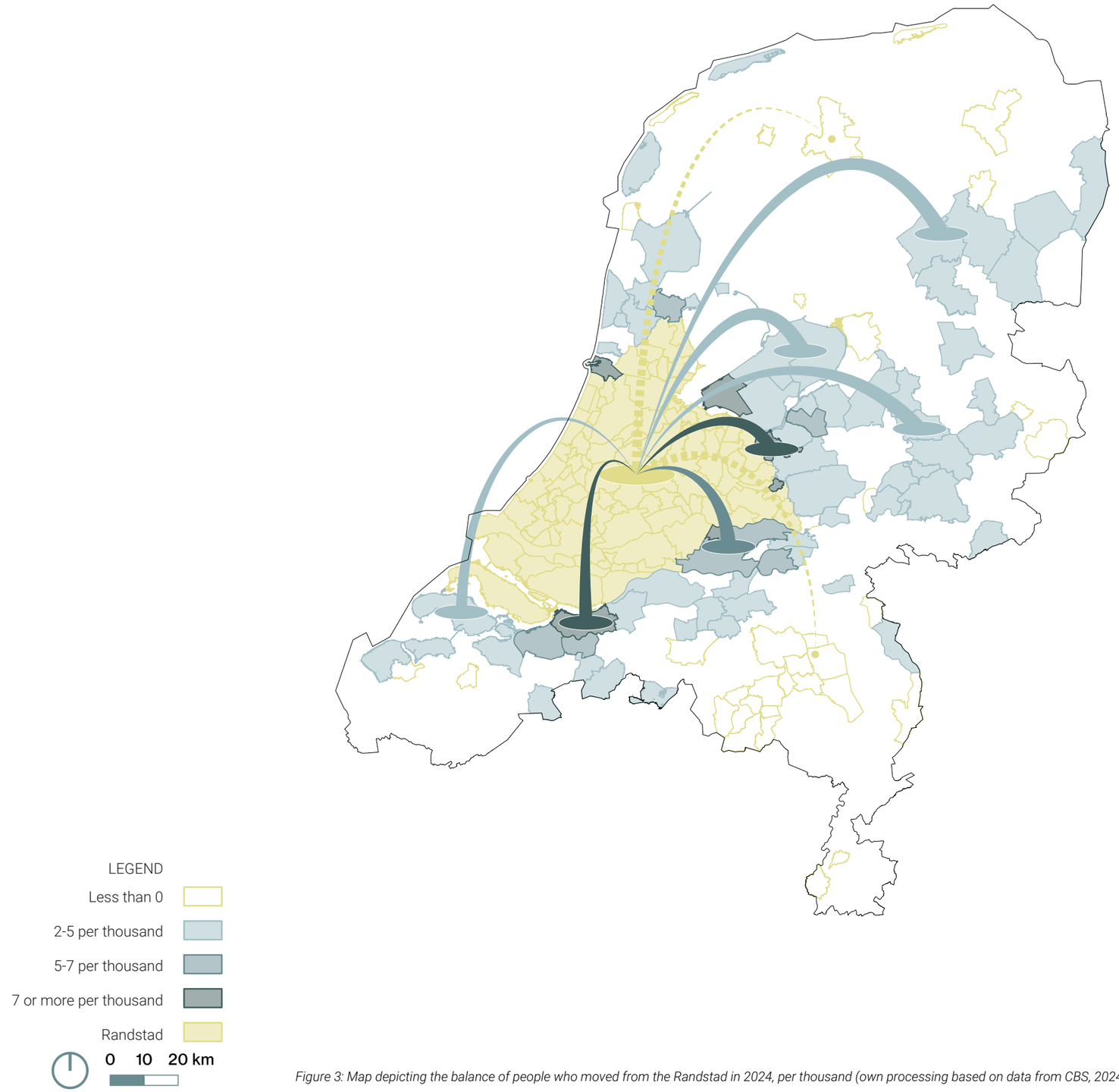


Figure 3: Map depicting the balance of people who moved from the Randstad in 2024, per thousand (own processing based on data from CBS, 2024).

New emerging centralities on a national scale

The map on the bottom right situates the Hanseatic cities within a national context, showing how the project's principles apply to other Dutch regions facing demographic change, fragmentation, and outmigration. While the Hanseatic cities have a strong historical identity, other regions may lack one. This creates an opportunity to build new regional identities through spatial, ecological, and economic collaboration.

The map highlights the importance of regional cooperation. Larger territorial networks, not isolated municipalities, enable more effective responses to current challenges (Hettne et al., z.d.). This approach is crucial for the energy transition, which requires coordination across scales and benefits from complementary regional relationships (Coenen et al., 2021).

Centrality in this project means developing strong regional cores that support diverse activities and lifestyles instead of uniformity. By integrating spatial and economic functions, regions become more attractive and resilient (Noaime et al., 2025b). These regions are part of an interconnected national system where each contributes unique strengths.

The proposed regions illustrate different forms of centrality:

- Veenmarken – ecological and energy-based systems
- RandVeluwe – connectivity and integration
- Delta verbonden – water and logistics
- Hanseatic cities – socio-spatial identity and heritage

Together, these regions demonstrate how centrality can be reimagined as a collaborative and distributed concept across the Netherlands.

Disclaimer: The suggested regions and names are conceptual and developed as part of this research.

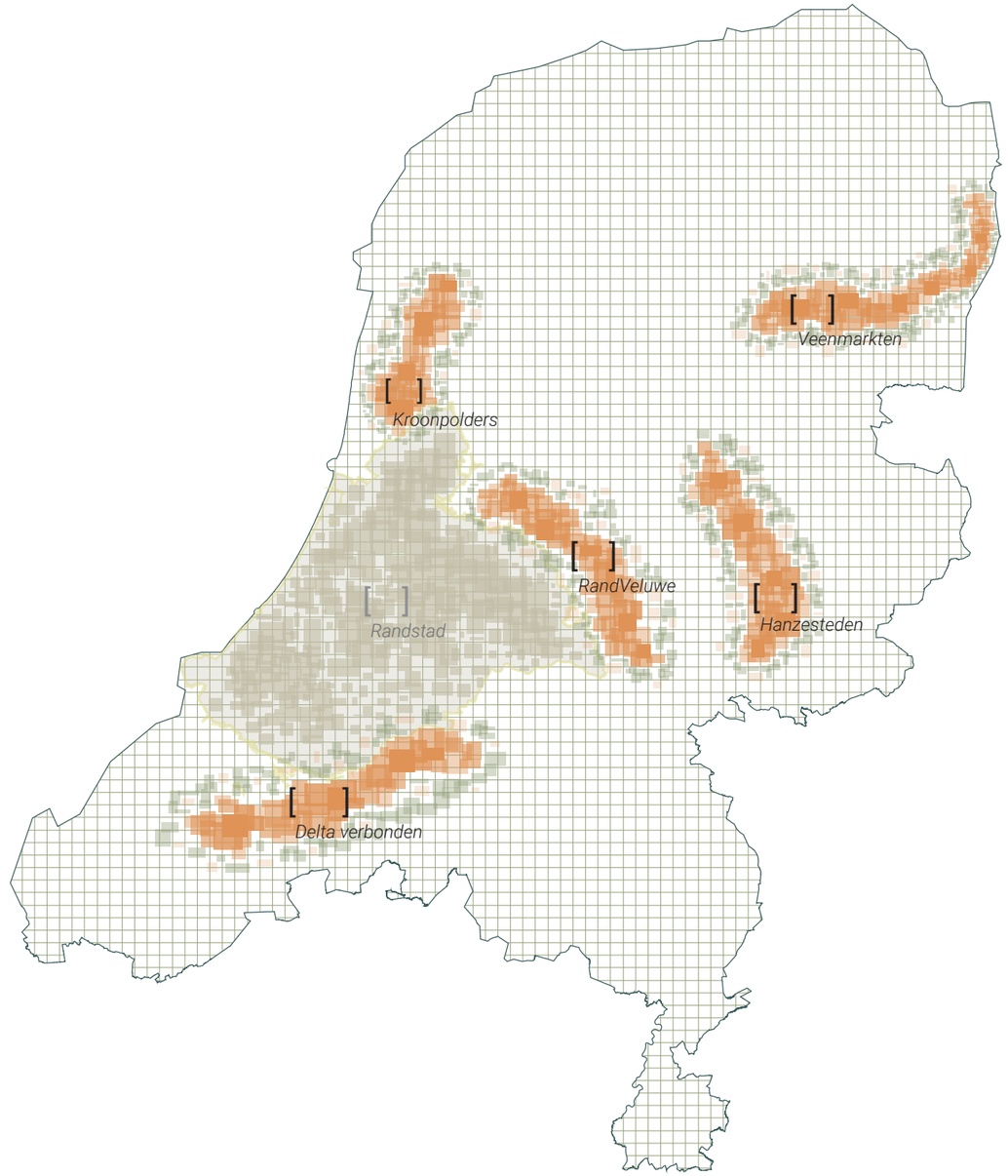


Figure 4: Positioning the Hanseatic cities within a network of emerging centralities

Urgencies that call for attention in the Dutch Hanseatic cities

The regional brain drain

Across the Hanseatic cities - such as Kampen, Zwolle, Deventer, Zutphen and Doesburg - the demographic imbalance is becoming increasingly visible. While the Dutch population continues to grow overall, it is unevenly distributed and largely concentrated in the Randstad and other major urban centres (Statistics Netherlands (CBS), 2023).

Proven by data - the recorded mean percentage of youth (aged 15 - 25 years) in the Dutch Hanseatic cities is 11.5%, while that of senior citizens (aged 65+) is 23.5%. (Allcharts.info, 2026) What does this mean for the region? The entirety of the region is experiencing a growing demographic imbalance characterised by the outmigration of younger, locally rooted populations and the simultaneous ageing of those who remain.

In urban and regional planning terms, this reflects the urgency of regional brain drain and contributes to broader shrinking regional dynamics. Brain drain refers to the permanent emigration or outflow of skilled and talented individuals from their home regions to seek better opportunities and prospects elsewhere. Addressing this phenomenon is crucial - it carries negative impacts for the sending regions, lowering their economic growth, and causing regional differences to widen within the country. (European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, 2023)

The result of this can be observed in the reduced labour force, diminishing innovation potential and questioning the long-term resilience of the socio-economic base. As services, cultural life and economic opportunities decline, a self-reinforcing cycle emerges, further accelerating outmigration and deepening demographic vulnerability. The present condition demands spatial strategies that re-attract and retain younger populations while re-balancing demographic structures (OECD, 2020).

The energy transition urgency

In parallel, like the rest of the world, the Hanseatic cities face a pressing energy transition challenge. Much of the region is shaped by carbon lock-in, in which dependence on fossil fuels is reinforced by existing infrastructure, the historic building stock, and mobility systems. Older housing, specifically the ones protected due to heritage value, is frequently energy-inefficient, while lower-density sprawling settlement patterns contribute to car dependency. Such conditions create strong path dependencies that slow the adoption of renewable energy and sustainable urban systems (Koutstaal et al., 2019). The European Environment Agency emphasises that climate transitions must be “just”, ensuring that all populations have fair access to affordable and sustainable energy (European Environment Agency (EEA), 2024).

In the Hanseatic cities, this involves addressing disparities between urban and rural areas and ensuring that vulnerable households are not disproportionately affected by rising costs or infrastructural shifts. At the same time, the region’s smaller scale and strong community networks present a unique opportunity to implement locally embedded solutions, such as decentralised energy systems and community-led initiatives. Without such targeted interventions, however, the region risks falling prey to poor environmental performance and long-term resilience. The energy transition is not only a necessity but also an urgent call for spatial innovation.

Figure 5: Collage visualising the urgency and consequences of demographic imbalance

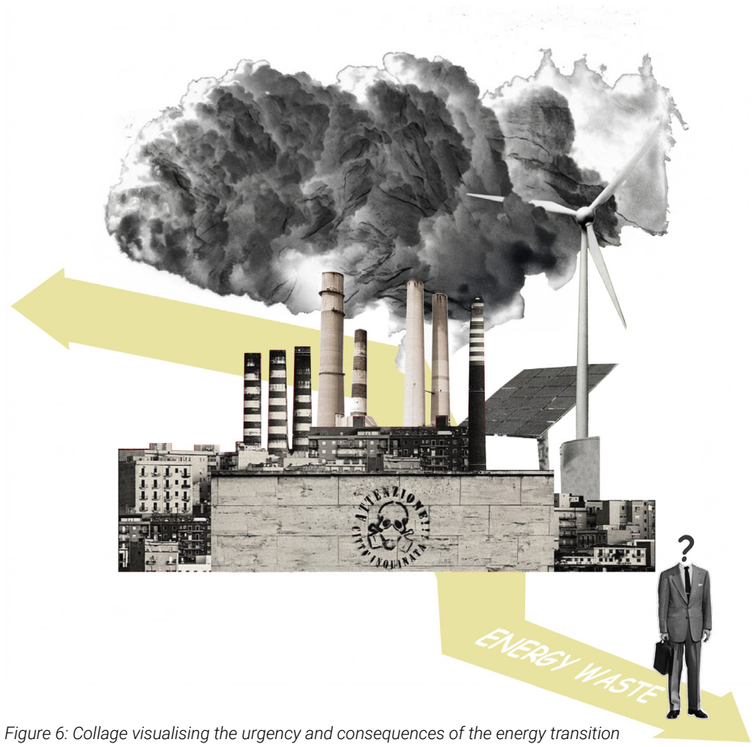


Figure 6: Collage visualising the urgency and consequences of the energy transition

Collages were made with Images from Pinterest and supported by AI Gemini

The spatial context: What are the Hanseatic cities?

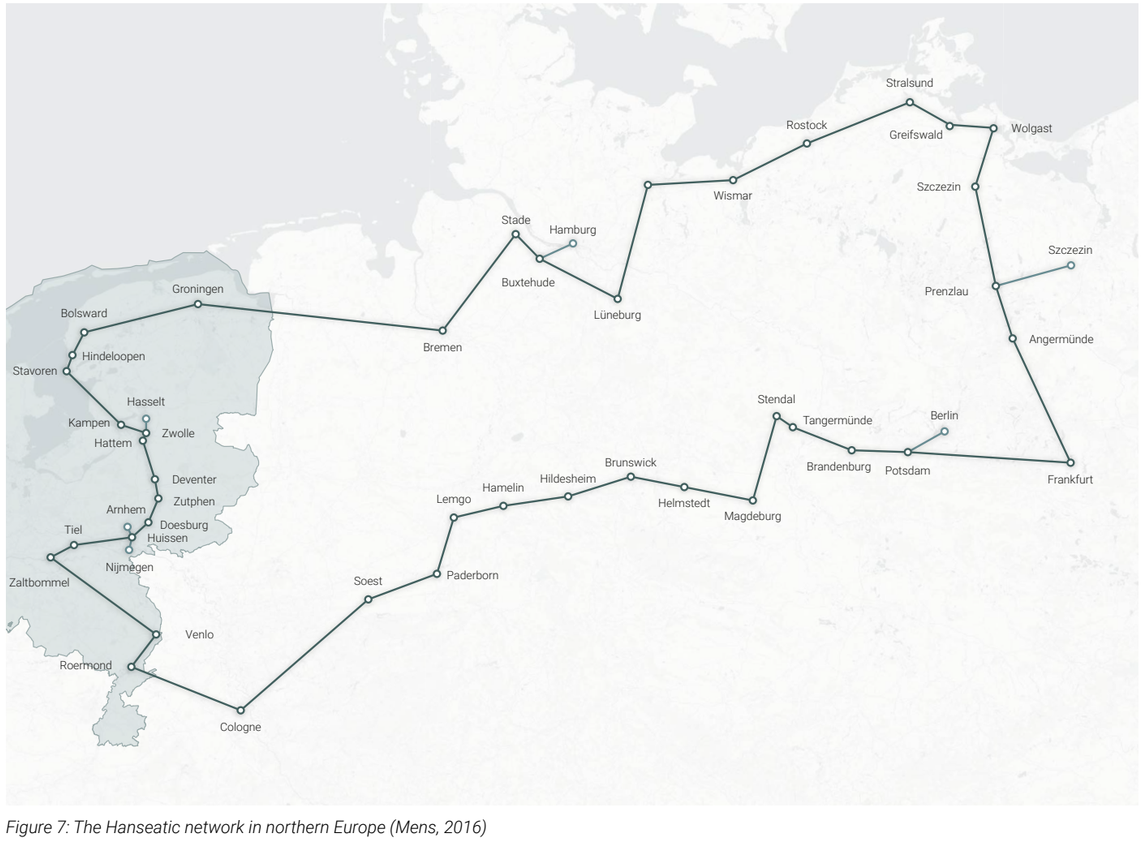


Figure 7: The Hanseatic network in northern Europe (Mens, 2016)

The Dutch Hanseatic cities are part of a historical network that dates back to the late Middle Ages. The Hanse (or Hansa) was not a formal organisation but rather a loose, flexible alliance of merchants and over 200 cities across Northern Europe, centred on trade in the Baltic and North Sea regions (Bargeman et al., z.d. ; Kaasschieter, 2022). Instead of a fixed institution, it functioned as a dynamic network in which cities and traders could participate when it suited their economic interests. This makes the Hanse, in some ways, comparable to today's network-based societies (Bargeman et al., z.d.).

The Dutch Hanseatic cities—such as Kampen, Zwolle, Deventer, Zutphen, and Doesburg—were strategically located along the IJssel, an important trade route connecting inland regions to international markets. Goods were transported by ships, such as cog vessels, enabling exchange between local producers and international merchants. This trade brought prosperity, but also required cooperation, risk-sharing, and strong relationships between traders (Bargeman et al., z.d.).

Historically, the Hanse gradually emerged rather than being formally established, and its influence declined over time due to shifting trade routes, political developments, and environmental factors such as river silting (Bargeman et al., z.d.; Kaasschieter, 2022). Despite this decline, the Hanse has never been officially "ended," and its legacy continues to shape the identity of many cities today (Bargeman et al., z.d.).

In a contemporary context, the Hanse is often understood not only as a historical phenomenon, but also as a cultural and symbolic network. Since 1980, a "New Hanse" has been established, in which cities collaborate again through events such as the International Hanseatic Days, aiming to strengthen cultural, economic, and social connections across Europe. Today, the Hanseatic identity is used both for regional cooperation and city branding, linking heritage, tourism, and a shared sense of history (Van Der Kooij, 2015).

Figure 8: Focus area: Dutch Hanseatic cities along the IJssel ((OGC) Webservices - PDOK, z.d.)

The social context: fieldwork insights

During the second week of the project, we undertook a field trip to the Hanseatic cities of Zwolle and Kampen to deepen our understanding of their social context. The fieldwork followed a qualitative and participatory approach, engaging residents and visitors through brief interviews and interactive surveys in public spaces. Instead of seeking statistically representative data, our objective was to document local perceptions, everyday experiences, and concerns that influence how individuals relate to their living environment.

We travelled by train to Zwolle and walked approximately 15 minutes from the station to the city centre. Since it was a Monday, the streets were relatively quiet, with only a few people present. Some Carnival participants remained, either returning home after a long night or continuing their celebrations.

Upon arrival in the city, we explored multiple locations and approached individuals for interviews. To ensure a diversity of perspectives, we visited sites such as the municipality building, the central city library, a university of applied sciences, and a café. We also walked through the historic city centre and along the waterfront, observing both the physical environment and the overall atmosphere. The cobblestone streets and well-preserved historic buildings contribute significantly to Zwolle's distinctive character.

Afterwards, we proceeded to Kampen, where we conducted further interviews. Like Zwolle, Kampen features quiet, picturesque streets and a rich historical setting, which makes it an inviting location for observation and fieldwork.

The fieldwork was organised around three central themes: the future of living, the future of energy, and the future of the region.

Figure 9: Historic shopping street in Zwolle during fieldwork observation

The social context: fieldwork insights

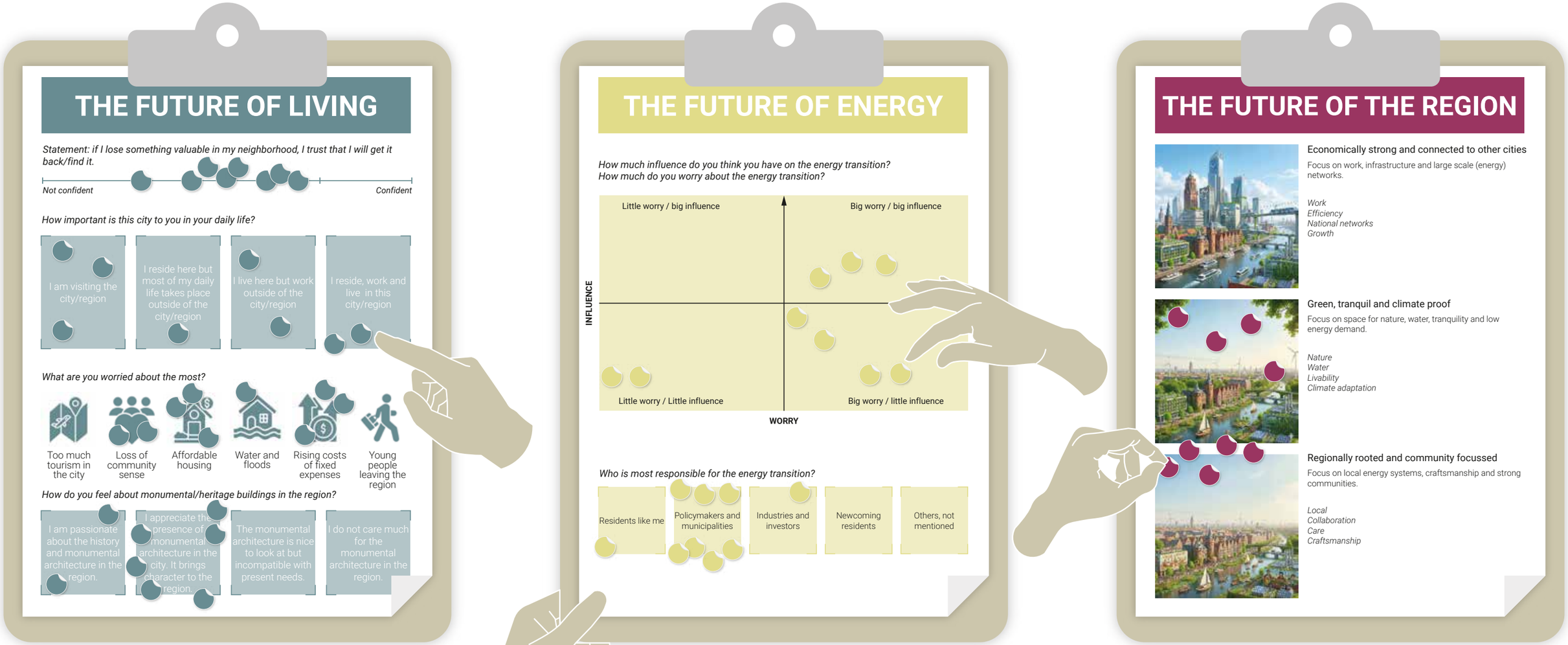
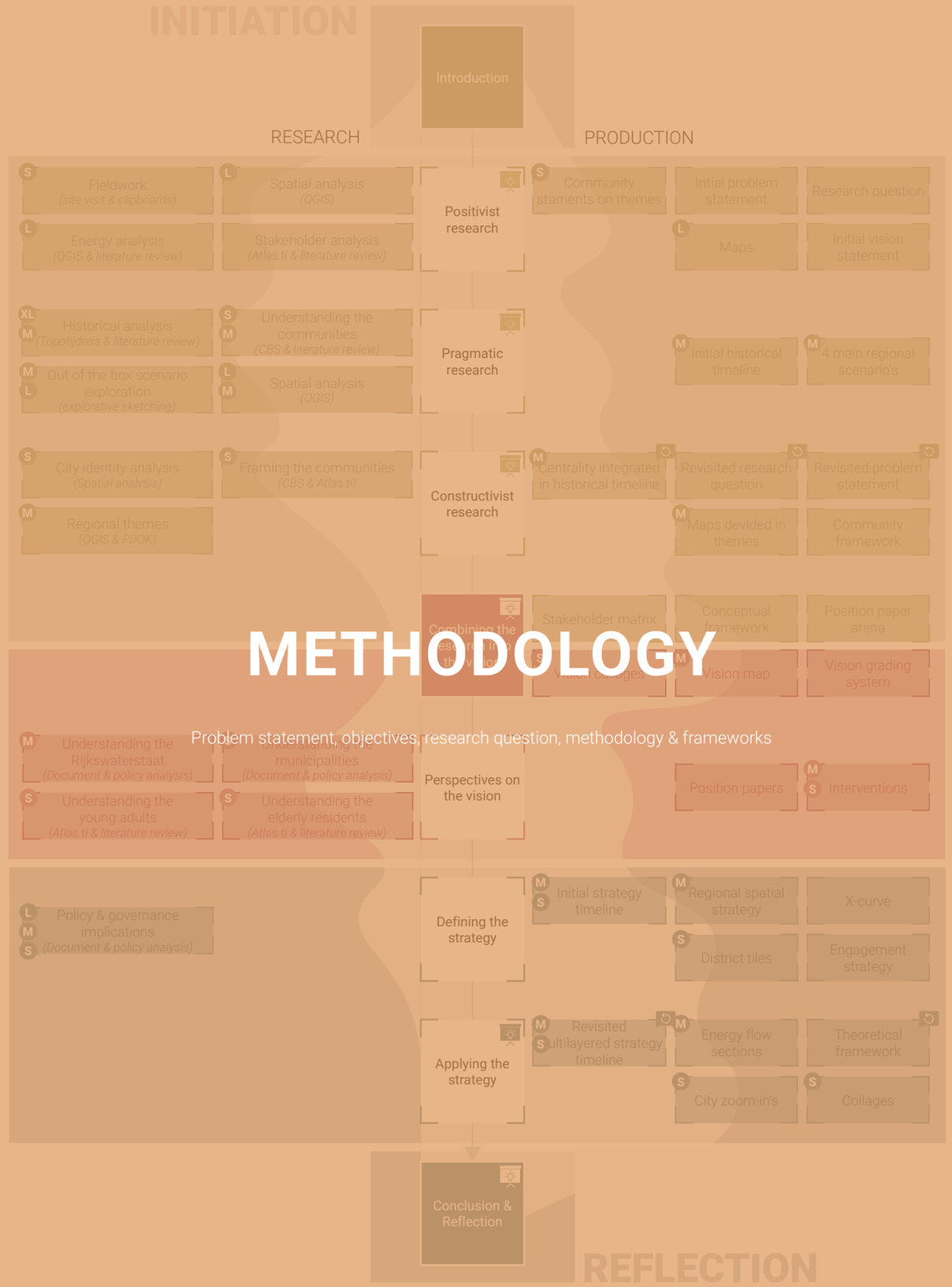


Figure 10: Interactive survey boards used to collect public perceptions during fieldwork

Within the theme of *living*, questions focused on social trust, attachment to place, and perceived challenges. Responses showed a varied relationship to the city, from visitors to people fully rooted in the region. Social trust was moderate, as many respondents were uncertain if lost belongings would be returned. The main concerns were housing affordability and rising living costs, while tourism and outmigration were less prominent. There was broad appreciation for historic and monumental architecture, widely valued as an important part of the cities' identity and character.

The theme of energy showed the *energy* transition is widely seen as important and often causes concern. However, most respondents felt they had limited personal influence, attributing responsibility mainly to municipalities and policymakers. This reveals a perceived gap between large-scale transitions and individual agency.

Finally, when reflecting on *the region's future,* two clear directions emerged. Most respondents preferred a green, tranquil, and climate-adaptive future, emphasising nature, water, and liveability. A significant group also desired a regionally rooted and community-focused future, highlighting local identity, craftsmanship, and strong social structures. In contrast, none prioritised a future focused on large-scale economic growth and infrastructural expansion.



METHODOLOGY

Problem statement, objectives, research question, methodology & frameworks

Contents

Problem statement
Design objectives
Towards spatial justice with the SDG's
Research question & subquestions
Theoretical framework
Methodology

Problem statement

Figure 11: Resident perspectives on the impact of newcomers and regional transformation, Source: Resident quotes from a participatory workshop in Ede–Wageningen (Image referencing in table of figures)

"As more Randstad residents move to hanseatic cities, these cities face the challenge of already losing economic and symbolic centrality throughout history, they must find ways to integrate newcomers with existing communities, fostering a shared sense of belonging instead of deepening fragmentation."

Design objectives

Spatial justice

The project's design focuses on strengthening regional resilience through a set of core objectives, translated into a spatial strategy. Central to this approach is the principle of *spatial justice*, which aims to redistribute access to housing, services, and opportunities more equitably among residents in the Randstad's peripheral regions. This involves reinforcing regional centrality while ensuring that the benefits and burdens of development are shared by both existing and incoming residents.

Spatial justice

Care and health

The second core objective is to promote *care and health* at the regional scale by integrating accessible public services, green infrastructure, and sustainable mobility networks. Particular attention is given to ageing populations by supporting diverse forms of elderly care that are embedded within communities rather than isolated. By encouraging intergenerational living environments and a broader mix of residents within care-related settings, the design seeks to improve social inclusion, reduce isolation, and create more resilient care systems.

Care and health

Sense of belonging

Equally important is fostering a *sense of belonging* within residential communities. In the context of demographic change, the design seeks to strengthen local identity and social cohesion by valuing existing cultural structures and enabling inclusive development that reflects both historical continuity and current needs.

Sense of belonging

Towards spatial justice with the SDG's

This project addresses the urgent need for spatial justice in the future development of Dutch Hanseatic cities. Amid rising housing pressure, demographic shifts, and regional disparities, guaranteeing equitable access to space, resources, and opportunities presents a significant challenge. These concerns correspond with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015 as a global framework for fostering a more just, sustainable, and inclusive society (Martin, 2025).

At the core of this research lies SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, approached through the lens of spatial justice. The project recognizes that inequalities are not only social or economic but also spatially embedded, shaping access to housing, energy, infrastructure, and opportunity (Urban Housing, 2024). Addressing these disparities requires an integrated spatial approach that actively includes both existing residents and newcomers, ensuring equal access to resources and representation in the design process (Inclusive Urban Design and achieving the SDGs, 2017).

This focus extends to SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. Within this framework, communities are regarded as central agents of spatial transformation (Sietchiping et al., 2019). Both established and emerging communities share the objective of creating liveable, inclusive, and meaningful environments. Integrating their needs, perspectives, and voices into the design process enables spatial interventions to reduce inequalities and enhance social cohesion (Inclusive Communities - Thriving Cities, z.d.). Thus, spatial justice emerges as a measurable outcome of inclusive planning and design.

Nevertheless, social inclusion alone does not ensure long-term resilience. The sustainability of these communities relies on their integration with natural systems (Haarstad & Yazar, 2025). Consequently, the project explicitly links SDG 11 with SDG 15: Life on Land and SDG 13: Climate Action. Landscape and ecology are considered active structuring elements within the design process rather than passive backgrounds (Danler, 2025). By promoting biodiversity, strengthening ecological networks, and incorporating climate-adaptive strategies, the project advances regenerative landscapes that foster both environmental and social well-being (Roggema, 2022).

These ecological systems underpin new spatial-energy configurations, such as energy landscapes and eco-villages, that connect the energy transition to daily life (Thrän et al., 2020). Through these initiatives, the project advances SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. Addressing inequalities, empowering communities, and integrating natural systems generate opportunities for innovation and economic restructuring in the Hanseatic region. Spatial design thus serves as a catalyst for reimagining regional economies, improving connectivity, and establishing resilient infrastructure that supports both social and environmental transitions (Koschatzky & Hansmeier, 2026).

Collectively, these SDGs establish a clear cause-and-effect relationship central to this project: spatial justice (SDG 10) is achieved through inclusive communities (SDG 11), reinforced by ecological integration (SDG 15 and 13), and ultimately facilitates innovation and economic transformation (SDG 9) (Menton et al., 2020). This integrated approach illustrates that addressing inequality constitutes not only a social imperative but also a spatial, ecological, and economic opportunity for the future of the Hanseatic cities.

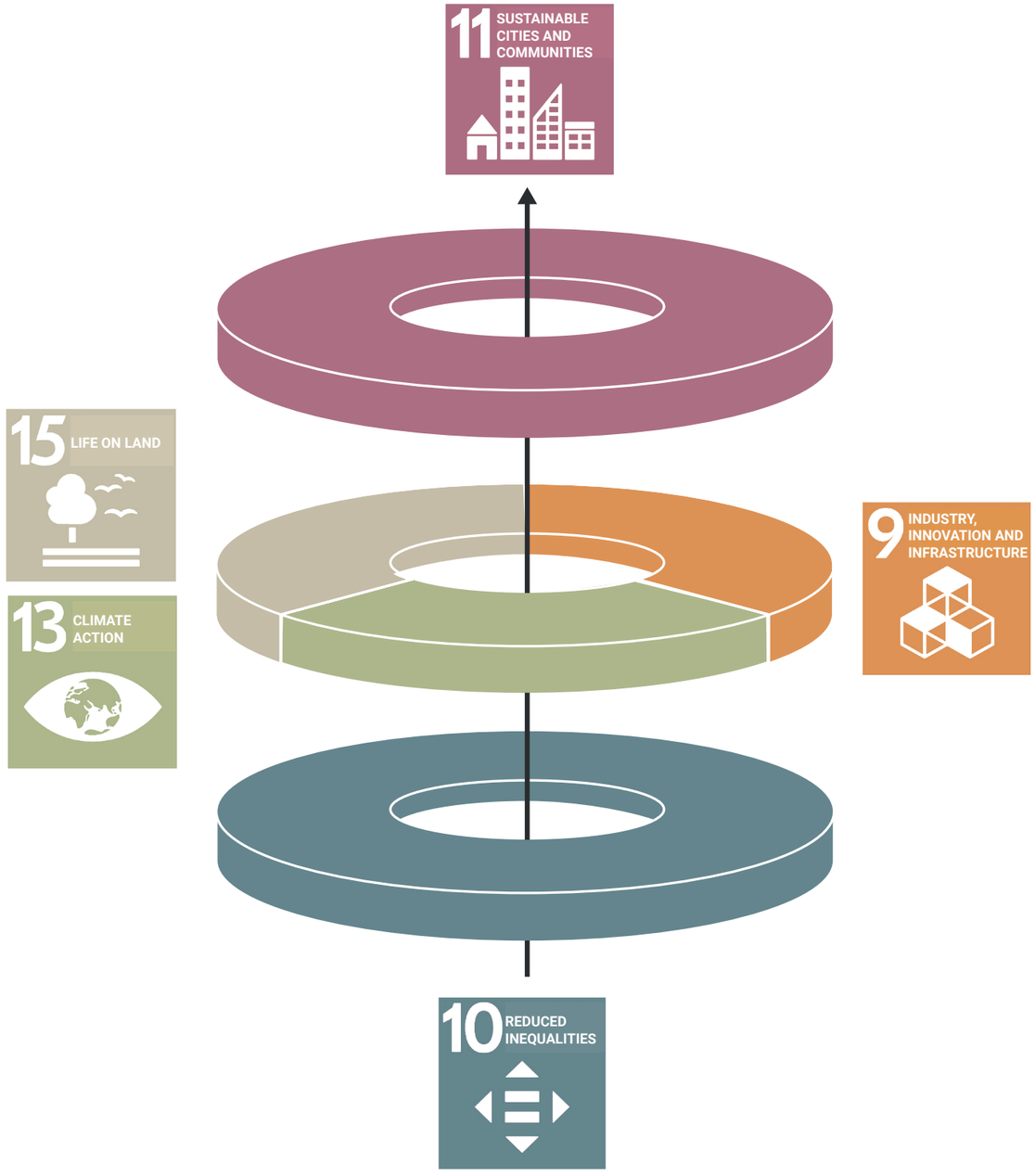


Figure 12: SDGs wedding cake linking spatial justice, community, ecology, and innovation (Image referencing in table of figures)

Research question

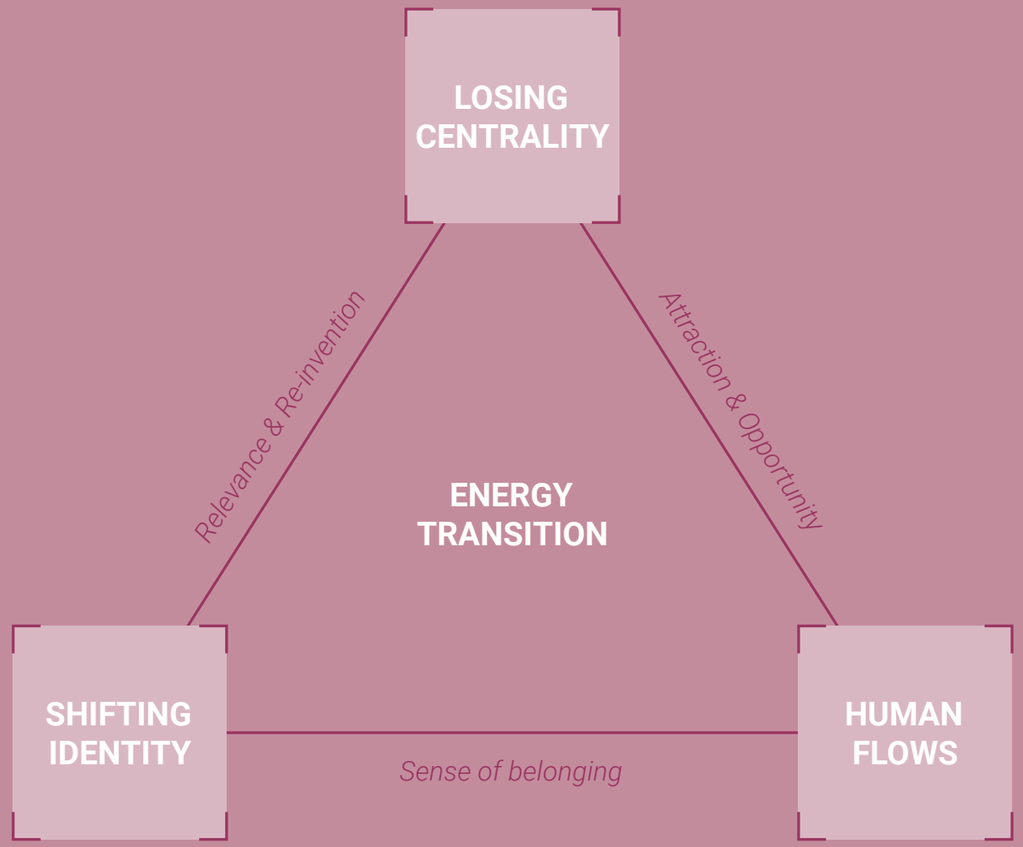


Figure 13: Linking identity, human flows, and centrality through the energy transition

How can the energy transition re-imagine the centrality of historic Hanseatic cities for future communities consisting of both newcomers and existing residents?

Research subquestions

Regional conditions

What spatial, environmental, and socio-economic factors define the current state of Dutch Hanseatic cities and their surrounding region?

The goal is to establish a comprehensive understanding of the region by analysing spatial elements, environmental systems, and socio-economic conditions. It provides the foundation for identifying key challenges and potentials within the region.

Energy systems

How is the energy transition currently integrated into the region regarding demand, infrastructure, and spatial potential?

This question focuses on the existing energy landscape, including demand and production. It examines how energy infrastructure is embedded within the region and identifies the potentials for future development.

Demographic & stakeholder dynamics

How do demographic shifts and stakeholder perspectives affect spatial development and the sense of belonging in the region?

This step investigates population movements, such as the shift from the Randstad to regional areas, and explores how different stakeholder groups perceive and influence the region. It highlights the relationship between development and social cohesion.

Spatial vision

Which spatial vision most effectively addresses the region's identified challenges and opportunities, and why?

Based on the analytical phases, this question develops and evaluates alternative future scenarios. It positions a coherent spatial vision that responds to the previous analyses.

Design strategy

What spatial interventions and design strategies are needed to implement this vision across themes such as ecology, infrastructure, housing, economy, and energy?

This question translates the vision into a concrete spatial design strategy. It considers multiple themes and explores how to integrate them into a cohesive plan.

Implimentation

How can these interventions be implemented over time and at different scales through governance, phasing, and stakeholder engagement?

The final question addresses the practical realisation of the project. It focuses on governance structures, stakeholder involvement, and temporal strategies, ensuring that proposed interventions are feasible, adaptable, and spatially just over time.

Theoretical framework

To begin reimagining a region requires a robust framework that inspires, directionalises the project and evaluates. A study of various theories was conducted - exploring them based on different thematic approaches. The prime theory engraving at the base of the project is 'The just City' theory by Susan Fainstein. The group's prerogative was to then suggest a synthesis with the 'The triangle of justice - interdependent dimensions of spatial justice', a framework developed by the Centre for the Just City (TU Delft) which is a synthesis of concepts from Edward Soja and John Rawls. The two are paired to draw contributing values within the project. Furthermore, the 'Communicative/Collaborative Planning Theory' by Patsy Healey and Jurgen Habermas is key for guiding the project's approach towards community. Hence, while the first framework drives the spatial planning aspect and its values, the second ensures its effectiveness.

'The Just City Theory' by Susan Fainstein

The foundation of this project draws on 'the Just City' theory developed by Susan Fainstein, which is established on three key pillars - equity, diversity and democracy as the central normative principles for urban development. Fainstein advocates for a value-driven framework as the planning approach. It intends to prioritise fairness in outcomes, the co-existence of different social groups and spatial forms, and an inclusive decision-making process (Fainstein, 2010). The ideals from 'The Just City' were instrumentalised to become our actionable criteria through which spatial intervention can be guided and assessed.

'The Triangle of Justice', developed by the Centre for Just City (TU Delft)

Complementing the prior theory is the concept of spatial justice, which extends justice into the spatial dimension, emphasising how inequalities are produced, distributed and experienced across territories (Soja, 2010). In his theory, spatial justice is often understood through three interrelated dimensions: distributive justice (the allocation of resources and opportunities), procedural justice (fairness in the decision-making process), and recognition (acknowledging and valuing differences across communities). This framework enables a more explicit engagement with how space itself becomes a medium through which justice is enacted or denied (Woessner, 2010).

Constructing a Personalised Theory

The advancement from the theories is performed by mapping Fainstein's principles onto the spatial justice triangle: equity as distributive justice, diversity as recognition, and democracy as procedural justice. The conjoined frameworks are translated into an operational lens, and justice is sought in the context of the Hanseatic cities. It informs how the territory is read - highlighting inequalities, recognising diverse communities and evaluating decision-making processes.

Figure 14: Personalised Theoretical framework inspired by the visual and theoretical framing of the 'Just City' and the 'Triangle of Justice' theories.

Theoretical framework

Communicative and/or Collaborative Planning Theory

Advancing from spatial to social, there is an exploration of the 'Collaborative Planning' theory by Patsy Healey, which itself is grounded in the 'Communicative Rationality' of Jürgen Habermas. Healey approaches the spatial context with the intent of emphasising collaboration across stakeholders, scales and interests (Healey, 2006). This modus operandi is based on ideas suggested by Habermas, wherein a rational consensus can emerge through inclusive, deliberative dialogue among diverse actors (Habermas, 1984). Understanding of the theories has led to planning being viewed as a socially embedded process, shaped by negotiation and shared understanding.
It is particularly relevant in the complex regional context of the project, for its involvement of multiple municipalities, institutions and communities. Within the methodology, we see the region being approached as multi-scalar and multi-actor, in order to develop a shared umbrella vision across the Hanseatic region.

Establishing the Project 'Commons'

Commons within this project are understood as shared, collectively held resources that require management to ensure their long-term sustainability (Rocco, 2026). The commons refer to resources that are collectively owned or shared by a community, but unlike public goods, they are subject to potential depletion or overuse if not carefully managed.
In the context of the Hanseatic region, energy infrastructure and development typologies emerge as key commons. Energy systems - with local grids, production landscapes, and distribution networks are shared resources that must balance demand, accessibility and spatial impact. Similarly, development patterns shape how housing and land as a resource are collectively used and transformed. Both are inherently finite and contested, requiring coordinated actors (Rocco, 2026). Hence, their management is tied to communities and governance structures, linking occupational groups, institutions and diverse residents; making the commons not just a physical system but also a social construct.

Defining the 'Public Goods' for the reimagined Hanseatic region

Public goods are understood as shared resources that are accessible to all and not diminished through use, defined by their non-excludability and/or non-rivalrous nature (Rocco, 2026). In the context of the Hanseatic region, key public goods include the IJssel River and its associated mitigation and waterfront landscape, as well as the Veluwe, whose ecological value extends beyond spatial presence to shaping environmental quality. These elements are not only functional systems but collective assets that structure everyday life and long-term resilience within the region. In addition, heritage - while subject to transformation - continues to carry the essence of a public good not through use but its cultural and symbolic value. As such, public goods defined in the project play a critical role in fostering connectivity among citizens, offering shared spaces where social and spatial interactions unfold. In doing so, they reinforce a sense of collective identity (Putnam, 2000; Judt, 2010), becoming central to how the region is experienced, negotiated, and envisioned within the project.

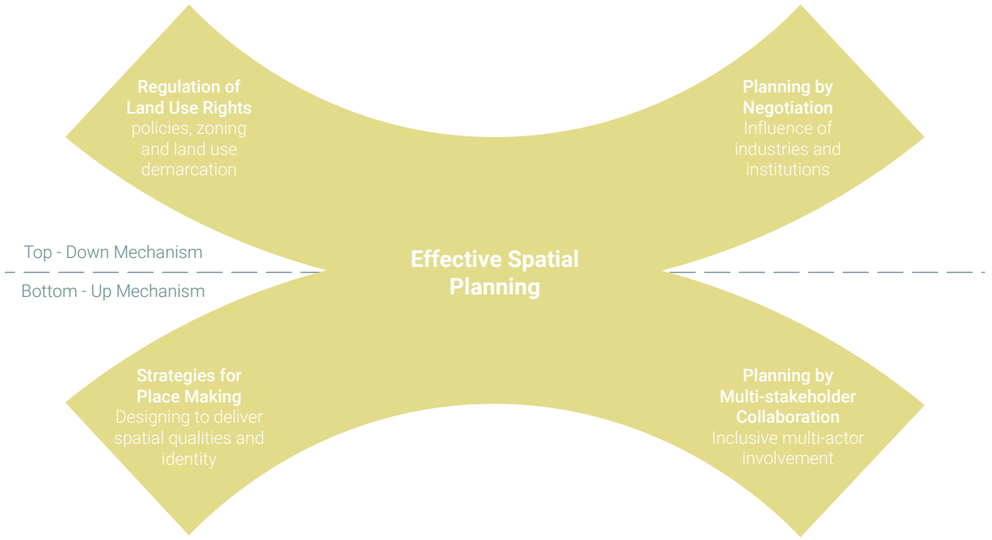


Figure 15: Personalised Collaborative Planning Theory diagram inspired by illustration from Patsy Healey

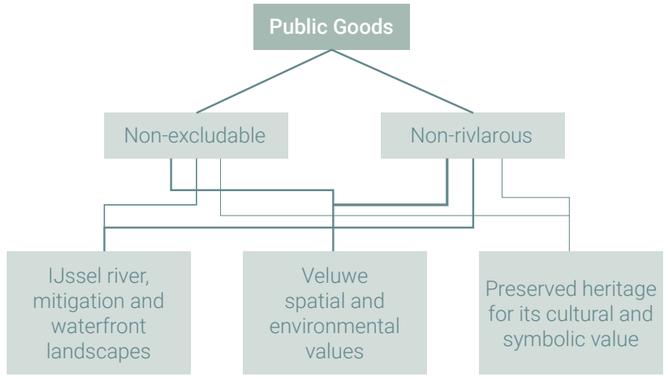


Figure 16: Project commons and their associated stakeholder communities

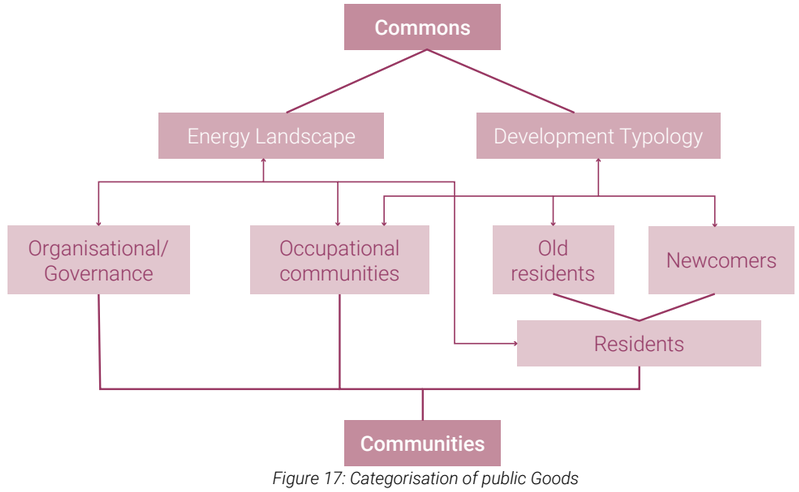


Figure 17: Categorisation of public Goods

Methodology

The methodological framework for this project is organised around a central timeline, with each week defined by a specific focus that reflects the evolving nature of the research and design process. On the left side of the diagram, the framework outlines the research conducted throughout the project. Each research step is paired with its corresponding method, such as literature review, policy analysis, or exploratory sketching, which is indicated in brackets. This side illustrates how different research methods, mostly spatial, social, energy-based, and historical, informed the project. On the right, the framework presents the outputs of these research activities. These include, e.g. analytical maps, timelines, vision collages, and frameworks. By aligning research inputs with design outputs, the diagram demonstrates how research was continuously translated into spatial and conceptual elements. A key feature of the framework is the white wave in the background, which shows the meandering progress of research and production over time. Periods of intensive analysis are followed by phases of synthesis and design development, highlighting the iterative nature of the process. Additionally, the icons provide further layers of information. These indicate the scale at which each activity or output operates (ranging from local to European), whether elements were revisited or refined, and when presentations or pitches took place. The framework presents an iterative design approach in which analysis and design are intertwined. Information is gathered throughout, tested, and developed with spatial scenarios.

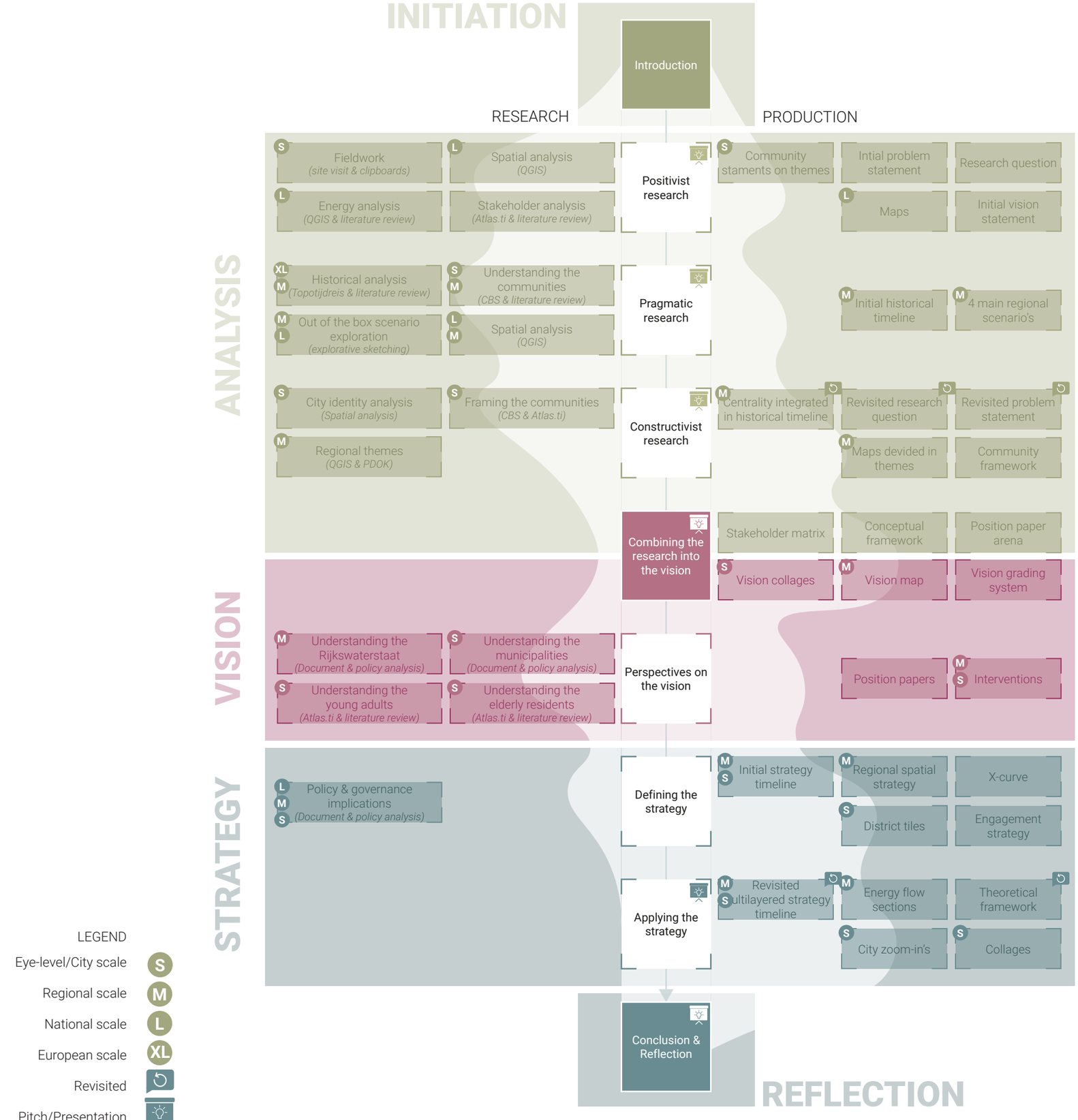
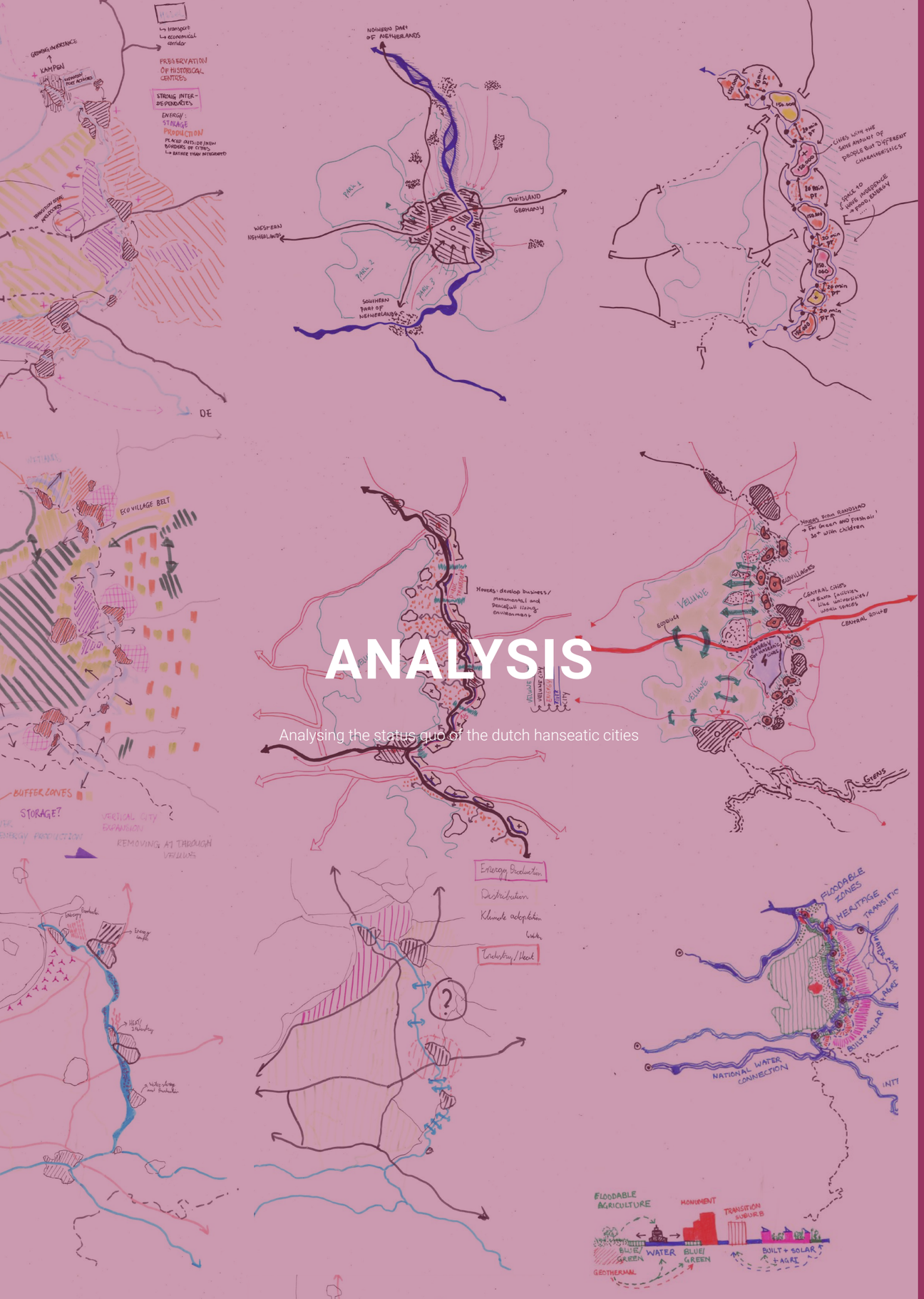


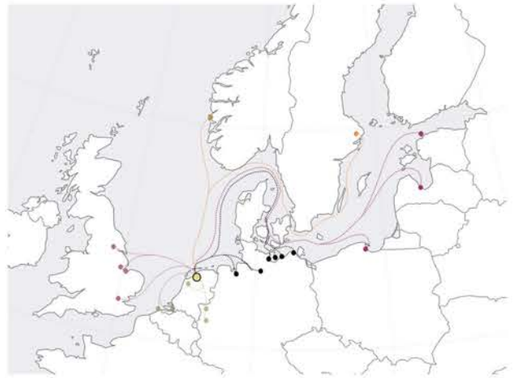
Figure 18: Methodology framework



Contents

- Historical timeline
- The identity of the Dutch hanseatic cities
- Spatial analysis on a national scale
- Spatial analysis on a regional scale
- Energy analysis
- Energy potential
- Community conflict
- The four W's
- The roundtable
  - Newcomers
  - Ageing residents
  - Young adults
- Community overlap, conflicts, and synergies
- Synthesizing the conclusions
- Experimental scenario's
  - Scenario 1: The regenerative preservation network
  - Scenario 2: The heritage network
  - Scenario 3: The energy archipelago
  - Scenario 4: the river metropolis
  - Evaluating the scenarios
- Conceptual framework

Historical timeline



Cities along the IJssel join the Hanseatic League forming trade connections to Baltic Hubs, England, Scandanavia, Rhine and the Ijssel system.

1200 - 1250s

Growth of Merchant Class

Fortification Structures Constructed

Agricultural Surplus

Braun, G., & Hogenberg, F. (n.d.). Kampen, 1572 [Map].

Formal participation in the Hanseatic League. Kampen becomes one of the most prominent dutch ports.

1350s

Maritime Employment

Storage Structures and Breweries

New Ship-building Industries

Trade routes and geographic accessibility

15th Century

Print by Hendrik de Leth, Photograph: de Volkskrant

Favour for trade routes change

Increasing competition from Holland (Amsterdam Port rising).

Internal conflicts rise within the Hanse regions

1568 - 1648

Painting by Cornelis Willem Hoevenaar

The seige of Zutphen (1572) was amongst many battles between the Dutch provinces and the Spanish Empire which brings trade and economic instability.

Regional Links not International

Stagnation or Decline in the development of the Hanseatic cities

17th Century

IJssel cities excluded from major colonial networks

Dutch Golden Age

Transport, trade & employment

19th Century

Photo from City Archives Deventer

Industrial and Infrastructural Revival: Introduction of railway hub in Zwolle and establishment of industries in Deventer

New workers neighbourhood constructed

Transport, trade & employment

1940 - 1945

Post-war Rebuilding

Early 20th Century

Photo from: Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed

World War II - German Occupation
Bombing in Zutphen destroys structures in the Medieval Core

Electrification in the Country

1950 - 2000

Photo from WIN magazine and news platform

Growth of Hogeschool Windescheim
Growing Industries -
Healthcare, Education, Service and Public Administration

Large-scale housing development

2000 - 2025

Witteven + Bos : Project Photos

Room for River project in Deventer -
flood management with waterfront development along the IJssel

Migration due to attractive quality-of-life

Present | Future

Future ideal concepts:
Circular economy based on zero net- & renewable energy

Future? Maybe 2075?

Port of Zwolle is developing into an international hub focused on circularity, energy transition, and climate adaptation to achieve sustainable growth.
- *Regio Deal Zwolle*

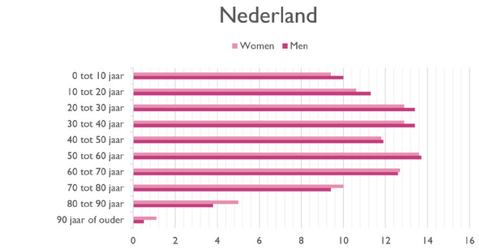
Kampen aims to be energy neutral by 2035 and also serve as battery for the region - particularly Zwolle.
- *Dual Ports (North Sea Programme conducted by the European Union.*

Zutphen aims to heat 710 homes with heat from the the IJssel River aquathermal energgy system.
- *Rijkswaterstaat Self Supporting River Systems programme*

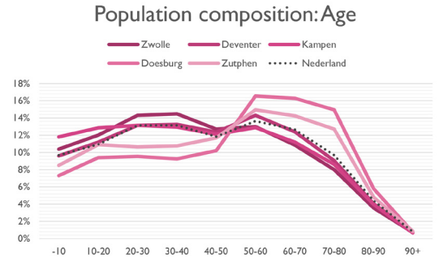
Figure 19: Timeline mapping the key historic events in the Dutch Hanseatic cities in relation to the meaning of centrality (Image referencing in table of figures)

The identity of the Dutch Hanseatic cities

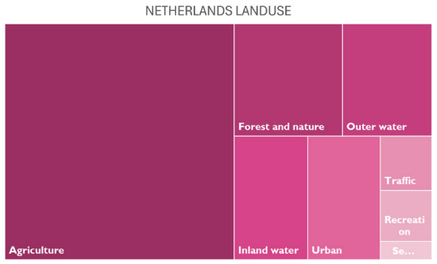
The Dutch Hanseatic cities of Kampen, Zwolle, Deventer, Zutphen, and Doesburg together form a region with a shared historic identity, yet one that is currently undergoing significant socio-demographic shifts. Once positioned along the Ijssel as key nodes of trade and exchange, these cities now occupy a more peripheral role within the national context.



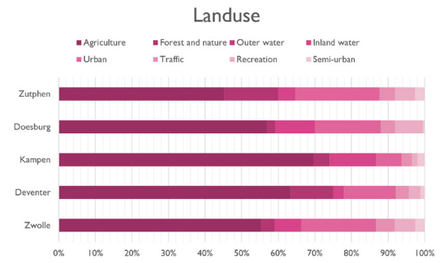
Supporting data across the region reflects patterns consistent with earlier identified urgencies : compared to national averages, a larger proportion of municipalities in this corridor are experiencing stagnating or declining growth among younger populations, alongside an ageing demographic profile (Inwoners per Gemeente, 2025).



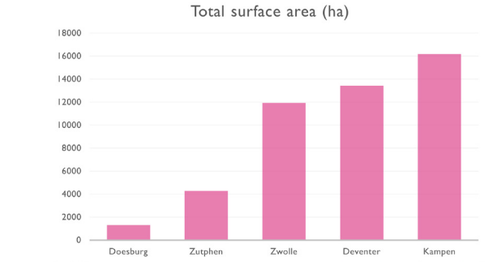
This aligns the region with broader trends of regional brain drain, where younger, mobile populations relocate toward larger urban centres, particularly in the Randstad. As a result, the identity of the region today is defined by a tension between its strong historical character and its contrasting demographic vulnerability.



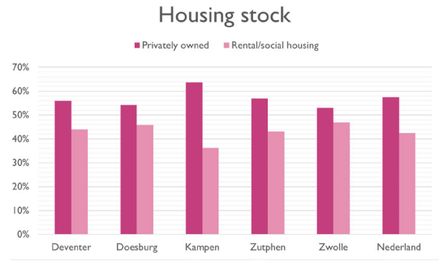
The spatial structure of the region reveals that the land-use is predominantly agricultural, forming the largest share of the territory and shaping both its economic and landscape character (StatLine Is De Databank Van Het CBS, n.d.). This agricultural base not only strengthens local production but also presents opportunities for transformation, particularly in relation to sustainable practices and energy integration.
Complementing this is the presence of extensive forested and natural areas, which, along with the



natural water systems, occupy a substantial portion of the region (StatLine Is De Databank Van Het CBS, n.d.); offering both challenges and opportunities in terms of climate adaptation, spatial design and identity formation. In contrast, urban land use ranks relatively low, creating a condition where space is not yet fully constrained (StatLine Is De Databank Van Het CBS, n.d.). This allows for a more strategic and intentional approach to development, particularly in how agricultural and ecological systems can be integrated.



Additionally, while there are differences in scale - Kampen being the largest municipality and Doesburg the smallest, being one-twelfth of Kampen (StatLine Is De Databank Van Het CBS, n.d.) - these variations do not directly impact the development trajectory that they will be subjected to. Each holds dimensions of spatial, cultural and economic qualities that influence how it can evolve. Hence, the primary indicator of growth in the project is not size but development, preservation and transformation based on specific city needs.



Housing patterns across these cities further reflect their overall socio-spatial character. As shown in the housing stock graph; large portion of the housing stock is privately owned (StatLine Is De Databank Van Het CBS, n.d.), which has implications for both stability and transformation. One one hand, home ownership can support long-term attachment to a place; on the other, it may slow down the process of large-scale spatial change, as interventions require negotiation across many individual stakeholders.

Figure 21: Demographics, land use, and housing in the Dutch Hanseatic cities (Image referencing in table of figures)

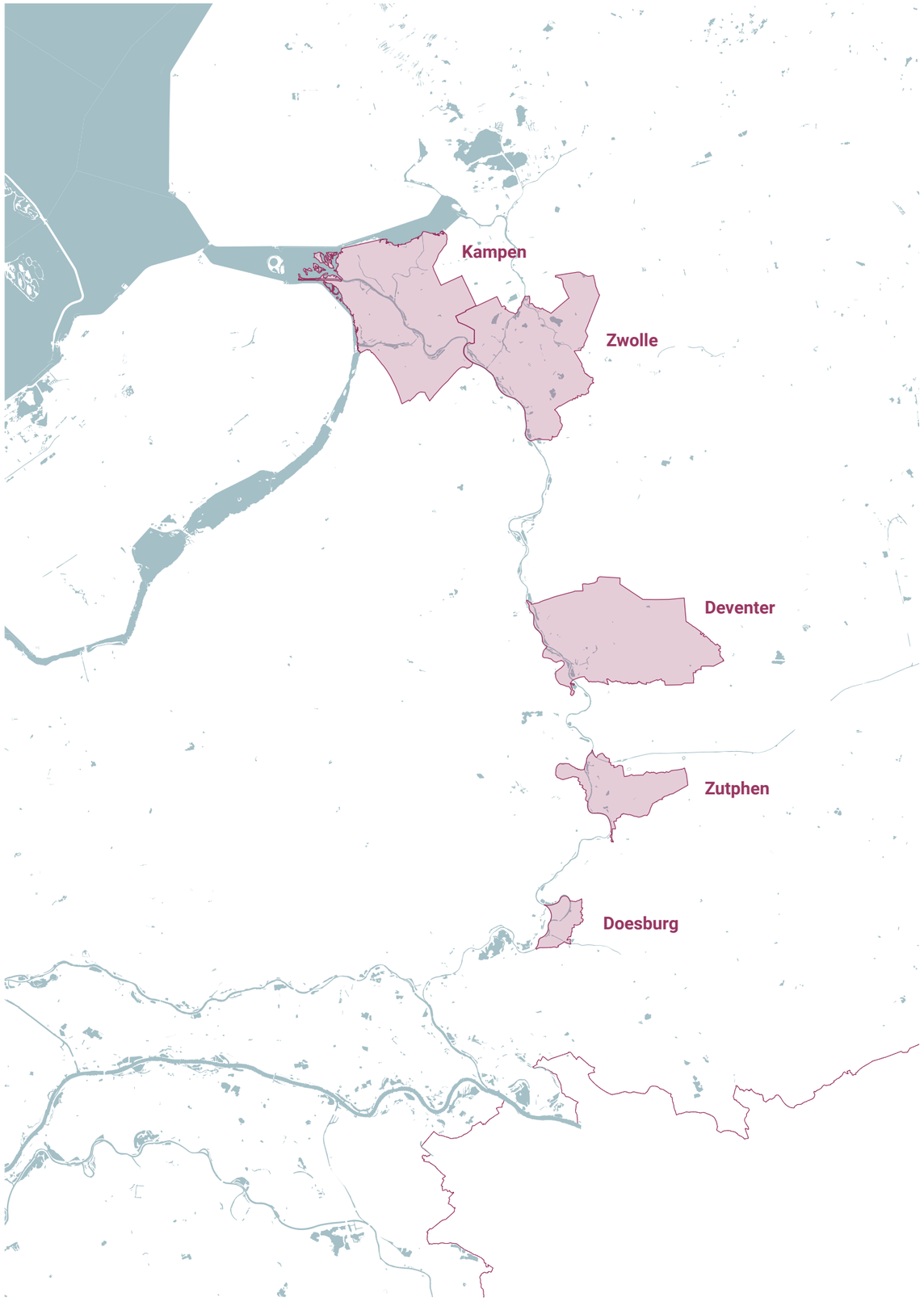
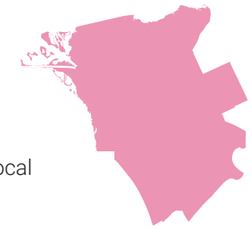


Figure 22: Regional map highlighting Dutch Hanseatic cities (Atom DownloadServices - PDOK, z.d.)

Kampen

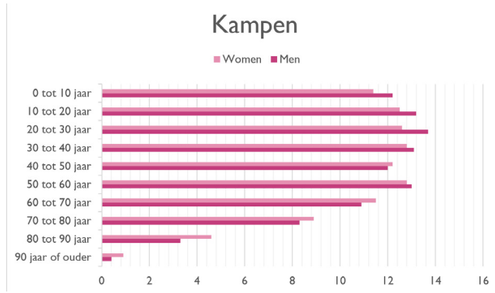
Traditional maritime city

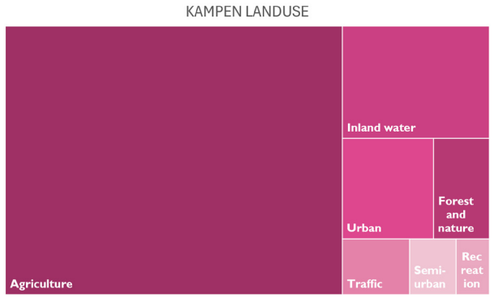


Residents | Regional/local retail | Limited education | Local

56.500

Diving into the individual characters of these cities, the first exploration takes place in Kampen. Kampen is uniquely positioned within a river delta landscape, where the Ijssel meets broader low-lying floodplain systems. This geomorphological condition was what historically shaped its development. The city was once the primary point of contact in the Dutch Hanse network of waterways that once supported trade, mobility and ecological richness (Louise Sicking, 2024).
As the largest municipality by area (StatLine Is De Databank Van Het CBS, n.d.)among the Hanseatic cities and home to approximately 56.500 residents (Inwoners per Gemeente, n.d.), Kampen presents a distinctive demographic profile. The city's high proportion of older residents contributes to strong continuity in local traditions, including the deeply rooted Hanseatic identity and a notable presence of religious communities. We know this because studies on Dutch peripheral regions highlight how such demographic compositions often reinforce tightly-knit social structure and a strong sense of belonging (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2024).





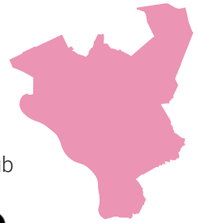
Economically and socially, Kampen functions with a strong orientation toward local and regional systems. The city is largely supported by local retail and small-scale businesses rather than national or international chains, reinforcing its community-oriented character (Kampen Voor Ondernemers | Ondersteuning Voor Nieuwe Bedrijven!, n.d.). This is further reflected in its socio-economic profile, where educational levels are comparatively lower, and employment is rooted predominantly in practical and regional sectors (StatLine Is De Databank Van Het CBS, n.d.). Agriculture and related industries continue to play a significant role in shaping both the economy and the surrounding landscape. Together, these characteristics position Kampen as a city with deep local ties and a stable, though less globally connected, socio-economic structure.

Figure 23: Demographics and land use in Kampen (Image referencing in table of figures)

Figure 24: Kampen city characteristic illustration

Zwolle

Dynamic regional hub



Residents

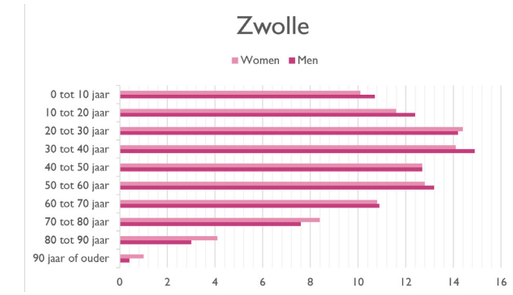
133.800

Mixed economy

Broad education

National hub

Zwolle, while not the largest municipality by area, is the most populous city within the Dutch Hanseatic cluster, with approximately 133.800 residents (Inwoners per Gemeente, n.d.). This demographic weight makes it the most prominent urban centre within the region. Zwolle also maintains a relatively balanced younger population profile (Inwoners per Gemeente, n.d.), largely due to the presence of higher education institutions such as the Windesheim University of Applied Sciences. The university attracts students from across the region, contributing to a more dynamic people profile. During field visits, the city was observed to have a lively atmosphere, with a wide range of recreational amenities and public spaces. Additionally, Zwolle acts as a regional anchor and gateway, benefiting from its highly developed transportation connectivity, functioning as a rail hub in the eastern Netherlands.



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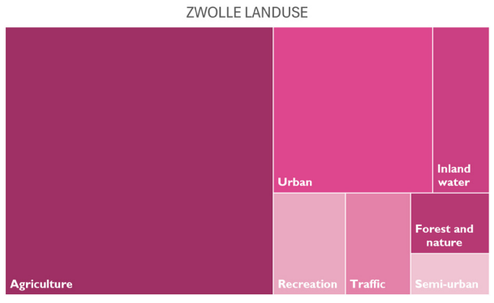


Description and source

Economically, Zwolle exhibits a more diversified profile compared to its neighbouring Hanseatic cities. The urban core accommodates a mix of local and regional businesses alongside national retail chains (Regio Zwolle, n.d.). Beyond retail, the city supports employment in sectors such as logistics, services and industries, which is also evident in its land distribution, where urban and industrial zones are more pronounced (StatLine Is De Databank Van Het CBS, n.d.). Its acceptance of modernity is also mirrored in its built environments. An example of this is the Museum de Fundaties, where a modern architectural extension is integrated into a historic structure. Such projects highlight a local openness to change and adaptation, suggesting a community that is more receptive to transformation while still engaging with its historical identity.

Figure 25: Demographics and land use in Zwolle (Image referencing in table of figures)

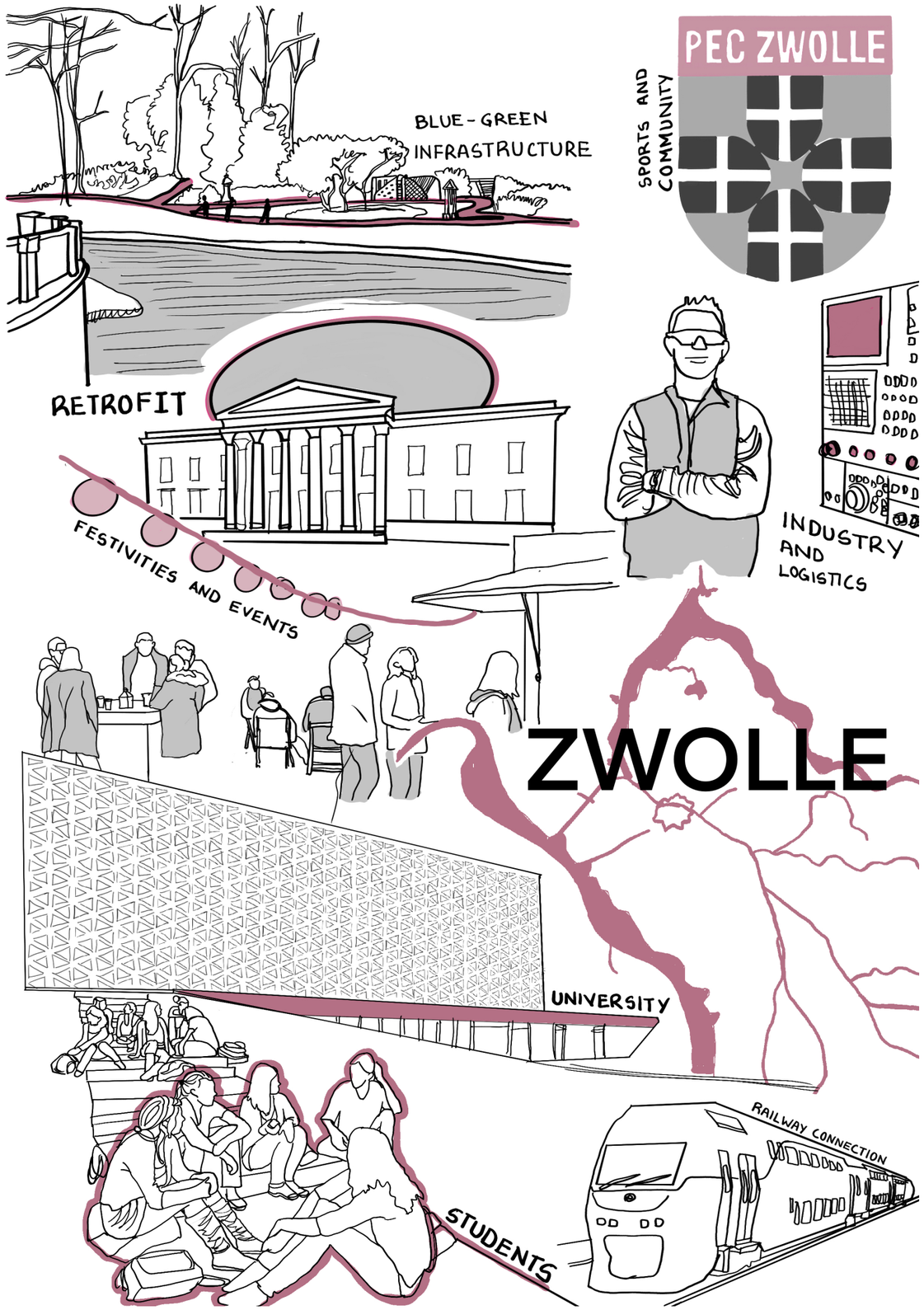
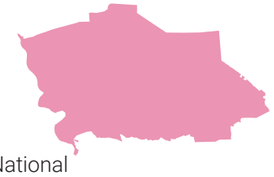


Figure 26: Zwolle city characteristic illustration

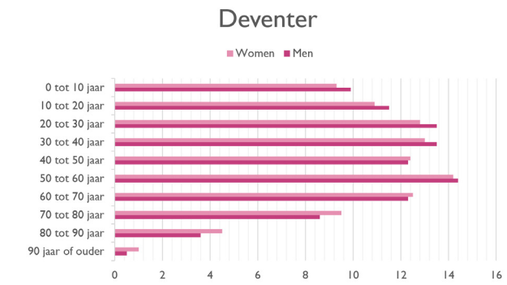
Deventer

Balanced historical & economic city



Residents	Mixed economy	Specific education	National
104.300			

Further south along the IJssel is Deventer, within its wide flood plains. The city is inherently shaped by periodic flooding dynamics. In recent years, activities have become accentuated along the river through waterfront enhancement projects such as the IJssel redevelopment, strengthening the relationship between the city and its river edge (Warner, 2023). Despite having the second largest population of approximately 14.300 (Inwoners per Gemeente, n.d.), Deventer has successfully preserved its compact medieval core, characterised by a highly walkable structure and significant architectural heritage.



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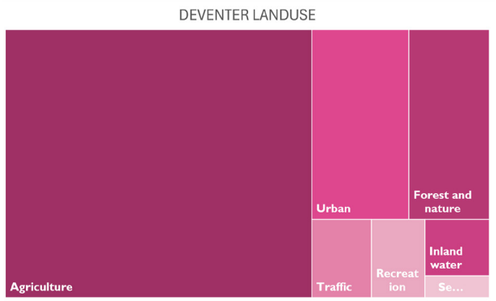


Description and source

A defining characteristic of Deventer is its cultural and artistic identity, sustained through events like Deventer Book Market (Deventer Boekenmarkt), and the Dickens Festival (Dickens Festijn) (Städtebund - Die Hanse, n.d.). These activities reinforce the city's reputation as a cultural hub. At the same time, efforts towards sustainability are visible in the integration of agricultural innovation, including biogas facilities utilising farm waste and the presence of wind turbines along agricultural landscapes. Concludingly, Deventer stands with further potential to demonstrate integration of heritage and energy in a singular zone.

Figure 27: Demographics and land use in Deventer (Image referencing in table of figures)

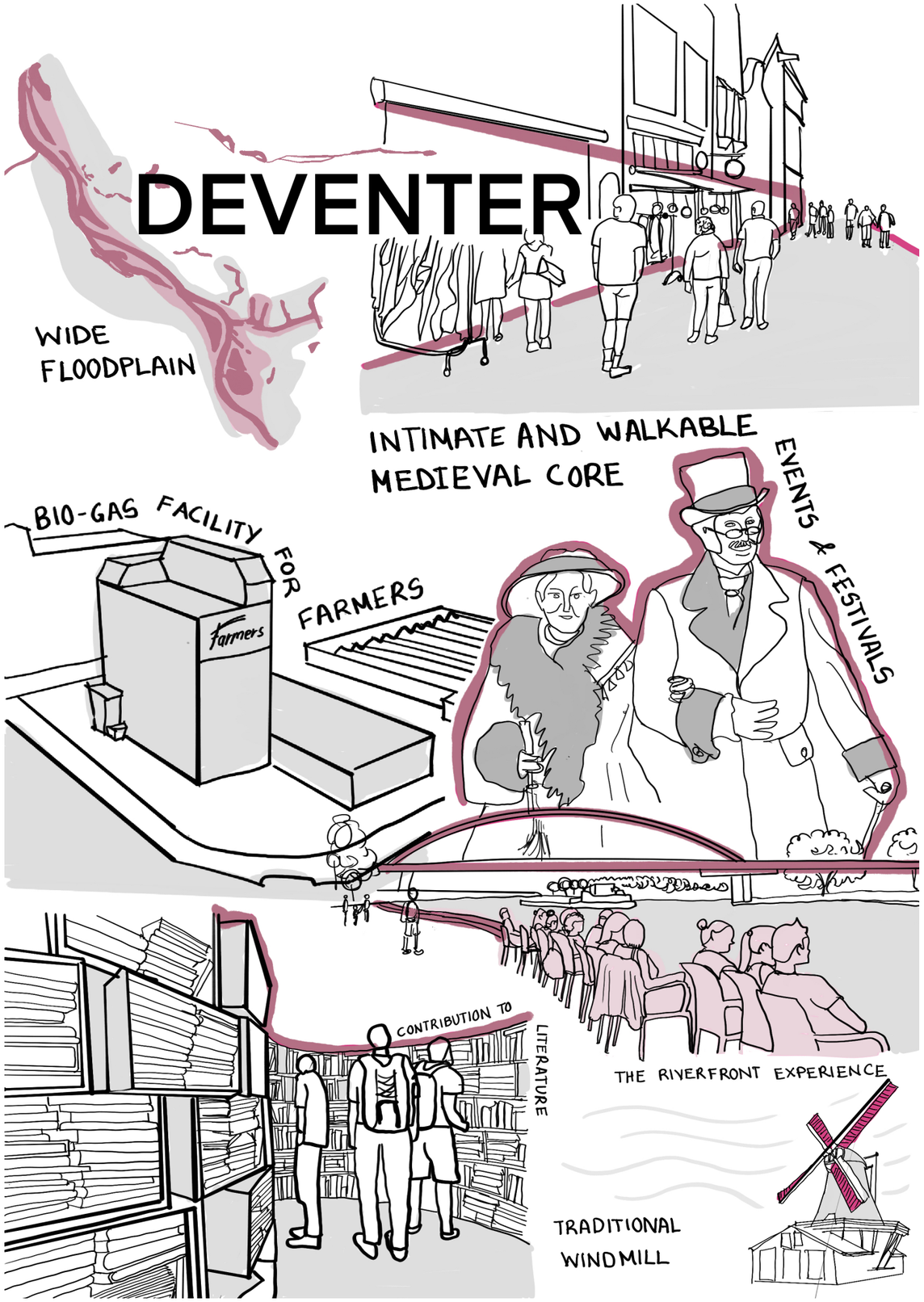


Figure 28: Deventer city characteristic illustration

Zutphen

Historical regional centre

Residents

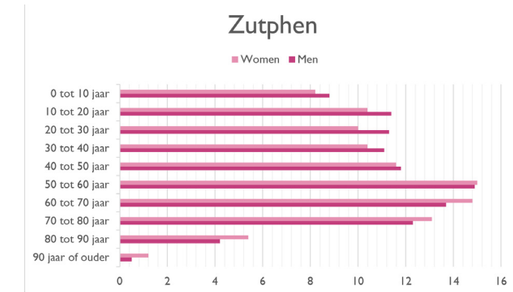
49.000

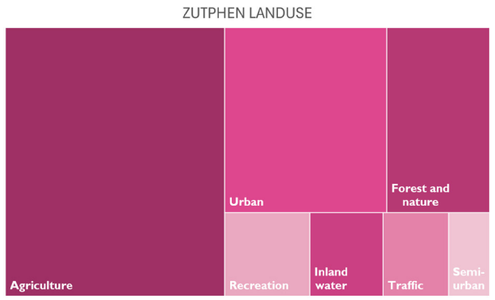
Service based

Limited education

Regional

The Hanseatic city of Zutphen is relatively small in scale, with a modest population that mostly consists of elderly residents (Inwoners per Gemeente, n.d.), contributing to a calm and slow-paced urban character. This demographic profile reinforces its identity as an intimate and highly walkable city, where daily life is concentrated within a compact historic core. Situated along the IJssel River, Zutphen has tributaries that enter its land mass and are used for river tourism. Additionally, they also capitalise on its well-preserved medieval street and historic towers. The local economy reflects this orientation, with a strong service-based sector centred on hospitality, small retail, and cultural tourism (Städtebund, n.d.). Community-led initiatives such as Biostad Zutphen further strengthen local engagement, promoting sustainable living practices and reinforcing the city's cohesive social fabric (BioStad Zutphen, 2025).





Description and source

Despite its strengths, Zutphen faces certain structural limitations. Educational facilities remain relatively limited, particularly in higher education (StatLine Is De Databank Van Het CBS, n.d.), largely due to the city's small scale and reduced range of urban amenities. This often results in younger populations seeking opportunities in larger nearby cities, reinforcing the existing demographic imbalance. However, not all is lost,by continuing to invest in community-driven projects, sustainable local economies, and its tourism appeal, Zutphen can further position itself as a resilient, livable city that balances heritage preservation with adaptive regional development.

Figure 29: Demographics and land use in Zutphen (Image referencing in table of figures)

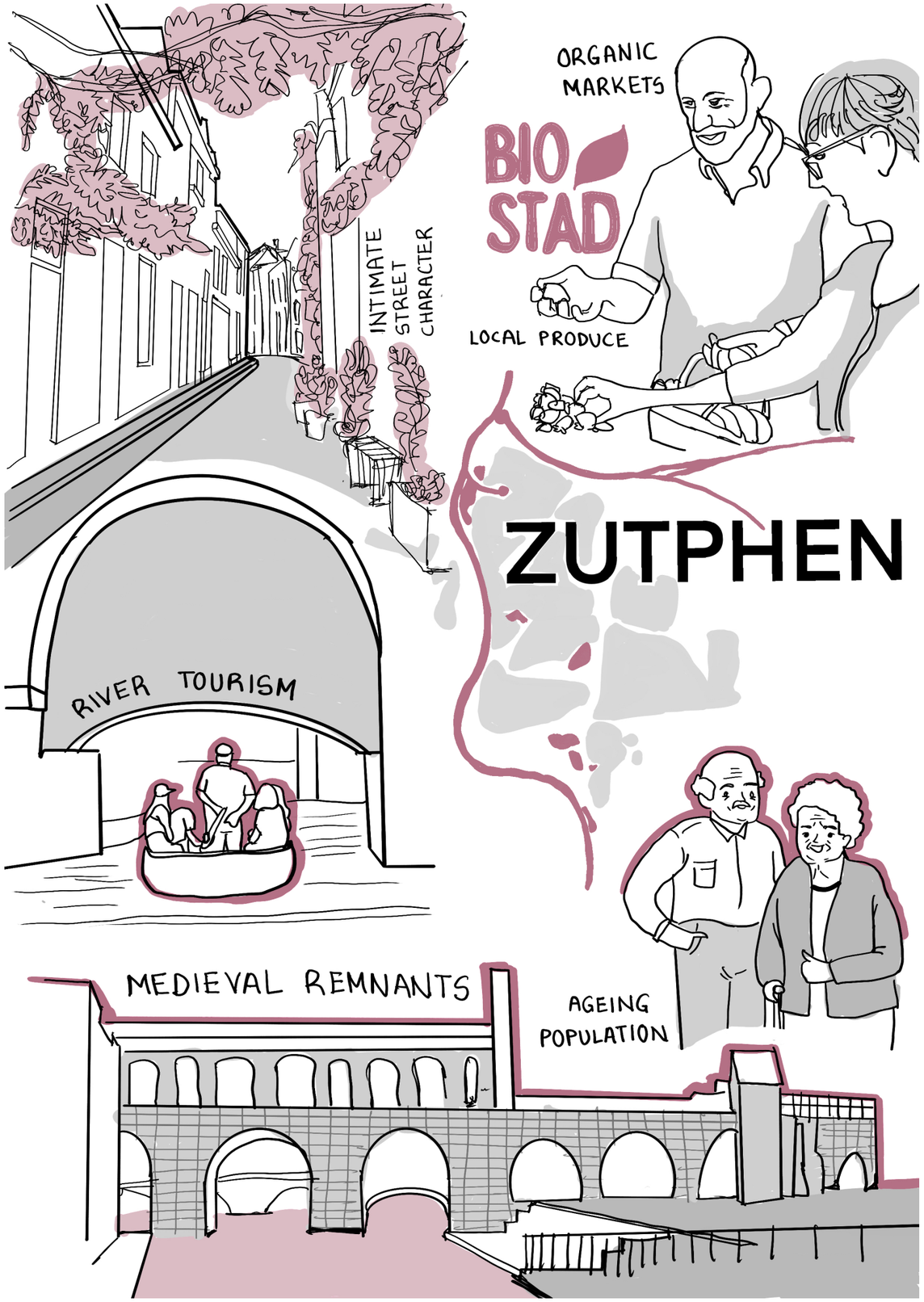


Figure 30: Zutphen city characteristic illustration

Doesburg

The small-scale heritage town

Residents

11.100

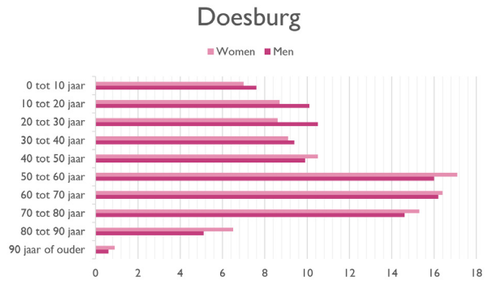
Small scale/retail

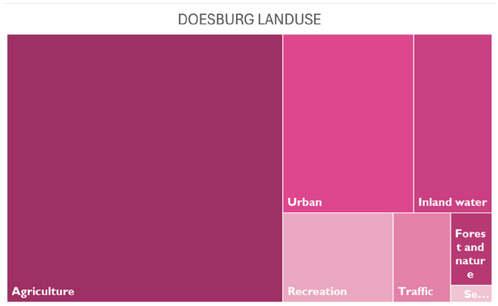
Very limited education

Local

Doesburg is the smallest among its regional counterparts, strategically located at the confluence of the IJssel River and the Oude IJssel, near the German border. This meeting of rivers forms fertile valleys that strongly shape the surrounding landscape and land use patterns. With approximately 11,100 households and the highest proportion of elderly residents among the Hanseatic cities (Inwoners per Gemeente, n.d.).

Doesburg maintains a quiet, small-scale character. Despite its size, it has preserved a highly functional historic core, where heritage buildings - such as former merchant houses are actively repurposed into restaurants, local shops, and production spaces, including the well-known mustard industry associated with Doesburgsche Mosterd - en Azijnfabriek (Doesburg Tourism, n.d.).





Description and source

The people of Doesburg form a close-knit population that frequently engages in volunteer-led initiatives, reinforcing social cohesion and local identity (Vrijwilligerswerk in Doesburg | Buurtacademie Doesburg, n.d.). At the same time, the river valleys formed by the IJssel and Oude IJssel provide some of the most agriculturally rich lands in the region, supporting productive farming activities that remain closely tied to the city's economy and spatial structure. Together, this combination allows it to function as a resilient rural-urban node with significant potential to strengthen its local economy while maintaining its distinctive cultural and environmental character.

Figure 31: Demographics and land use in Doesburg (Image referencing in table of figures)

Figure 32: Doesburg city characteristic illustration

Spatial analysis on a national scale

Figure 33: Map showing the national green structures (PDOK, z.d.-a,-b)

Figure 34: Map showing the national main infrastructure (PDOK, z.d.-c)

Figure 35: Map showing the national Water structures and floodrisk (PDOK, z.d.-d,-e)

At the national scale, the green structure of the Netherlands consists of an interconnected network of natural areas and ecological corridors, formalized in the Natuurnetwerk Nederland and Natura 2000 (Ministerie van Landbouw, Visserij, Voedselzekerheid en Natuur, 2023). Large, continuous landscapes are essential for supporting biodiversity and reducing fragmentation. The Veluwe plays an important role as the largest Natura 2000 site in the country.

At the national scale, infrastructure in the Netherlands is organized as a dense and well-connected network of railways and motorways. The railway system, managed by ProRail, and the motorway network, overseen by Rijkswaterstaat, form the backbone of national mobility. These networks connect major cities, ports, and regions, supporting efficient transport of people and goods and strengthening the country's economic structure (Rijkswaterstaat, z.d.-b).

At the national scale, water in the Netherlands is organized in a connected system of rivers, canals, and lakes. The major rivers the Rijn, Maas, and IJssel are central to this system. They shape the landscape and are important for water drainage, transport, and flood protection. This shows how strongly the Dutch water system depends on its connection to these large rivers (Rijkswaterstaat, z.d.-a).

Spatial analysis on a regional scale: Ecology

Figure 36: Veluwe (Drenth, 2024)

Figure 37: The IJssel (Oude Kade in een Nieuw Jasje, z.d.)

The ecological structure surrounding the Dutch Hanseatic cities is characterized by a strong interconnection between water and landscape systems. The IJsselmeer and the IJssel form the backbone of a dynamic blue network, which is not only important for water drainage and storage, but also functions as a important role in biodiversity and habitat connectivity. The presence of multiple Natura 2000 sites highlights the high ecological value of the area, where protection and development must be carefully balanced (Ministerie van Landbouw, Visserij, Voedselzekerheid en Natuur, 2023).
At the same time, the location in a low-lying delta entails a significant flood risk, making flood risk a determining factor in spatial planning decisions. The Veluwe functions as an important green core area and contributes to a robust green corridor, connecting natural areas and facilitating species migration. In combination with the blue corridor along the river systems, this creates an integrated ecological network.
This layered structure demonstrates that ecology does not stand alone, but is strongly intertwined with water safety, landscape, and spatial development in the Hanseatic region.

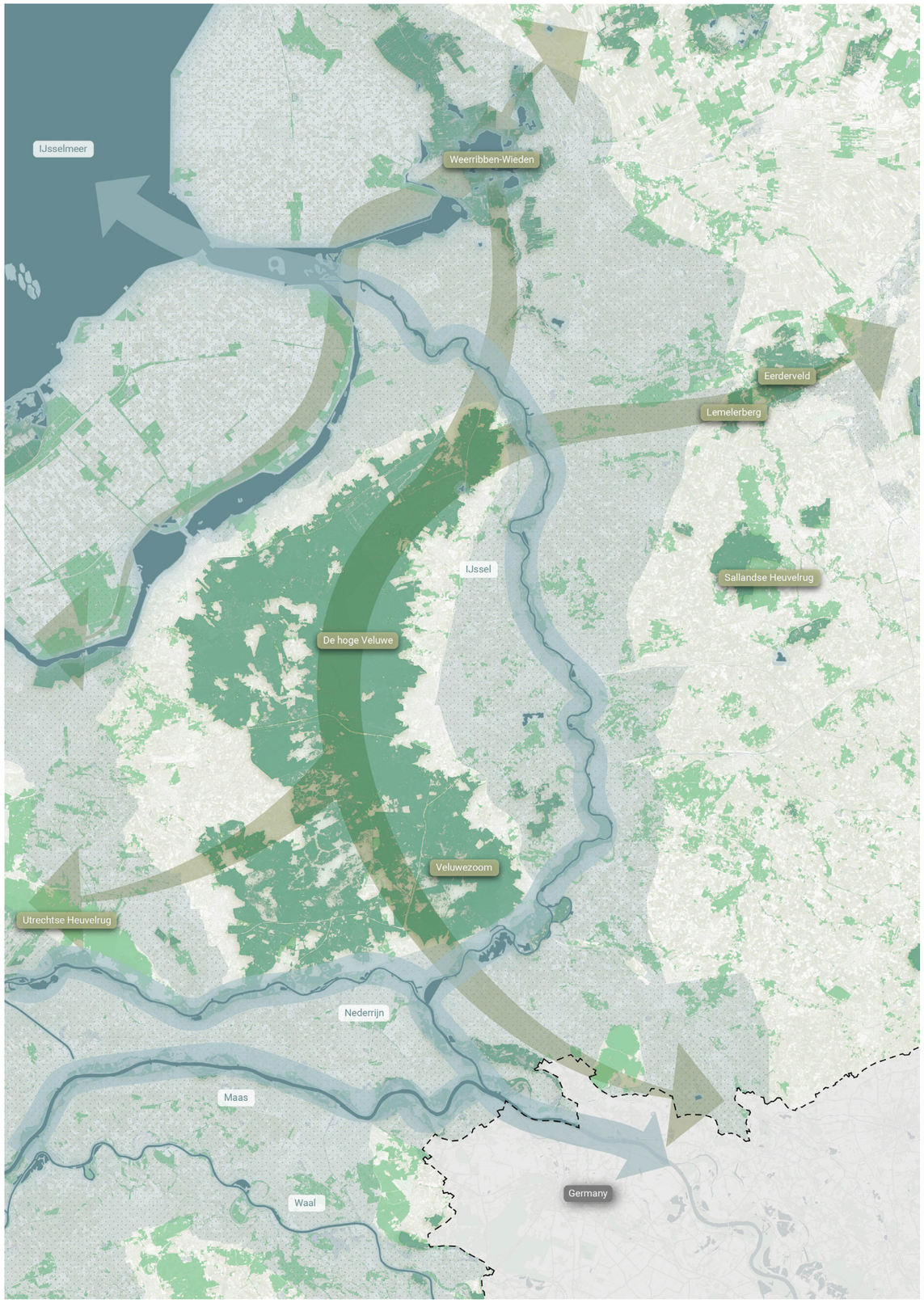


Figure 38: Ecology in the Hanseatic region

Spatial analysis on a regional scale: Infrastructure

Figure 39: Zwolle station (Deerpeter, 2024)

Figure 40: Car-oriented infrastructure (Redactie 1Zwolle, 2025)

The infrastructural structure surrounding the Dutch Hanseatic cities is defined by a well-connected and multi-layered mobility network. Key elements within this system are the intercity stations, which function as central nodes in the national and regional transport network. These stations are embedded within an extensive system of train routes, securing efficient connections between cities and supporting both daily commuting and longer-distance travel.

In addition, the network of main roads plays a crucial role in regional accessibility, facilitating the movement of goods and people. The presence of waterways further strengthens the system, linking the region to national and international logistic corridors and offering sustainable transport alternatives.
This layered infrastructure system shows that mobility in the Hanseatic region is not reliant on a single network, but rather on the interaction between rail, road, and water.

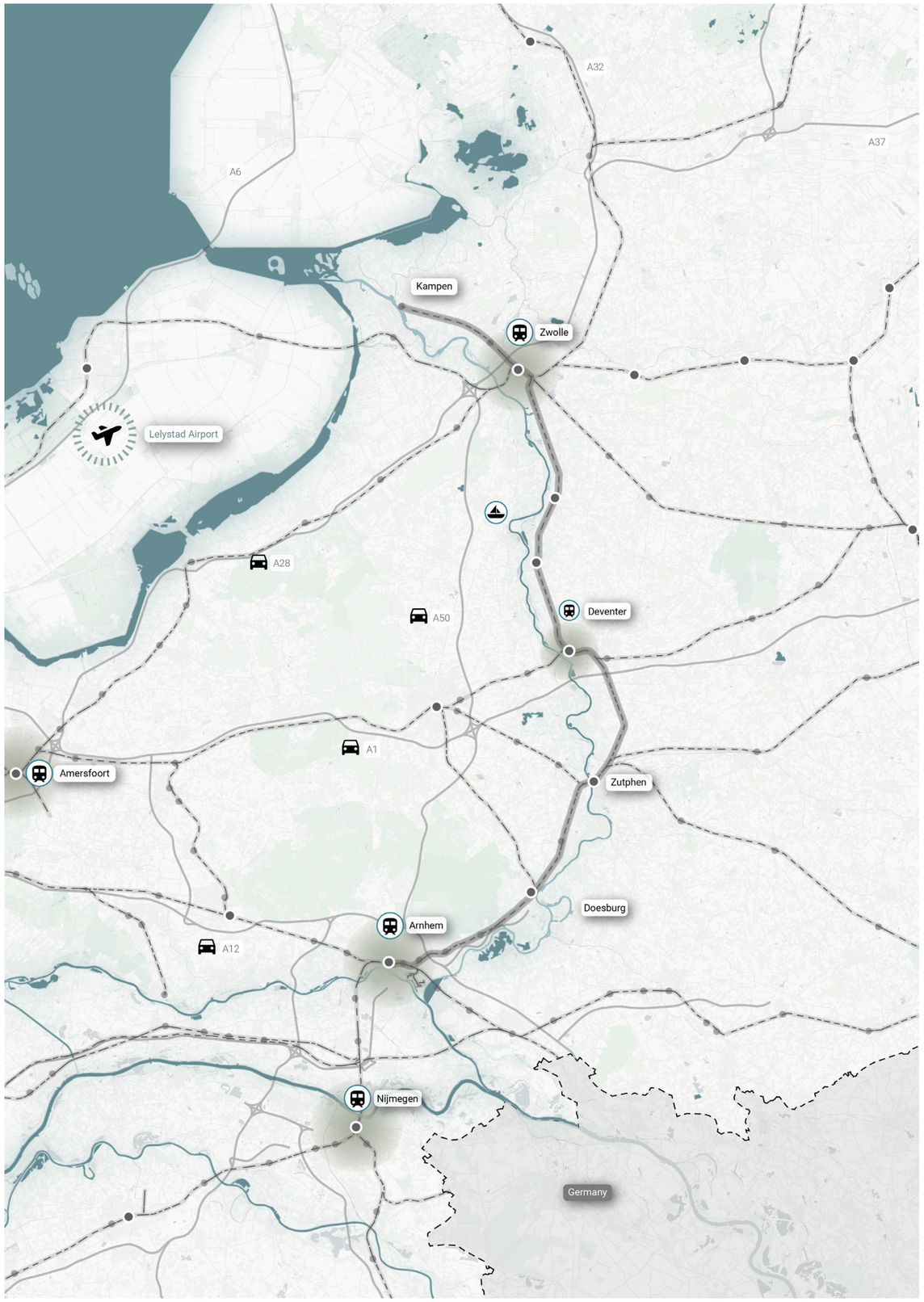


Figure 41: Infrastructure in the Hanseatic region

Spatial analysis on a regional scale: Housing and population

Figure 42: Development regarding growing population (Leren van Woningbouwprojecten Voor de Stad van Morgen | NWO, 2025)

Figure 43: Elderly residents (Luister Ook Naar Ouderen Bij het Maken van Beleid - Netwerk100, 2020)

The housing and population structure surrounding the Dutch Hanseatic cities reveals a differentiated pattern of growth and demographic composition. Cities such as Deventer and Zwolle show a population increase of approximately 5–10%, indicating their role as attractive urban centers for living and working. In contrast, cities like Kampen, Zutphen, and Doesburg experience more moderate growth between 0–5%. The surrounding villages show a slight population decline of -5 to 0%, reflecting a larger trend of rural depopulation (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS], n.d.-a).

In addition to these spatial differences in growth, demographic composition varies across the region. The proportion of elderly residents is relatively higher around Deventer and Zutphen (CBS, n.d.-b), while Zwolle has a comparatively higher share of younger inhabitants (CBS, n.d.-c). This highlights how urban centers continue to attract population growth, while smaller settlements face decline.

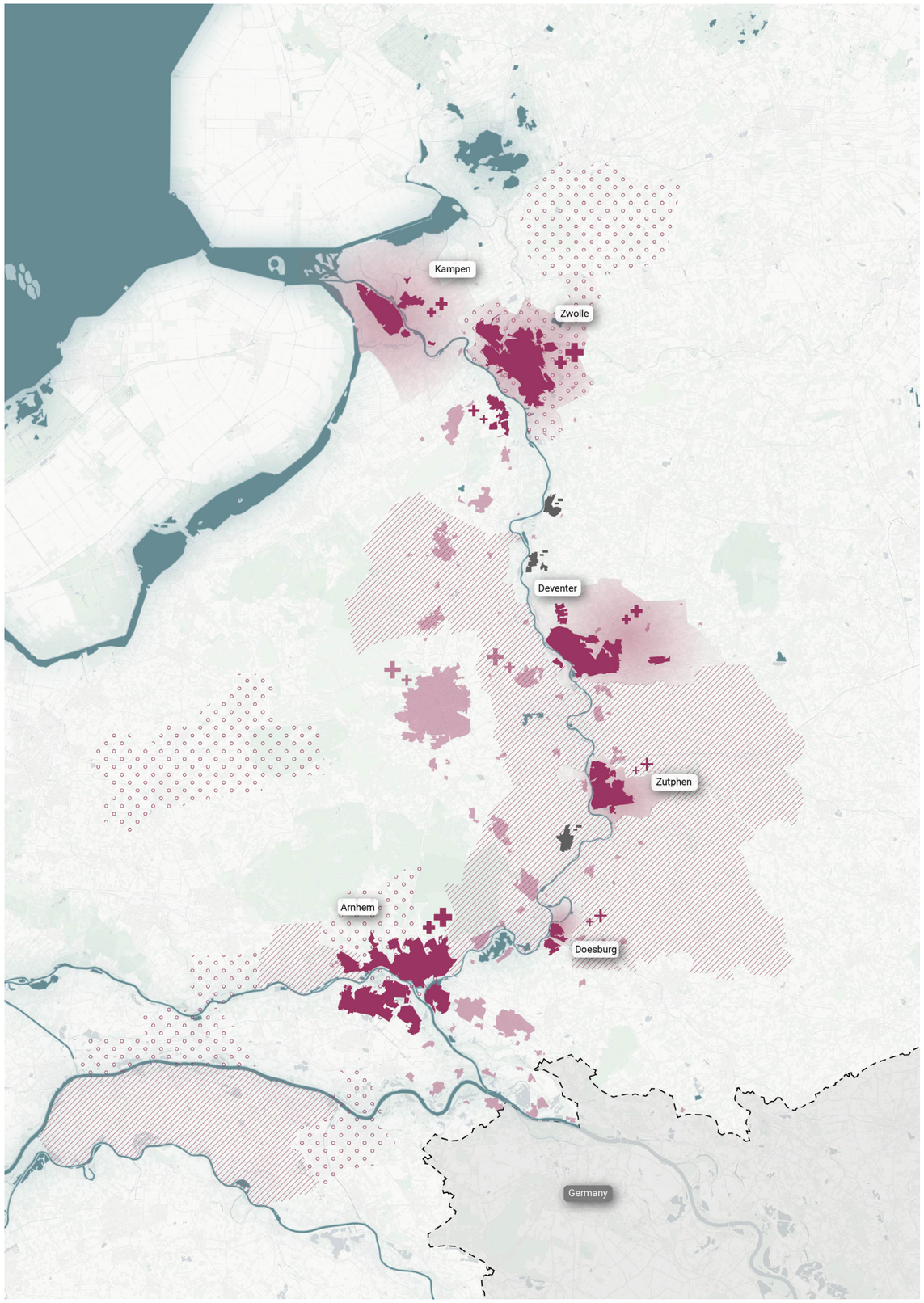


Figure 44: Housing and population in the Hanseatic region

Spatial analysis on a regional scale: Economy

Figure 45: Variety of economic avenues

Figure 46: Big industries along connectors

The economic structure surrounding the Dutch Hanseatic cities is characterized by a diverse and spatially differentiated system of functions and sectors. Key economic elements include agriculture, education, healthcare, logistics, business districts, heritage, tourism, and shopping areas. These functions are historically rooted in the region's development as part of the Hanseatic trade network, where cities such as Deventer, Zwolle, and Zutphen grew into important economic and commercial centers (Canon van Nederland, n.d)

Kampen is primarily oriented towards agriculture, river-based logistics, and energy-related industries, benefiting from its strategic location along the IJssel. Zwolle functions as a regional hub, with a strong focus on education, commercial activity, public services, and logistics, supported by its central position within infrastructure networks. Deventer combines agricultural activity with a strong presence in arts and culture, alongside a well-developed business district.

In Zutphen, the economy is more oriented towards elderly care facilities and tourism, showing both demographic trends and its strong historical identity as a heritage city. Doesburg emphasizes agriculture and heritage, with its historic core functioning as an important cultural and economic driver.

This economic landscape highlights the complementary roles of the cities within the region. It shows how historical trade structures have evolved into a diverse modern economy, where specialization, tourism, and regional cooperation continue to shape economic development.

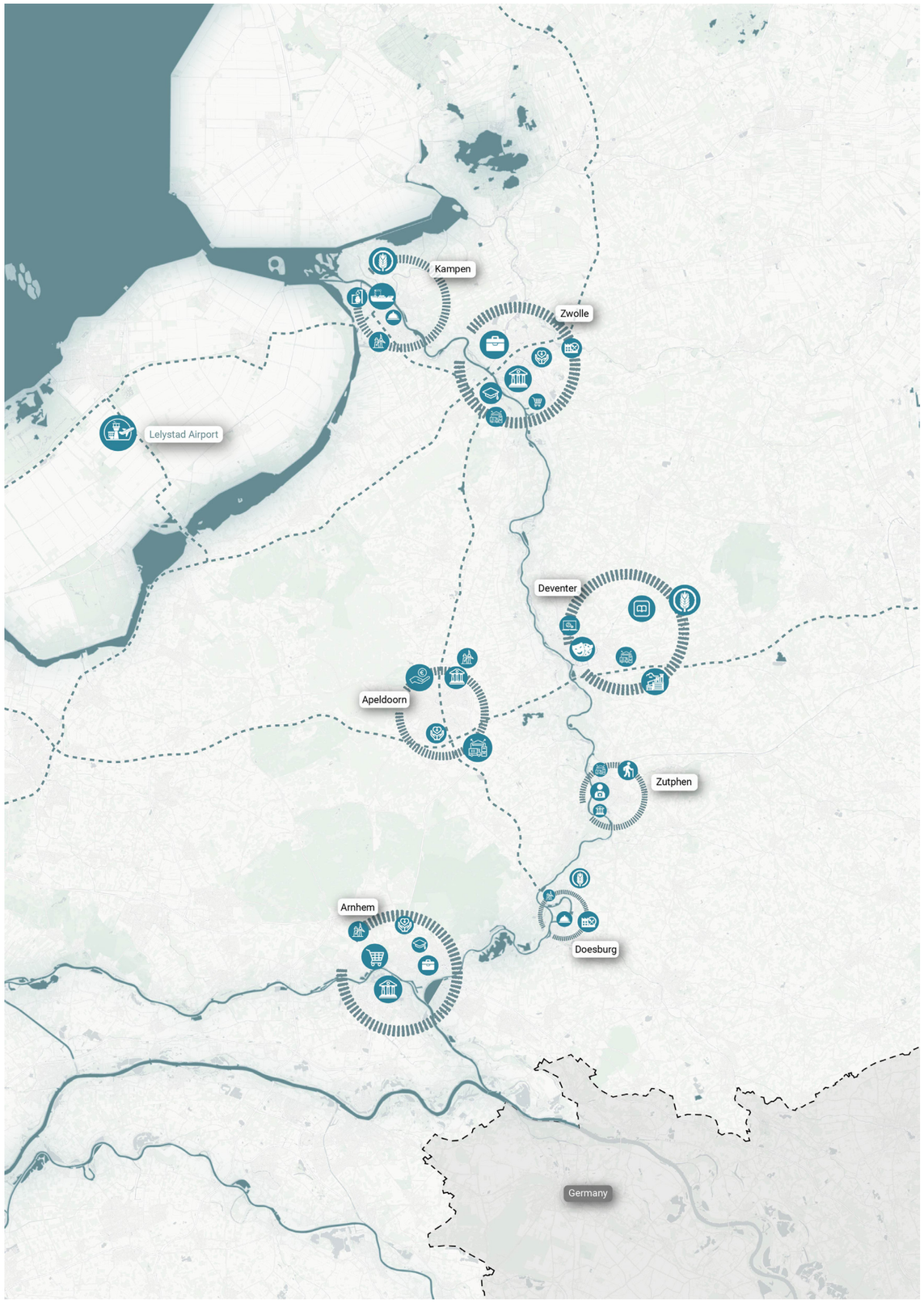


Figure 47: Economy in the Hanseatic region

Spatial analysis on a regional scale: Energy

Figure 48: Wind turbine park in the Netherlands (Kathy Büscher from Pixabay)

Figure 49: Solar park combined with argiculure (Roy Michielsen/ERF BV)

The energy structure surrounding the Dutch Hanseatic cities is characterized by a transition towards a more sustainable and decentralized system. Large-scale solar parks already play an important role in regional energy production, with additional future solar parks indicating a continued shift towards solar energy (Zon op Kaart, z.d.). Alongside this, wind turbines contribute significantly to renewable energy generation, particularly in open landscapes and along infrastructural corridors.
The distribution and reliability of this energy are supported by the high voltage electricity network, which forms the backbone of the regional energy system. This network connects production sites to areas of high demand, ensuring stability and continuity in energy supply.
A key characteristic of the region is the high energy consumption within industrial areas of the cities, where demand remains concentrated and continuous. This creates both pressure on the existing system and opportunities for innovation.
This layered energy landscape highlights the growing interaction between production, distribution, and consumption. It underlines the importance of integrating renewable energy sources with existing infrastructure to support a resilient and future-proof energy system in the Hanseatic region.

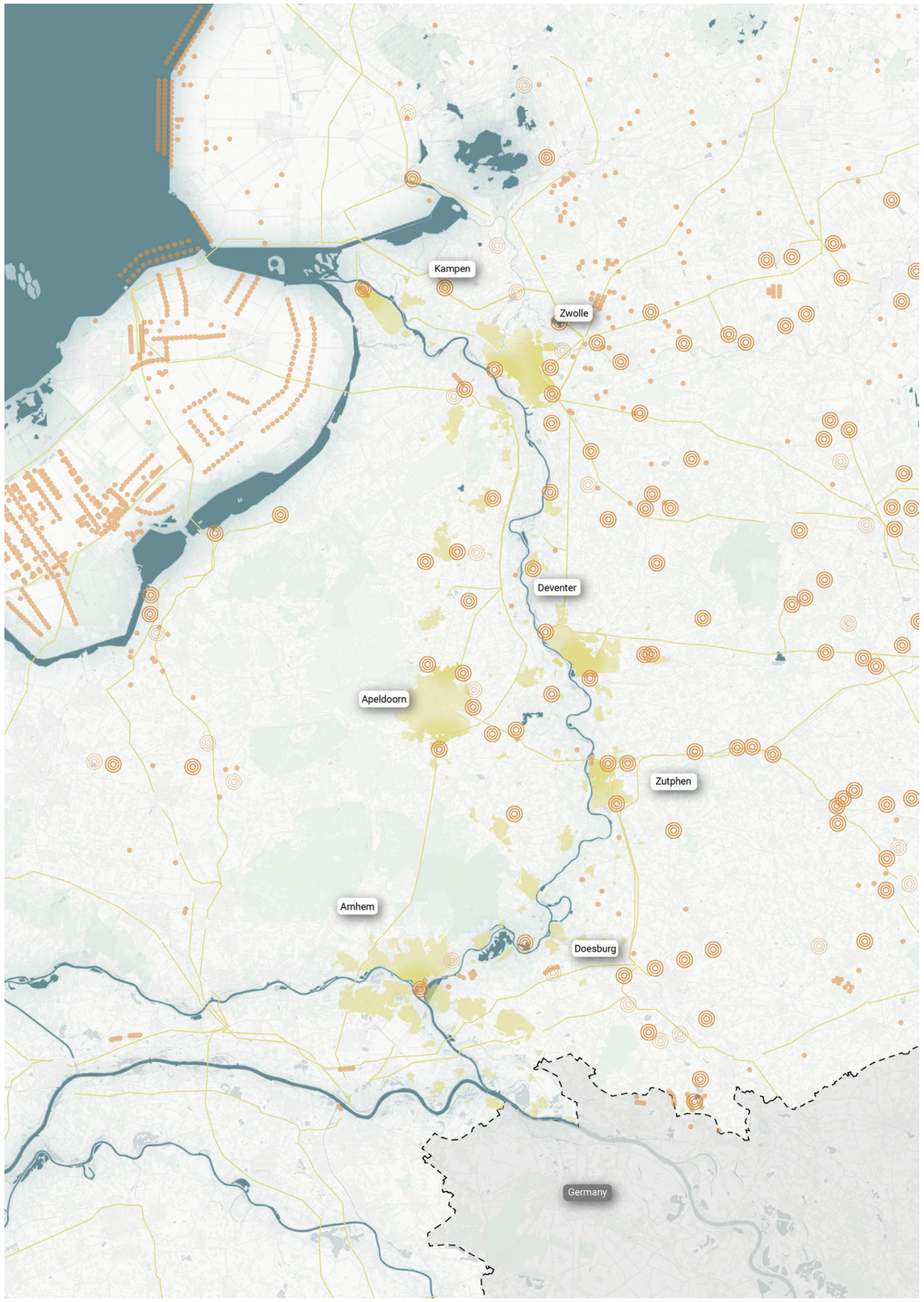


Figure 50: Current electricity supply in the region ((ArcGIS Dashboards, z.d.), (rivm, z.d.)

Spatial analysis on a regional scale: Conclusion

The region around the Dutch Hanseatic cities has been assessed across several key layers: ecology, housing and population, infrastructure, economy and energy. But also looked at education, cultural heritage and urban densification. Overall, the results show a fairly balanced situation, but not really high. There are some clear contrasts. Cultural heritage scores the highest (4.5), highlighting the strong historical identity and character of the area. Ecology also performs relatively high (3.5). In contrast, education and urban densification score the lowest (both 2). This shows where we have to focus on in our future vision for the area, and what is already strong.

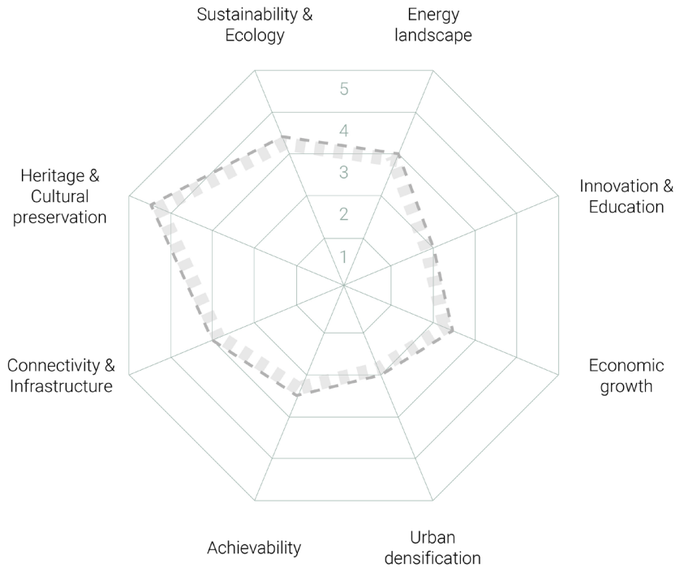
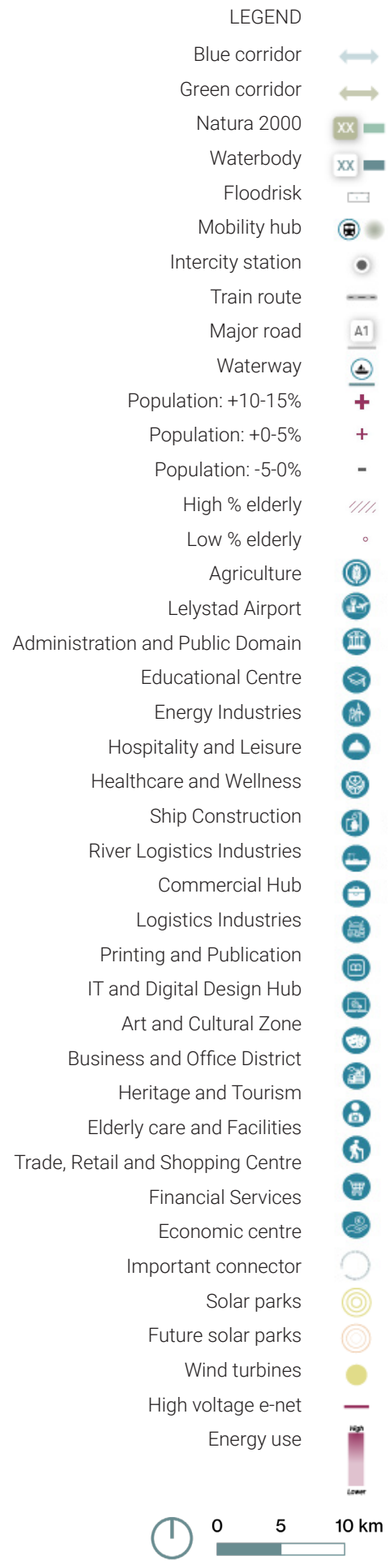


Figure 51: Assessment of key regional layers highlighting strengths and areas for improvement in the Dutch Hanseatic cities



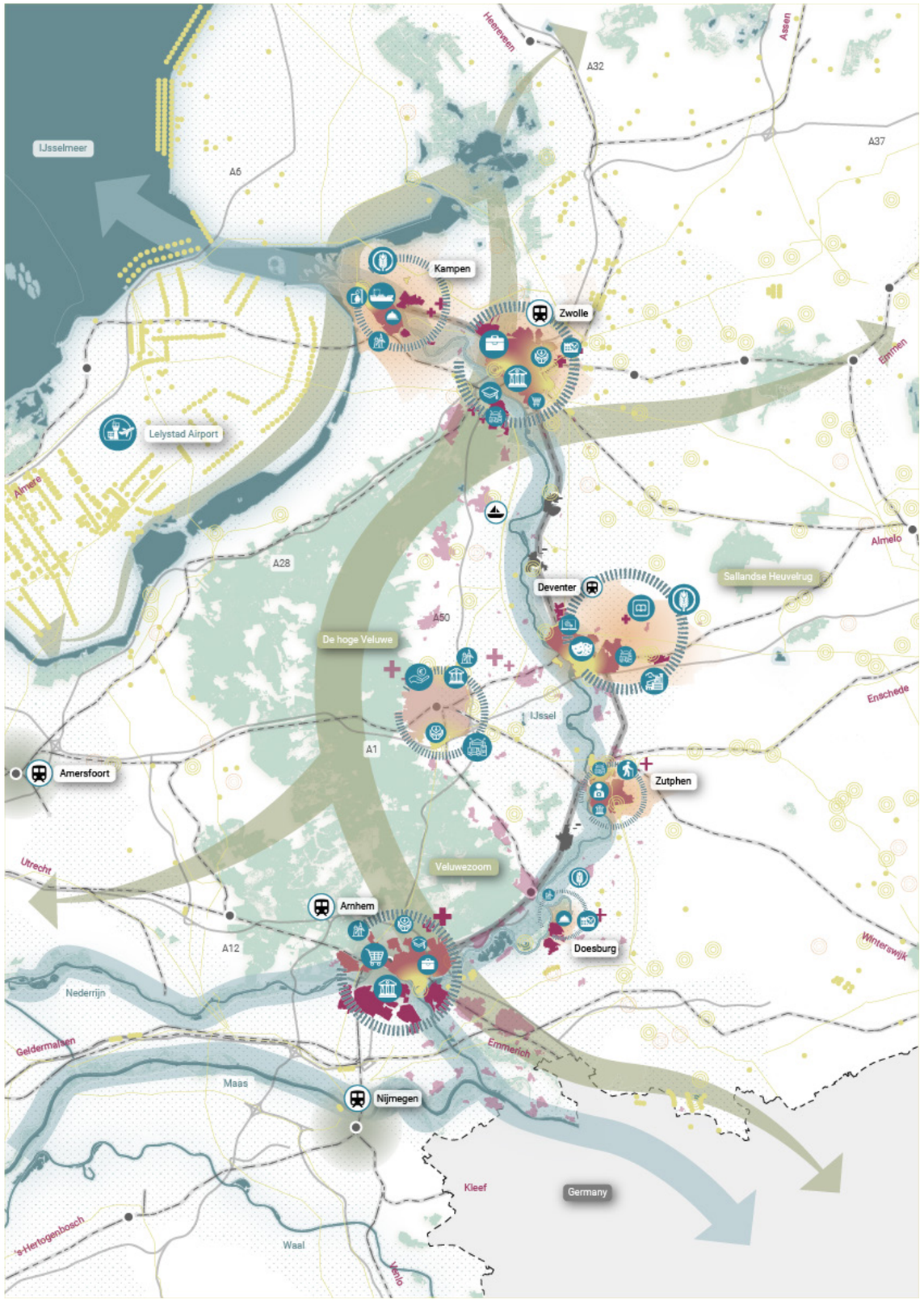


Figure 52: Map of key regional layers

Energy

National aim

How we live, work, travel, and produce is largely shaped by the energy system. Our current way of life is built on the fossil-based system developed in the last century. To secure a sustainable and economically strong future for the Netherlands, this system must transition to one that is climate-neutral and less dependent on energy imports from geopolitically risky regions outside Europe.
In line with national climate commitments, the future energy system must no longer contribute to global warming. This transition also has significant spatial implications. Renewable energy requires more space, is mostly produced within the country and usually above ground.
At the same time, energy demand is changing. New infrastructure, such as charging networks and heat pumps, is needed to make use of sustainable energy flows. The environmental and safety impacts of energy production, transport, storage, and use will also shape spatial planning. During the transition, flexibility is essential, as old and new systems will need to coexist for some time (Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting en Ruimtelijke Ordening, 2025).

Current energy demand

The current energy demand in the provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel is still largely dependent on fossil-based energy carriers. Natural gas (111,2 PJ) and fossil fuels (86,2 PJ) together make up the majority of total energy consumption, indicating a strong reliance on non-renewable sources. Electricity currently accounts for a smaller share, around 54 PJ, while heat demand is largely fulfilled through gas-based systems. The contribution of alternative energy carriers such as biogas and hydrogen (H2) remains minimal at present, reflecting their early stage of development within the regional energy system (Nieuwe Energie Overijssel, 2025; Provincie Gelderland, 2025).
When we look at the current energy demand of the Dutch Hanseatic cities, these cities and their surroundings are embedded within the same provincial energy system and will likely follow similar transition pathways. This report examines the total number of inhabitants of the Provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel combined and the total number of inhabitants of the Hanseatic cities. From this, the percentage (+-12%) that the Hanseatic cities make up of the two provinces is derived. The energy demand for the Hanseatic cities was also calculated using this percentage.

Future energy demand

By 2050, Gelderland and Overijssel aim to fully transition to a renewable energy system, drastically changing their energy composition. Electricity demand is projected to increase significantly from 54 PJ today to approximately 146 PJ. Heat production, biogas generation, and hydrogen use are also expected to rise, supporting a more sustainable and diversified energy supply. What stands out is that the total energy demand has decreased, despite a growing population, especially in Gelderland (CBS, 2023). This reduction is mainly due to the higher efficiency of electricity-based energy systems compared to fossil fuels. Renewable electricity allows for more efficient heating (heat pumps) and transport solutions, lowering overall energy consumption. These developments indicate that while the energy mix will shift heavily toward renewables, efficiency gains will play a crucial role in meeting future demand sustainably, ensuring that growth does not translate into higher energy consumption (Nieuwe Energie Overijssel, 2025).
To specialise this shift, we look at the different renewable energy producers and see how many of each producer you need to produce 1 PJ per Year. This is shown in the graph on the right.

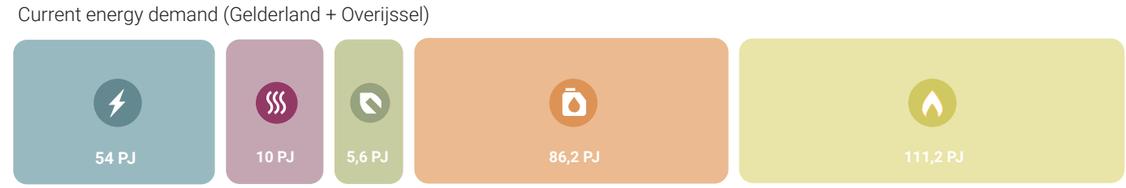


Figure 55: Diagram current energy demand Gelderand and Overijssel. (Provicie Gelderland, 2025 and Nieuwe energie Overijssel, 2025)

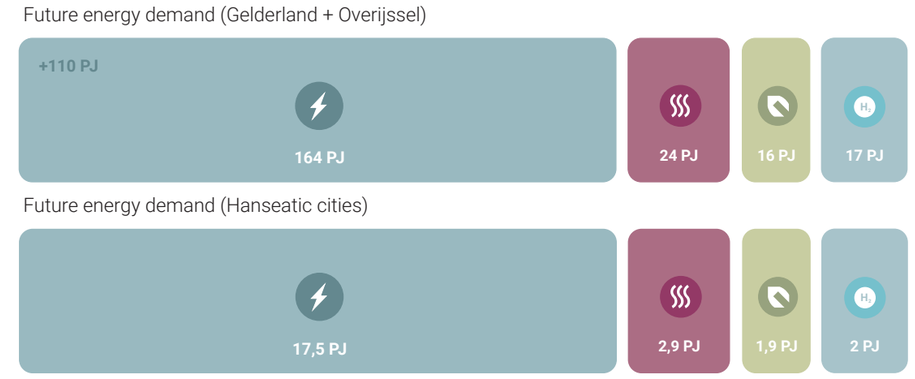


Figure 56: Diagram future energy demand Gelderland, Overijssel and Hanseatic region. (Provicie Gelderland, 2025 and Nieuwe energie Overijssel, 2025)

	Gelderland	Overijssel	Together
Elcetricity	36 PJ	18 PJ	54 PJ
Heat	5 PJ	5 PJ	10 PJ
Bio-gas	5 PJ	0,6 PJ	5,6 PJ
H2	0 PJ	0 PJ	0 PJ
Fossil fuel	56 PJ	30,2 PJ	86,2 PJ
Gas	70 PJ	41,2 PJ	111,2 PJ
Total	**172 PJ**	**90 PJ**	**262 PJ**

	Hanseatic citys
Elcetricity	6,5 PJ
Heat	1,2 PJ
Bio-gas	0,7 PJ
H2	0 PJ
Fossil fuel	10,3 PJ
Gas	13,3 PJ
Total	**32 PJ**

Figure 53: Table current energy demand Gelderland, Overijssel and Hanseatic region. (Provicie Gelderland, 2025 and Nieuwe energie Overijssel, 2025)

	Gelderland	Overijssel	Together
Elcetricity	112 PJ	34 PJ	146 PJ
Heat	15 PJ	9 PJ	24 PJ
Bio-gas	10 PJ	6 PJ	16 PJ
H2	8 PJ	9 PJ	17 PJ
Fossil fuel	0 PJ	0 PJ	0 PJ
Gas	0 PJ	0 PJ	0 PJ
Total	**145 PJ**	**58 PJ**	**203 PJ**

	Hanseatic citys
Elcetricity	17,5 PJ
Heat	2, PJ
Bio-gas	1,9 PJ
H2	2 PJ
Fossil fuel	0 PJ
Gas	0 PJ
Total	**24,3 PJ**

Figure 54: Table future energy demand Gelderland, Overijssel and Hanseatic region. (Provicie Gelderland, 2025 and Nieuwe energie Overijssel, 2025)

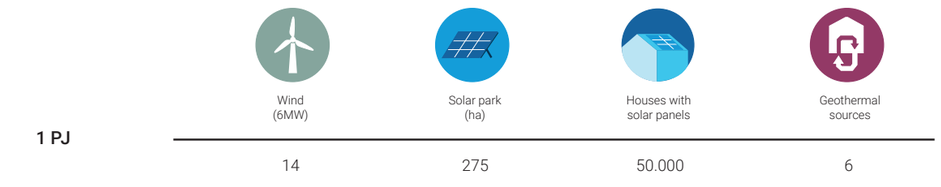


Figure 57: Needs for the production of 1 PJ (Nieuwe energie Overijssel, 2025)

Energy demand

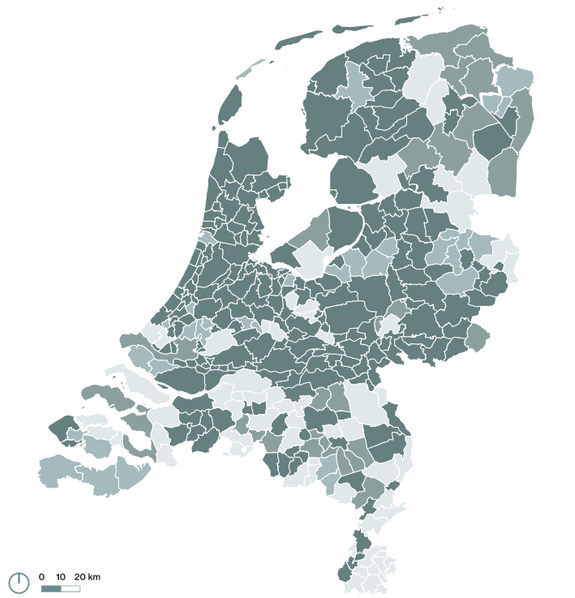


Figure 58: Map showing the national grid-congestion (TenneT, z.d)

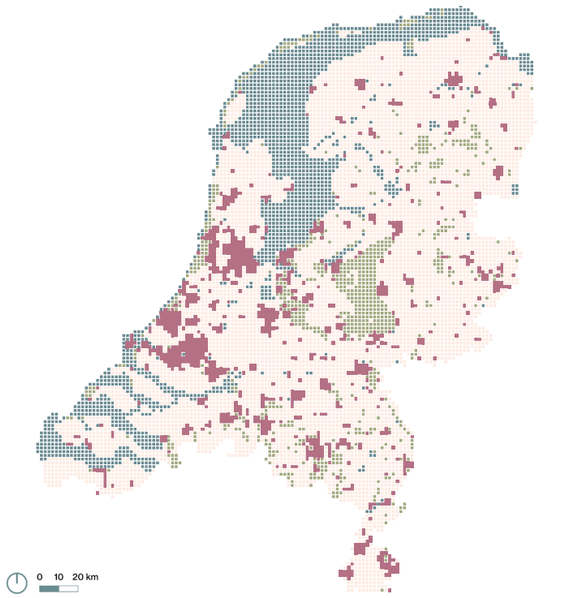


Figure 59: Map showing the national land-uses.

Transitioning away from fossil fuels

The transition away from fossil fuels and natural gas towards renewable energy is essential for a sustainable future. However, increasing electrification also creates challenges, particularly in the form of grid congestion. As more sectors, such as transport and heating, shift to electricity, the demand for power rises, placing significant pressure on existing grid infrastructure. This can result in capacity constraints, connection delays, and decreased reliability in certain regions.

A potential solution lies in the use of hydrogen (H_2). Hydrogen can act as an energy carrier, storing excess renewable electricity and redistributing it when needed, thereby reducing peak loads on the grid and helping to alleviate congestion.

Energy flow land use

Energy flows of heat and electricity vary across different land-use types, and can be distinguished between production and consumption. Areas such as the historic centre, urban neighbourhoods, and distribution are primarily characterised by energy consumption, particularly electricity and heat for residential and commercial use. In contrast, production-related land uses are the industrial harbour, greenhouses and agriculture. Natural areas such as the IJssel and the Veluwe play a more limited role in both energy production and consumption.

What stands out are the greenhouses and the industrial harbour; these land uses both have high levels of production and consumption. However, it is important to note that there are relatively few greenhouses in the area, making these extreme values less representative of the overall region.

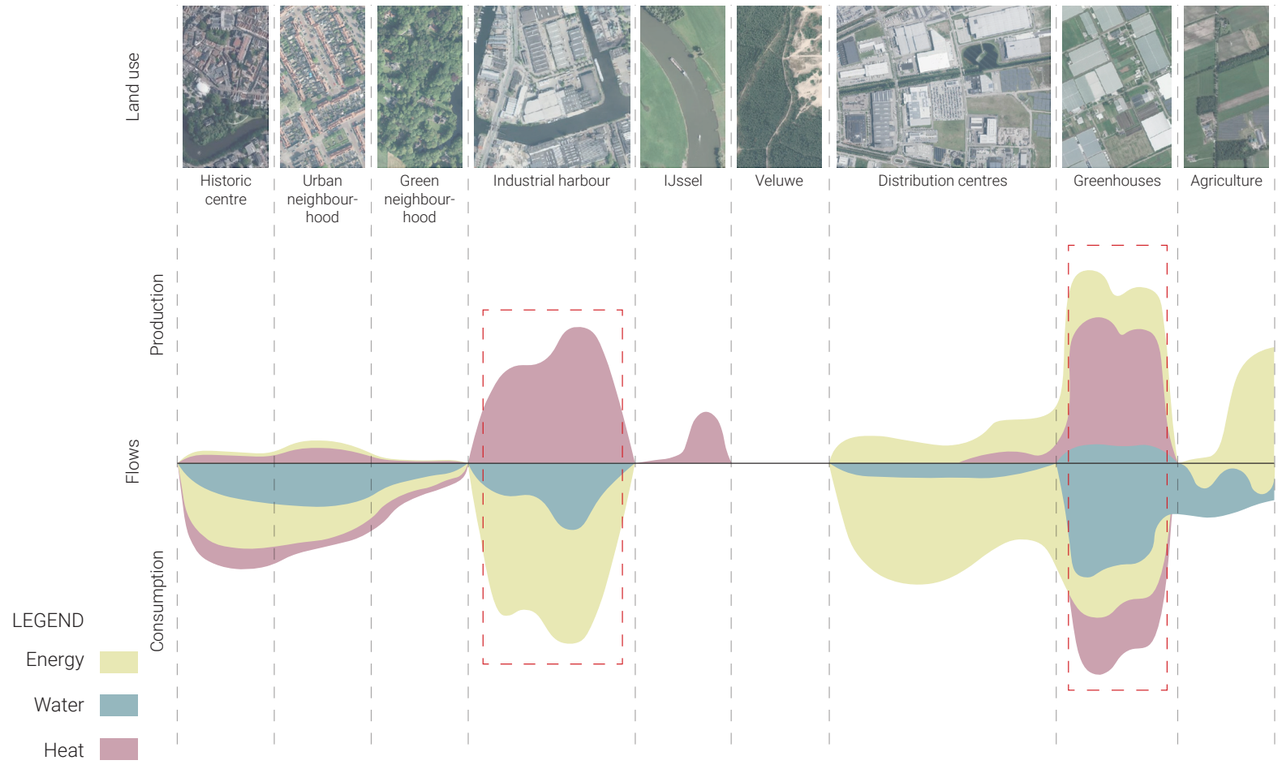


Figure 60: Diagram showing the electricity, heat, and water flows of each land-use in the Hanseatic region.

Solar potential

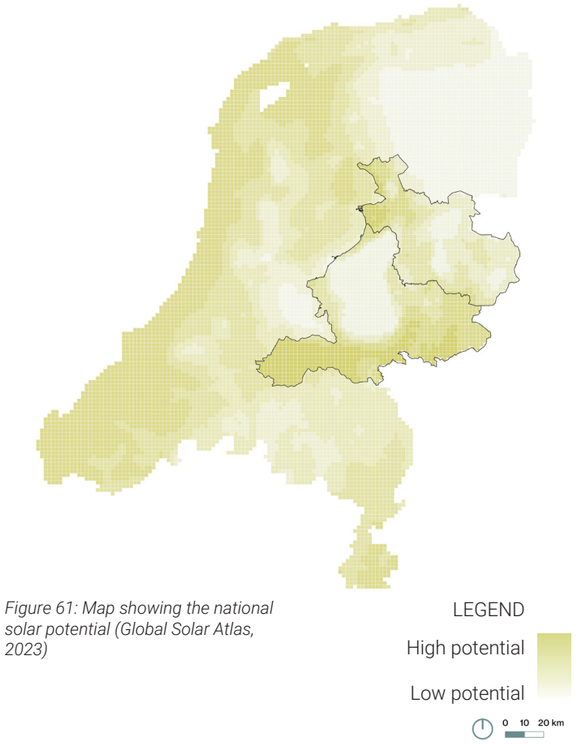


Figure 61: Map showing the national solar potential (Global Solar Atlas, 2023)

Solar energy development in the Hanseatic region shows clear spatial variation, with the most favourable conditions found in Flevoland and towards the German border. Despite this, the region around the Dutch Hanseatic cities still offers meaningful opportunities, particularly in the northern and eastern areas where conditions are more suitable. The presence of the Veluwe significantly limits solar potential due to its dense vegetation and protected landscape, reducing the availability of usable space.

This contrast highlights the importance of location-specific strategies when considering solar energy expansion. While some areas are less suitable, the overall region still holds considerable potential, especially when focusing on more open and less constrained landscapes (Global Solar Atlas, 2023).

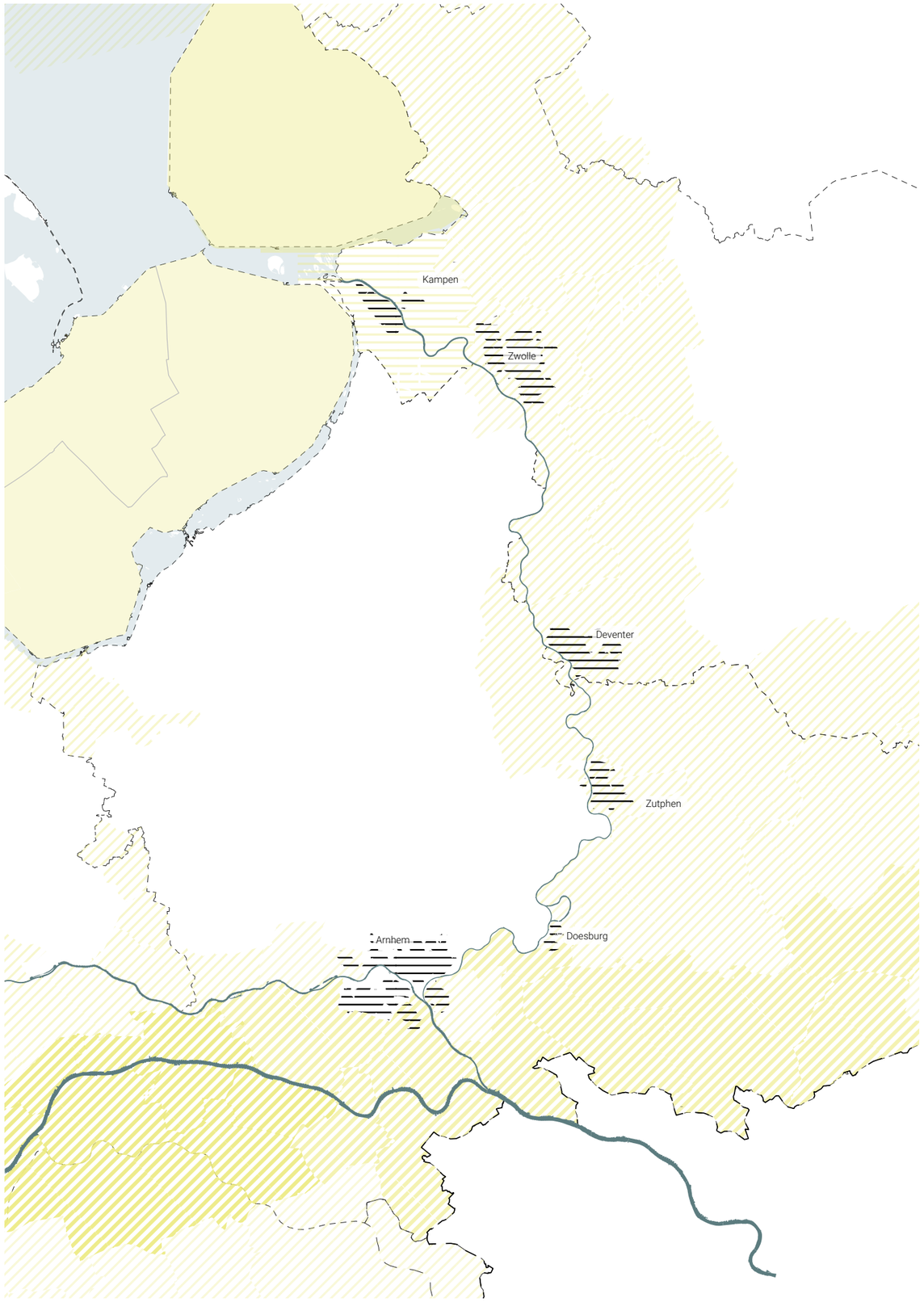
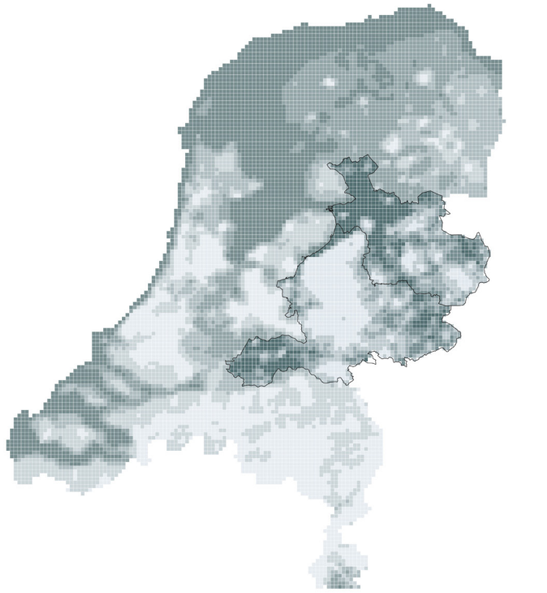


Figure 62: Map showing the regional solar potential (Global Solar Atlas, 2023)

Wind potential



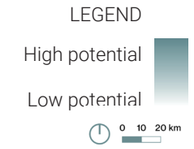
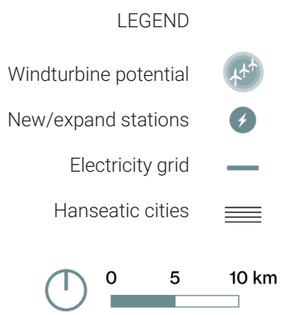


Figure 63: Map showing the national wind potential (Global Wind Atlas, 2025)

Wind energy potential in the region shows a similar spatial pattern, with the highest potential located in Flevoland and the lowest around the Veluwe. Regardless of whether areas are protected or not, the Veluwe regularly shows limited suitability for wind energy development. Within the Hanseatic region, the most promising opportunities are found in the northern parts, particularly on both sides of Kampen and towards the IJsselmeer, where open landscapes and favourable wind conditions enhance the potential for wind energy.

The rest of the Hanseatic region has lower potential for wind energy (Global Wind Atlas, 2025). These differences emphasise the importance of focusing wind energy development in areas with the most favourable conditions, while recognising that not all parts of the region are suitable for large-scale implementation.



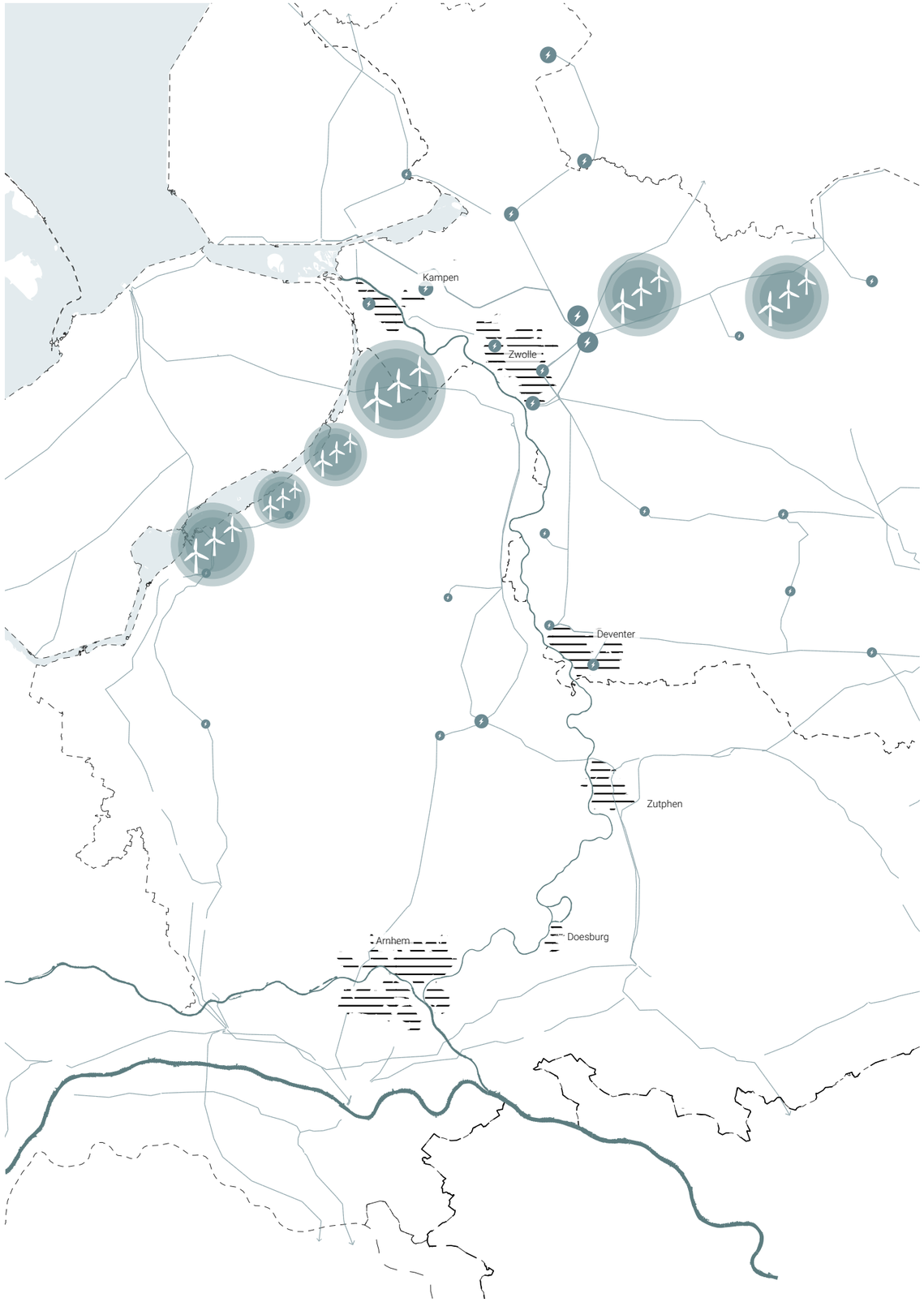


Figure 64: Map showing the regional wind potential (Global Wind Atlas, 2025)

Geothermal potential

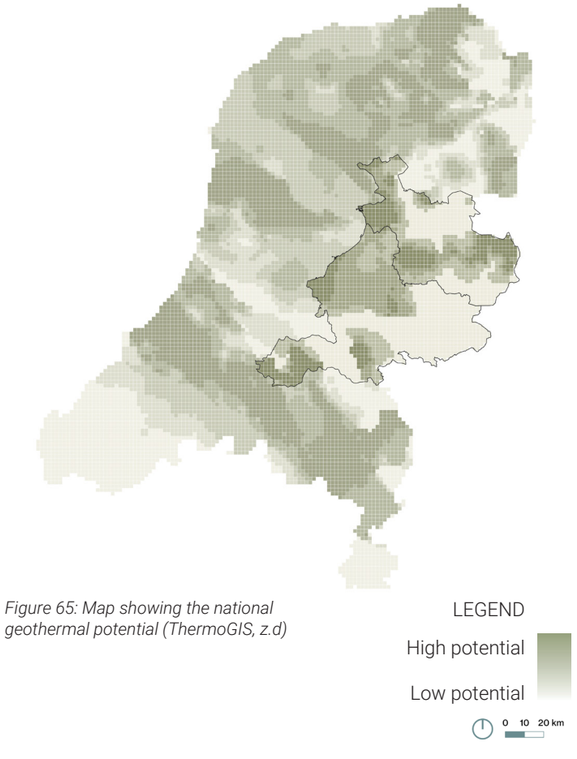


Figure 65: Map showing the national geothermal potential (ThermoGIS, z.d)

Geothermal energy potential in the region again highlights Flevoland as a highly favourable area. In addition, the Hanseatic region itself presents specific opportunities for the development of new geothermal sources. Two locations stand out in particular. The first is situated to the northeast of Kampen, close to the border with Flevoland, where subsurface conditions appear suitable for geothermal exploitation. The second promising area lies between Deventer and Zutphen, on the eastern side of the Ijssel (ThermoGIS, z.d.).

These localised zones of higher potential indicate that, despite broader regional variations, geothermal energy could play a meaningful role when development is focused on the most suitable sites. As a result, cities in the area could be connected to a heat network and supplied with sustainable heating through a combination of geothermal energy and aquathermal sources.

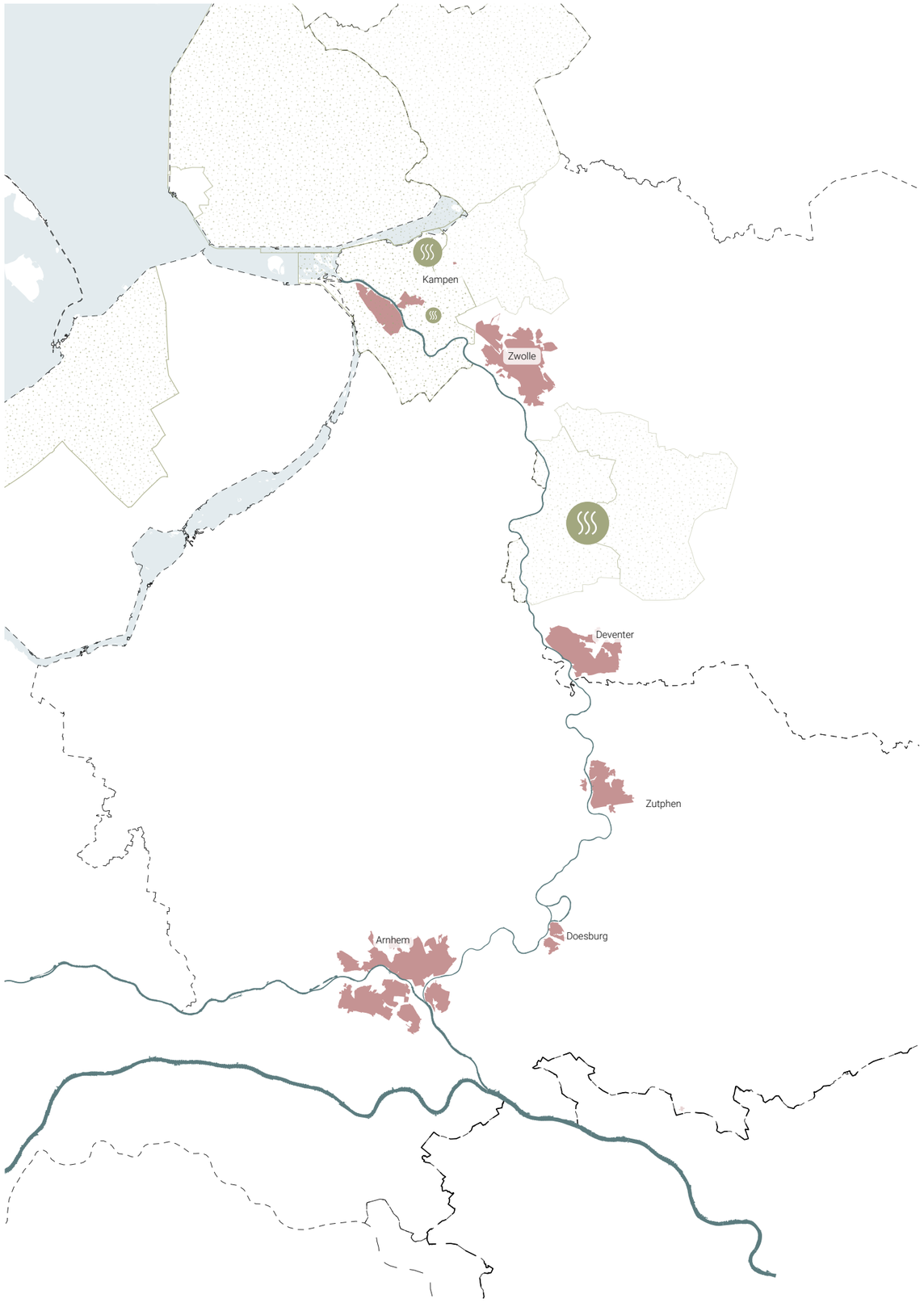


Figure 66: Map showing the regional geothermal potential (ThermoGIS, z.d)

Energy potential

The combined energy potential highlights clear opportunities for an integrated and regionally differentiated energy strategy. While solar and wind energy show strong potential in areas such as Flevoland and the northern parts near the IJsselmeer, geothermal resources provide more localised but valuable opportunities near Kampen and between Deventer and Zutphen. Together, these layers demonstrate that the region can rely on a diverse mix of renewable energy sources, each of which fits specific spatial conditions.
In addition, the presence of existing hydrogen pipelines forms a strong foundation for future energy infrastructure. The potential reuse of former gas pipelines offers an efficient way to expand this network, reducing the need for entirely new infrastructure. This creates opportunities to better connect production areas with demand areas. The identification of potential energy-intensive industrial zones further strengthens this system, as these locations can act as key hubs for energy use, storage, and distribution.

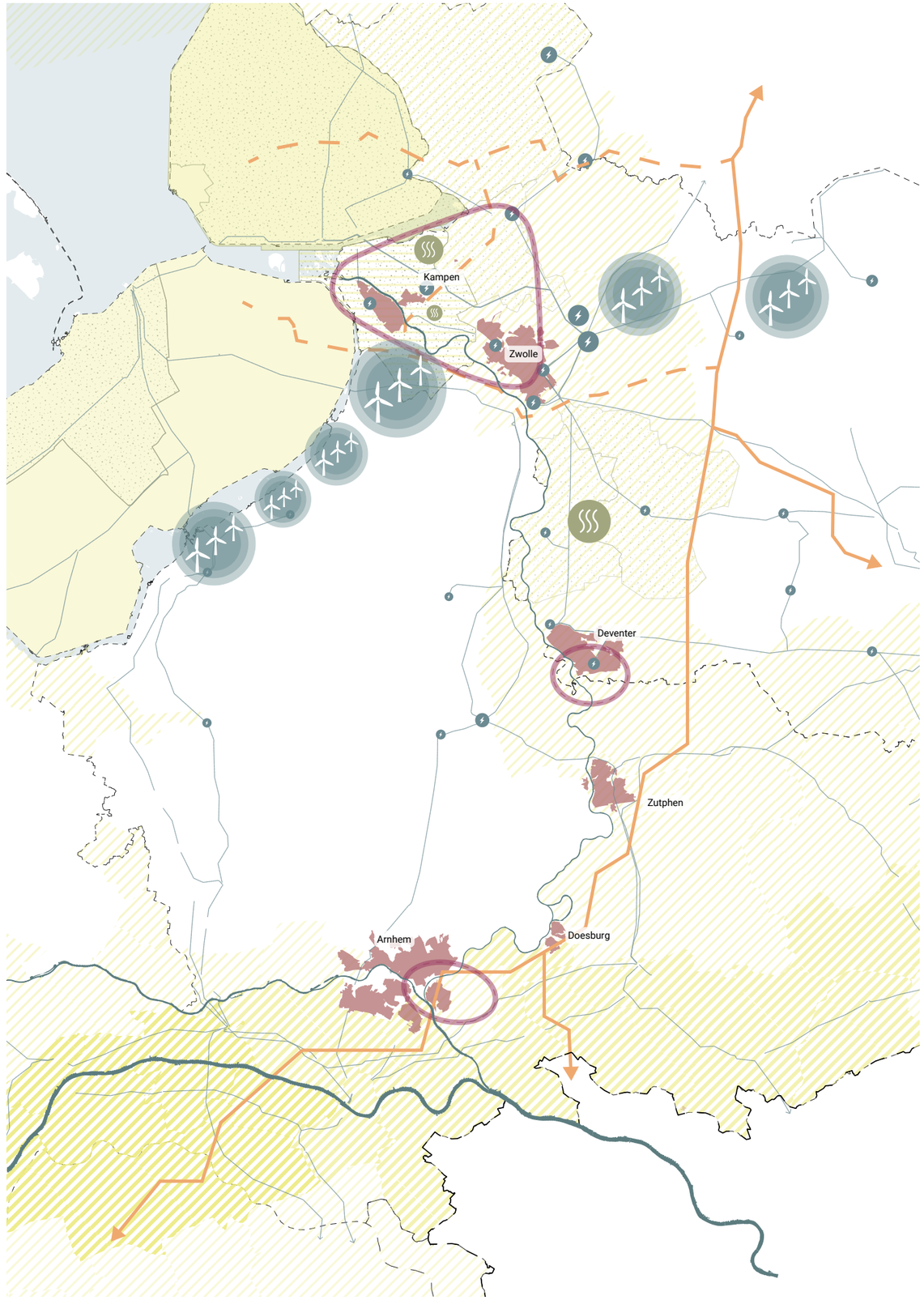


Figure 67: Combination of all energy potential layers (Global Solar Atlas, 2023), (Global Wind Atlas, 2025), (ThermoGIS, z.d)

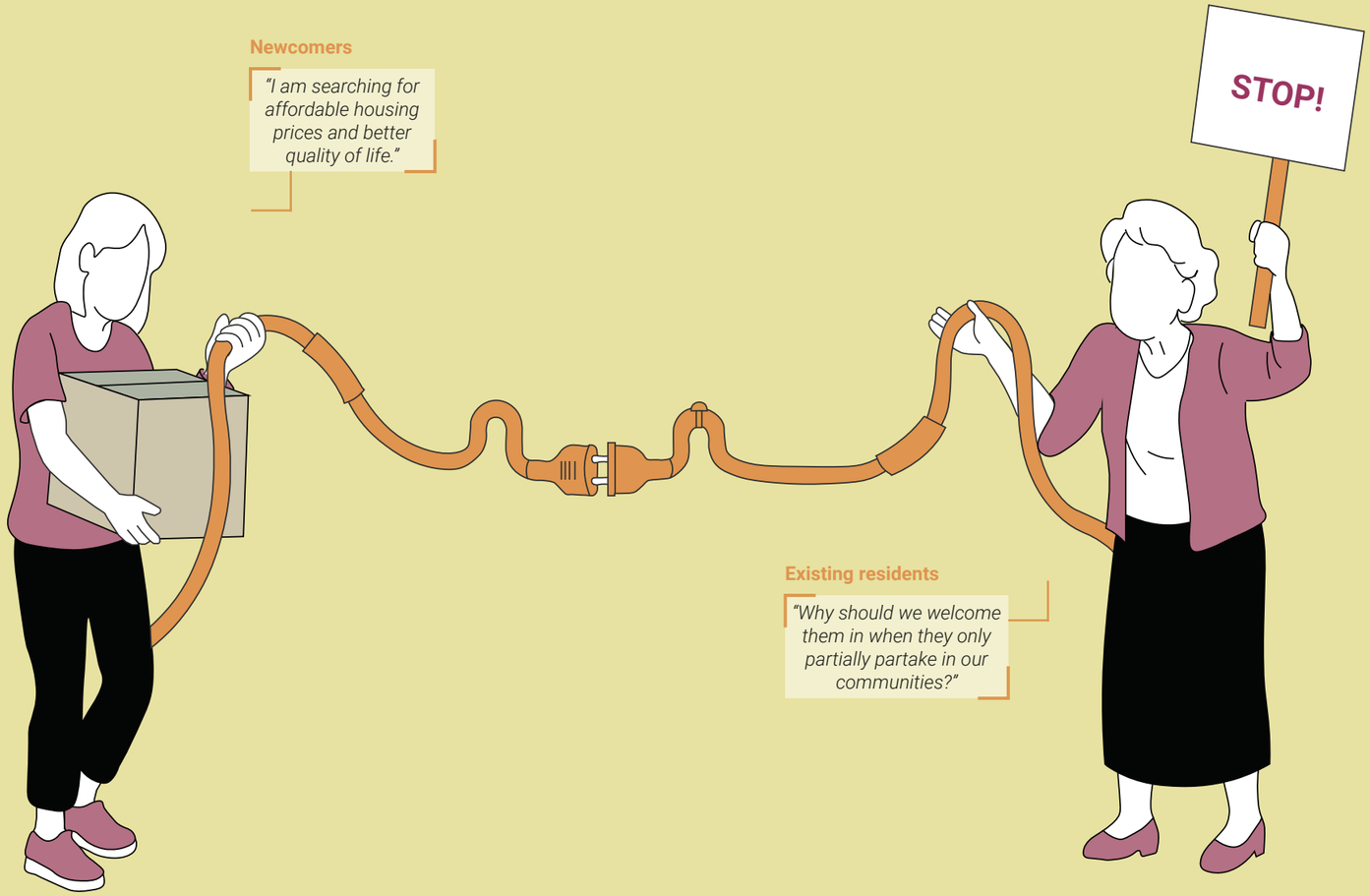


Figure 68: Collage - balancing newcomers' needs with residents' concerns

The four W's

Dutch Hanseatic cities are undergoing significant demographic changes due to internal migration, which presents both opportunities and challenges for local communities. Annually, between 65,000 and 75,000 individuals leave the Randstad, while approximately 50,000 to 55,000 relocate to the region (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). These migration patterns are influenced by factors such as housing market pressures, the desire for more space and tranquility, proximity to nature, increased feasibility of remote work, life-stage considerations including child-rearing, and overall quality of life (Redactioneel, 2026).

Hanseatic cities primarily attract adults in their thirties and forties with young children, residents aged 40 to 50, and younger seniors. These groups generally prefer private rental or owner-occupied housing, often located in medium-sized cities such as Zwolle, Assen, Leeuwarden, and Deventer, as well as in village centers and rural areas where plots are available (De Uitdijing van de Randstad in Oostelijke Richting – Komen en Gaan, z.d.).

Although this influx can strengthen cities' social and economic fabric, it may also generate community tensions. Long-term residents, particularly older populations, may view newcomers as disrupting established social networks, while young adults and recent arrivals may encounter challenges integrating into existing community structures (Bokányi et al., 2026). Analyzing these dynamics requires a nuanced approach that considers the primary drivers of community change, including the housing market, spatial preferences, remote work trends, life-stage factors, and quality of life, and examines how these elements influence settlement patterns, mobility, and social cohesion (Muhammad et al., 2007).

Identifying these patterns establishes a foundation for fostering inclusive and resilient communities, enabling both existing and new residents to coexist in a manner that balances continuity with adaptation. Proactively addressing potential tensions allows Hanseatic cities to capitalize on the opportunities presented by migration while minimizing conflicts, thereby supporting regional vitality and promoting long-term social sustainability (Schmeets, 2025).

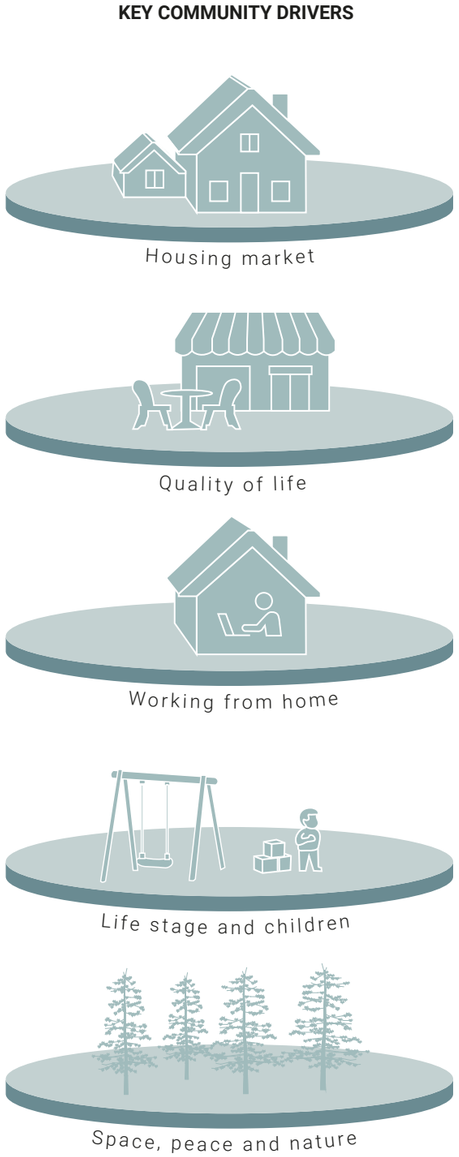


Figure 69: The five community drivers

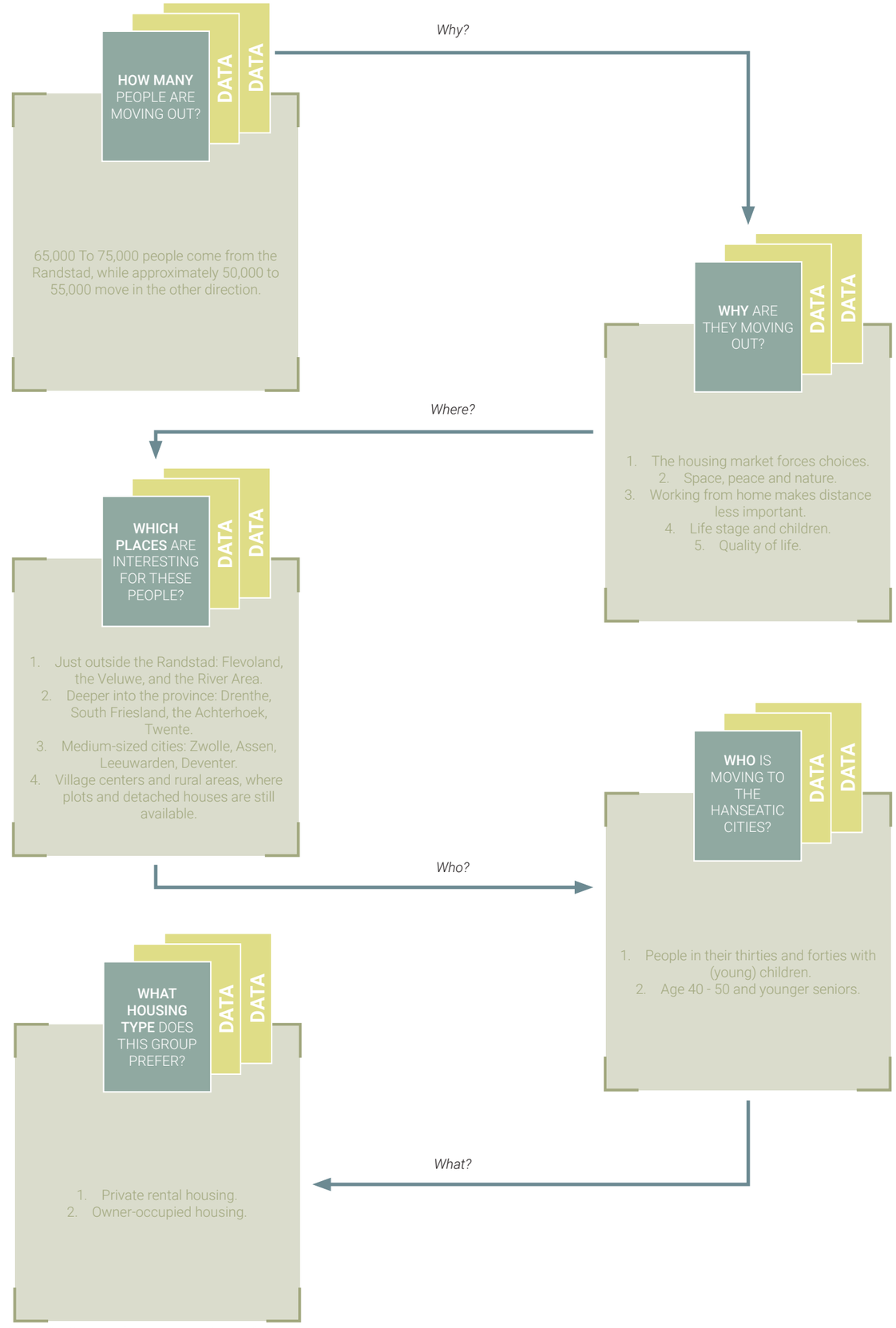


Figure 70: Migration flows and housing preferences

Population demographic shaping the Hanseatic cities

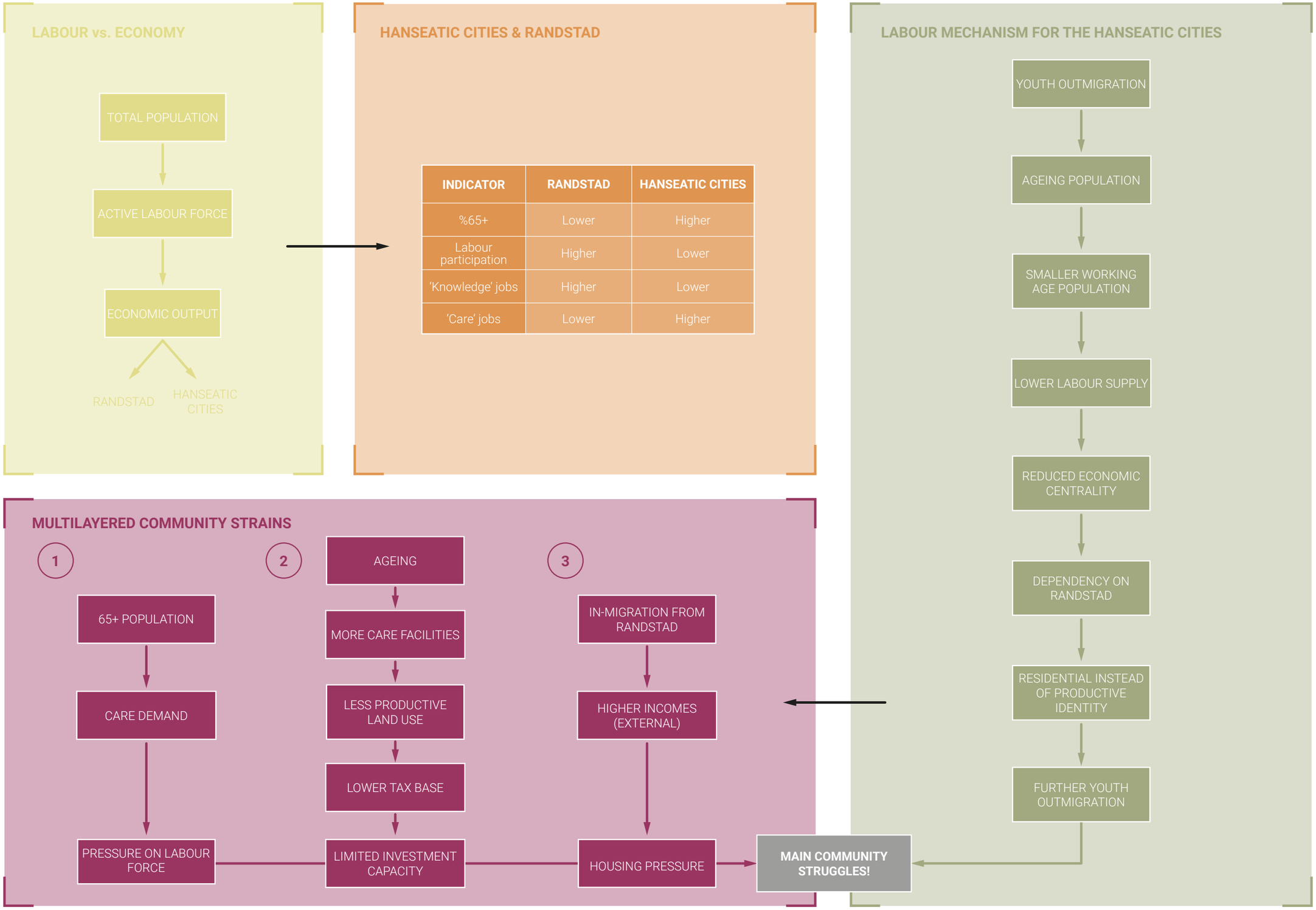
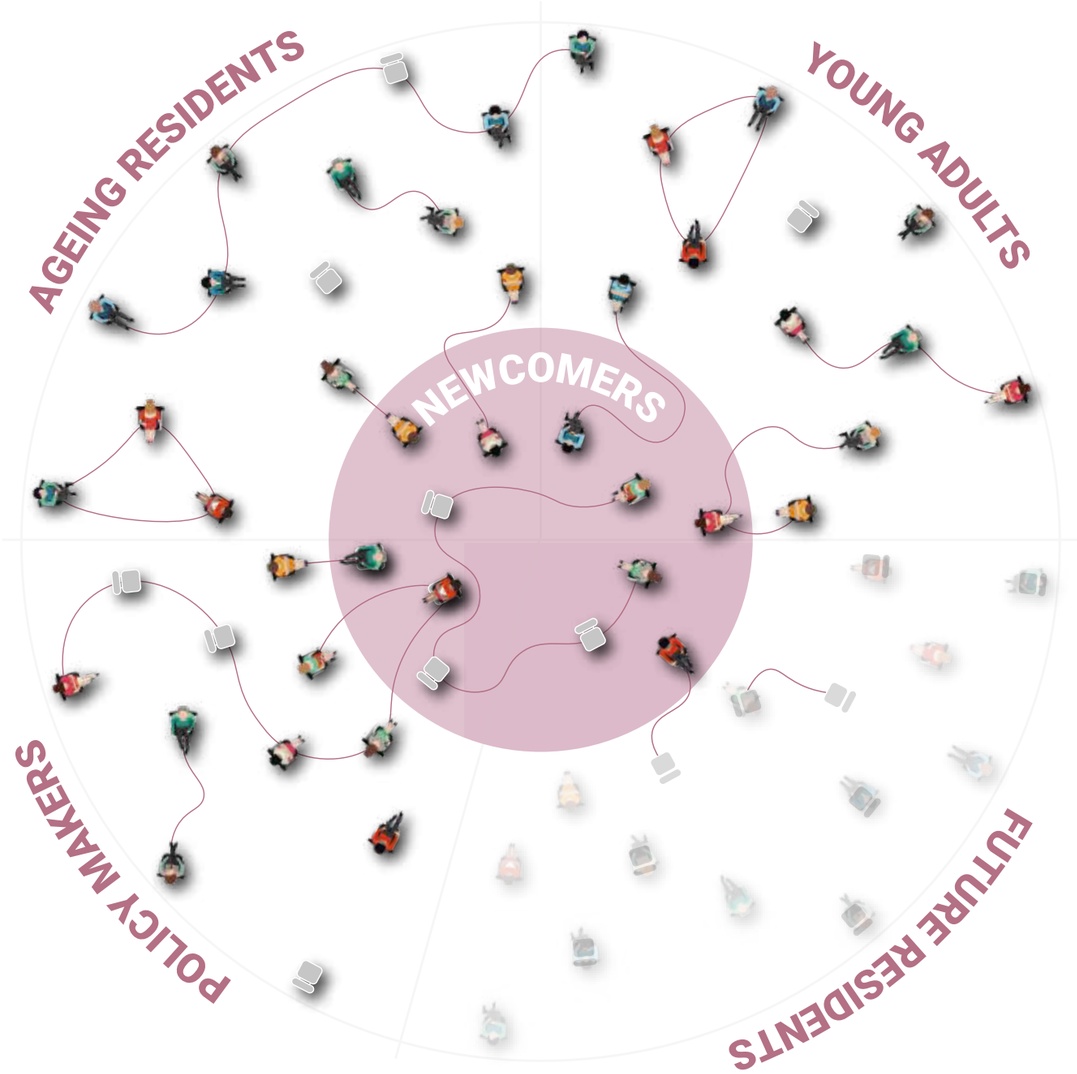


Figure 71: Current demographic and economic dynamics shaping Hanseatic city challenges



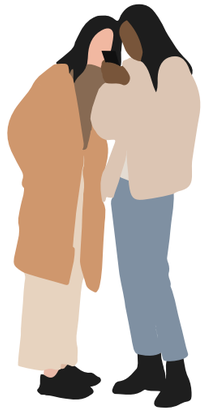


Figure 72: Facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue

A community roundtable has been established as a platform for dialogue between diverse stakeholders in planning the future of the Dutch Hanseatic cities. This approach acknowledges that the region's transition involves multiple interconnected interests and requires active participation from both current and future residents.

For this roundtable, newcomers have been placed at the center, reflecting their role as the focus community in the ongoing demographic and spatial transformations. Their perspectives serve as conversation starters, guiding discussions on how cities can adapt to changing populations while maintaining a cohesive, inclusive urban fabric.

Other stakeholders are included to ensure a holistic approach to regional development. Ageing residents provide insights on preserving local continuity and cultural heritage. Young adults, who often leave for employment elsewhere, contribute perspectives on retaining talent and ensuring long-term community vitality. Additionally, policy makers such as the Provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel, responsible for urban densification goals, and Rijkswaterstaat, which oversees integrated river management and infrastructure projects, bring institutional knowledge and regulatory frameworks to the discussion.

The roundtable operates across multiple scales. Small-scale discussions occur within individual communities. Inter-community dialogues allow comparison and negotiation between groups. On the largest scale, all stakeholders convene to address shared challenges and opportunities. This multi-level, participatory approach ensures the voices of both existing and incoming residents are integrated into the planning process, fostering inclusive, resilient, and future-oriented community development in the Hanseatic cities.

Newcomers

Property values and growth centres

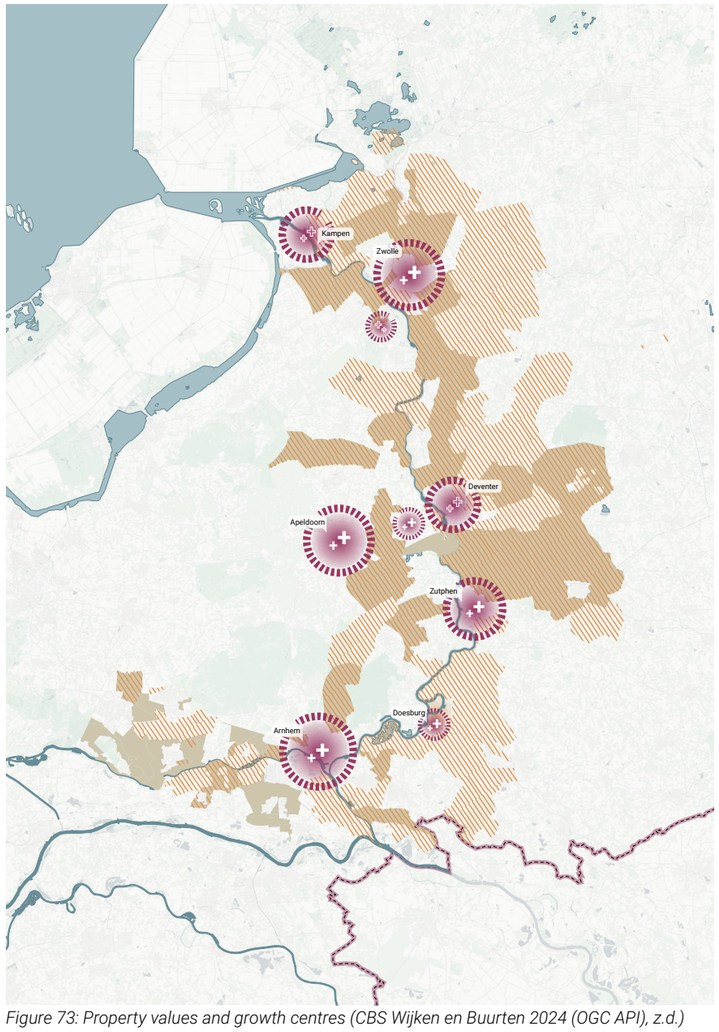


Figure 73: Property values and growth centres (CBS Wijken en Buurten 2024 (OGC API), z.d.)

LEGEND

Property value > 400.000 euros

Owned property >70%

Growth centres

0% - 5%

5% - 10%

10% - 15%

0 5 10 km

The majority of housing in the region is owner-occupied, which is the preferred tenure among newcomers. Property values tend to be higher in rural areas outside urban centres, whereas city prices are lower due to the prevalence of smaller dwellings. Urban growth patterns differ across cities, indicating potential areas where newcomers are likely to settle and invest.

Labour participation and demographics

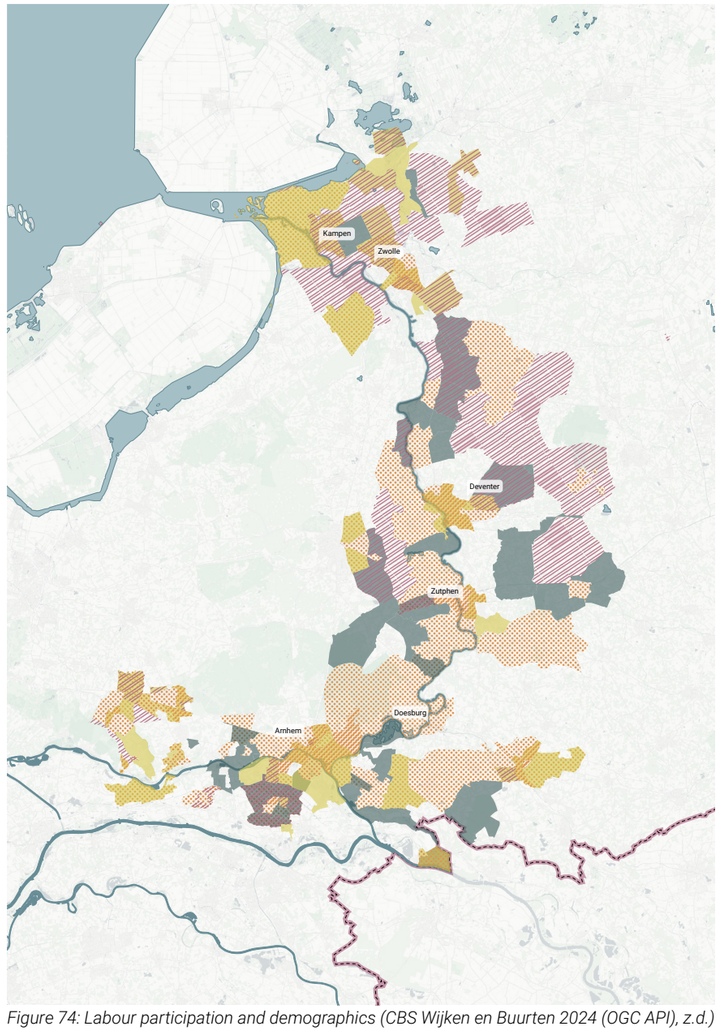


Figure 74: Labour participation and demographics (CBS Wijken en Buurten 2024 (OGC API), z.d.)

LEGEND

Labour participation > 70%

Age 45-65

Age 25-45

Low income

0 5 10 km

Labour force participation rates are highest in the northern part of the region. Older residents predominantly reside in rural areas, while younger adults are concentrated in urban centres, with Kampen exhibiting a particularly youthful demographic profile. Low-income populations are primarily located near Zutphen and Deventer. These patterns illustrate the distribution of economic opportunities and the social composition relevant to newcomers.

Accessibility and labour participation

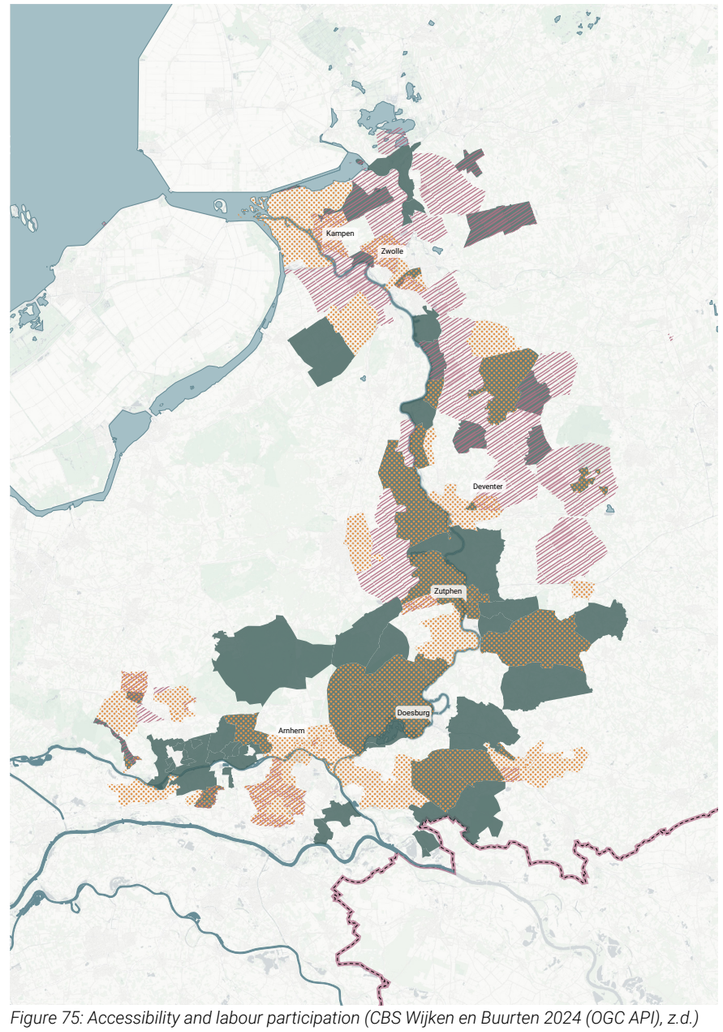


Figure 75: Accessibility and labour participation (CBS Wijken en Buurten 2024 (OGC API), z.d.)

LEGEND

Labour participation > 70%

Average distance to highway entrance <1km

Average distance to trainstation < 3km

0 5 10 km

Areas with high labour force participation generally have good access to highways and train stations. Northern Zutphen and Doesburg are comparatively well connected, whereas Deventer is less accessible. Levels of accessibility influence newcomers' commuting patterns, daily activities, and integration within the region.

Newcomers’ presence and potential

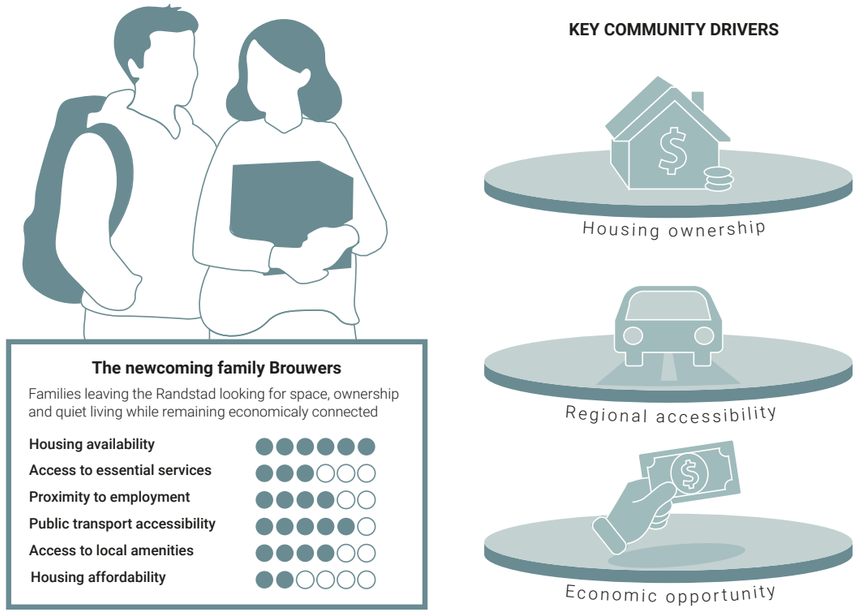


Figure 76: What newcomers value when moving to the Hanseatic cities

The map synthesises three analytical layers to identify spatial patterns associated with the newcomer community. The selected indicators—housing ownership, regional accessibility, and economic opportunity—are primary determinants of newcomer settlement patterns. Areas where all indicators converge represent the primary locations of newcomer presence. Zones with only partial overlap indicate potential areas that offer favourable conditions for future settlement.
This layered analysis provides insight into existing concentrations and informs targeted strategies to accommodate newcomers within the Hanseatic region.

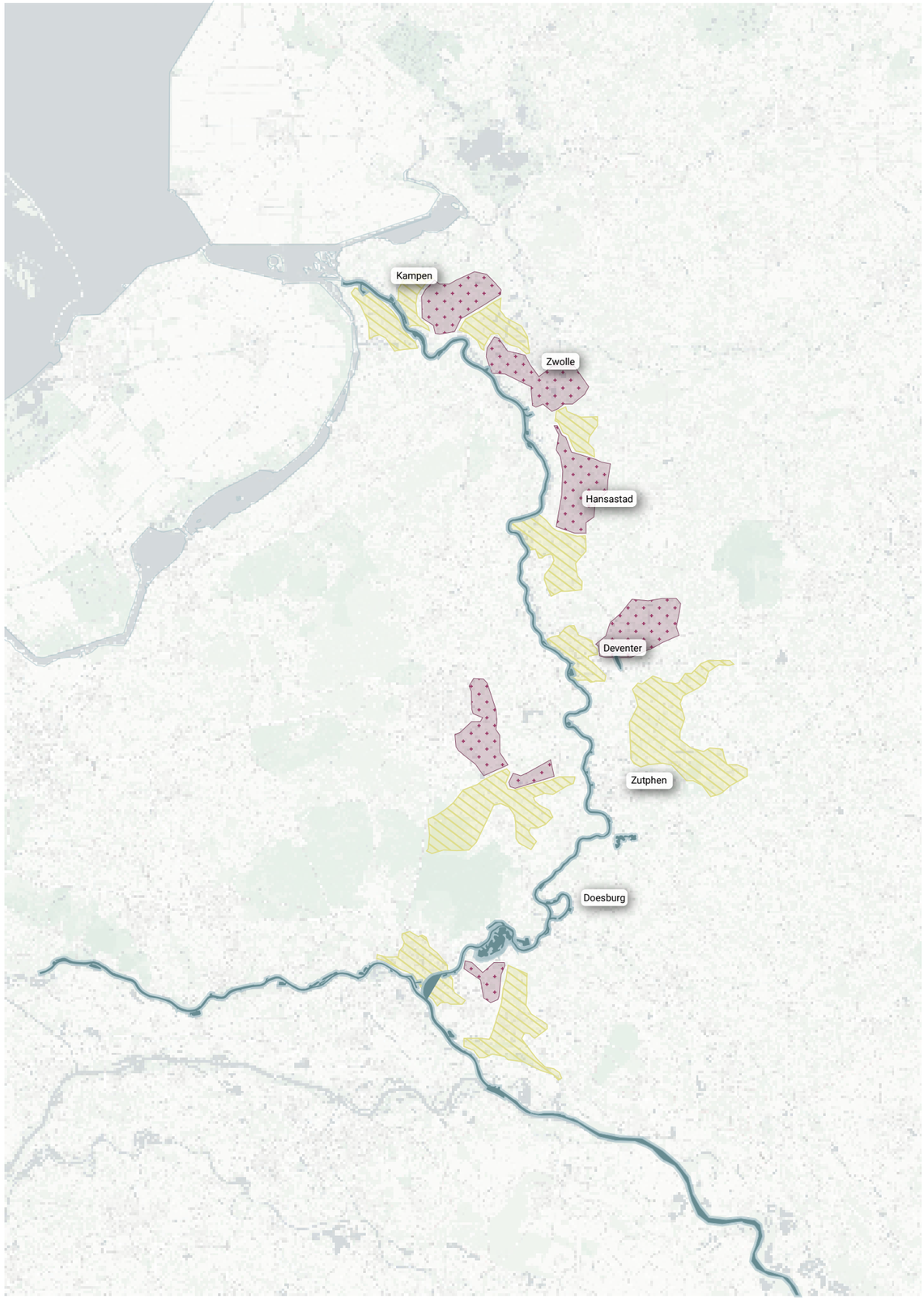


Figure 77: Newcomers - current presence and potential settlement zones

Ageing residents

Distribution

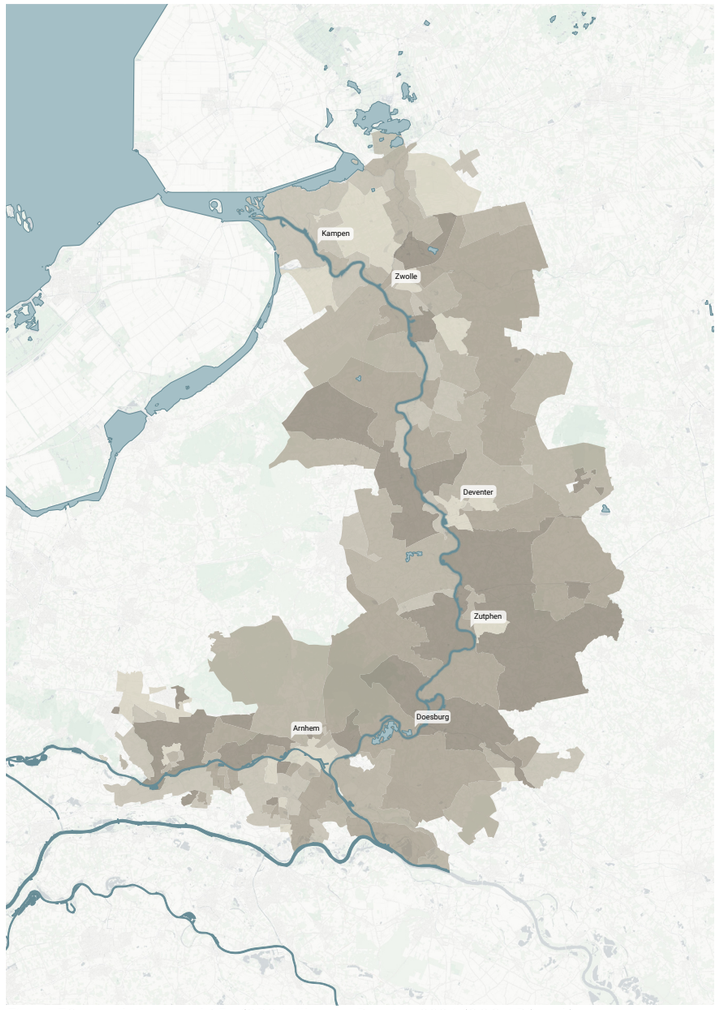


Figure 78: population aged 65+ (CBS Wijken en Buurten 2024 (OGC API), z.d.)

LEGEND

0 - 14

14 - 18

18-22 (average in the Netherlands)

22 - 26

26+

0 5 10 km

Higher proportions of ageing residents are primarily found at the peripheries of cities, while urban centres exhibit lower percentages. Cities such as Doesburg display particularly concentrated ageing populations. These patterns highlight areas where support and services for ageing residents are most needed.

Services

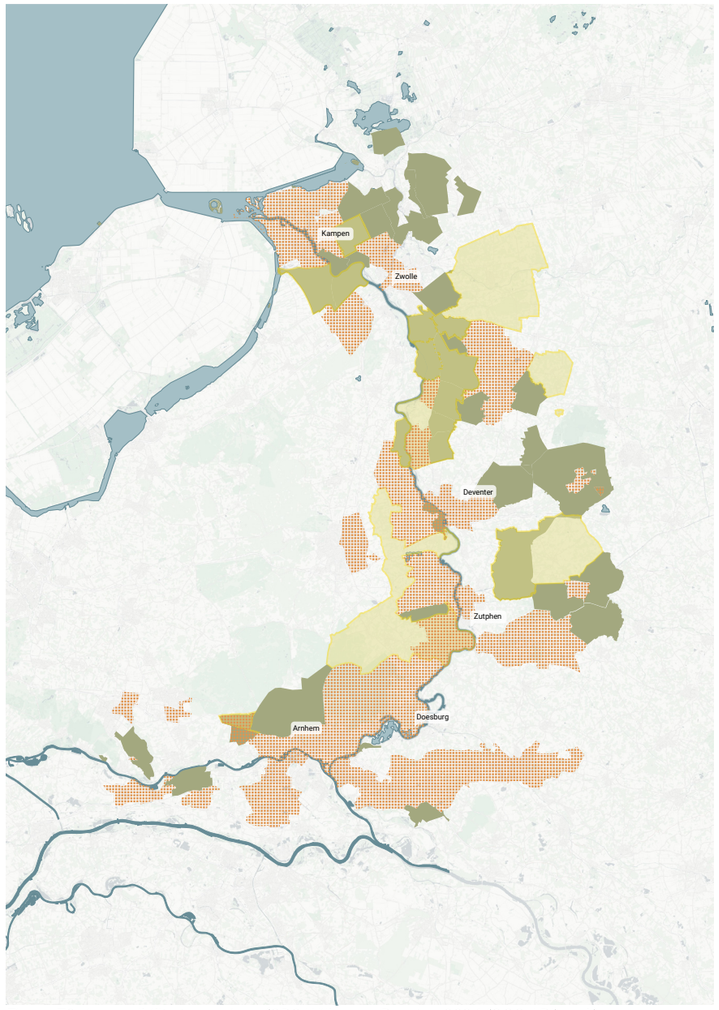


Figure 79: Accessibility to services (CBS Wijken en Buurten 2024 (OGC API), z.d.)

LEGEND

Distance to GP > 6km

Distance to cafe > 5km

Distance to train station < 3km

0 5 10 km

Distances to general practitioners are relatively high at city edges, despite proximity to urban areas. Cafés are less accessible in peripheral zones, while access to train stations is generally adequate except in Deventer and central Zutphen. For ageing residents, access to healthcare, social spaces, and mobility significantly influences daily life and independence.

Characteristics

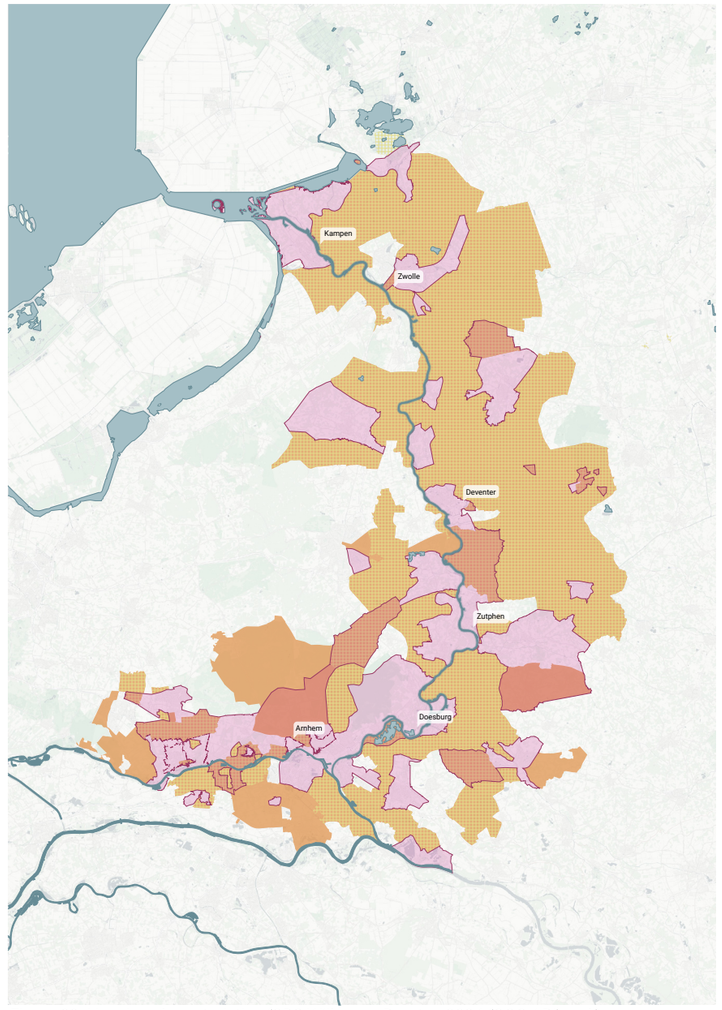


Figure 80: Housing characteristics (CBS Wijken en Buurten 2024 (OGC API), z.d.)

LEGEND

Rental housing < 30%

Owned property > 70%

Single housing > 30%

0 5 10 km

Rental housing is limited in portions of the southern region, while owner-occupied housing predominates throughout the area. Single housing is prevalent, particularly in and around city centres. This composition supports ageing in place but may restrict flexibility for evolving housing needs in later life.

Ageing residents’ presence and potential

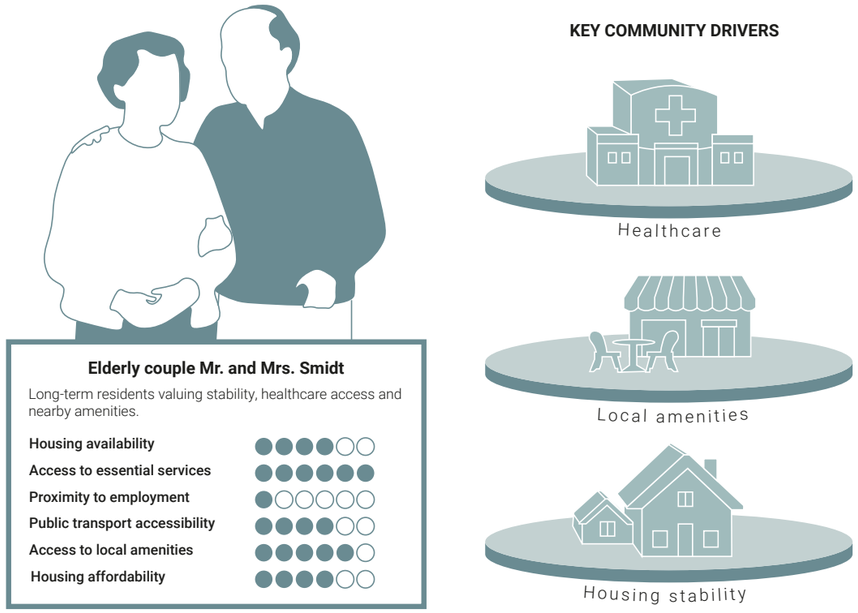


Figure 81: What ageing residents’ value when moving to the Hanseatic cities

The map integrates three analytical layers and their underlying data to identify spatial patterns associated with the community of ageing residents. The selected indicators—healthcare, local amenities, and housing stability—are primary factors influencing the residential distribution of this group. Areas where all indicators overlap represent locations where ageing residents are currently most present. In contrast, areas with only partial overlap are identified as potential zones, offering suitable conditions but not yet fully supporting this group.
This layered analysis reveals existing concentrations and future opportunities, underscoring the importance of improving access to healthcare, strengthening local amenities, and ensuring stable, adaptable housing to support ageing residents across the Hanseatic region.

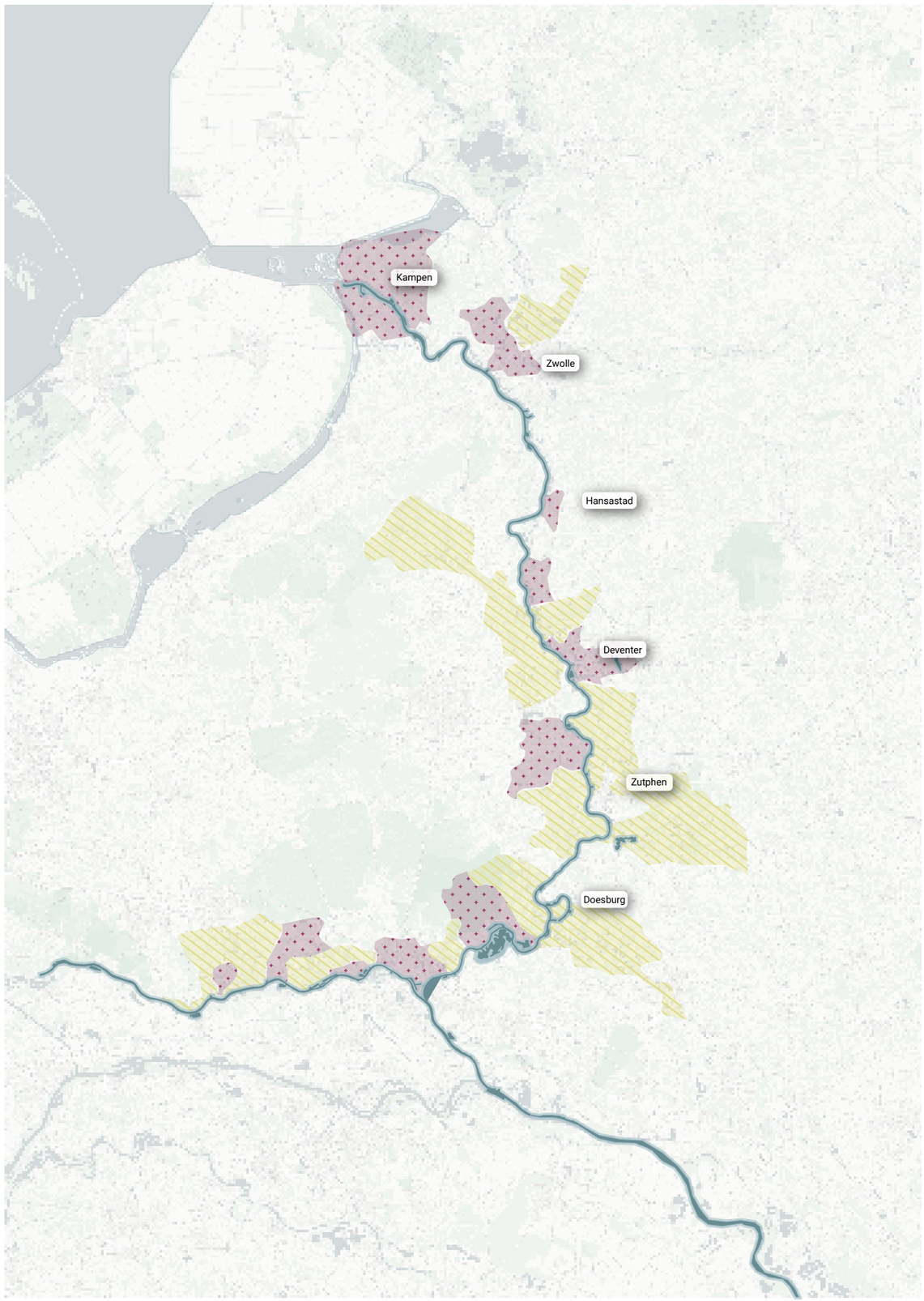


Figure 82: Ageing residents: current presence and potential areas

Young adults

Housing, Jobs, and Age Group

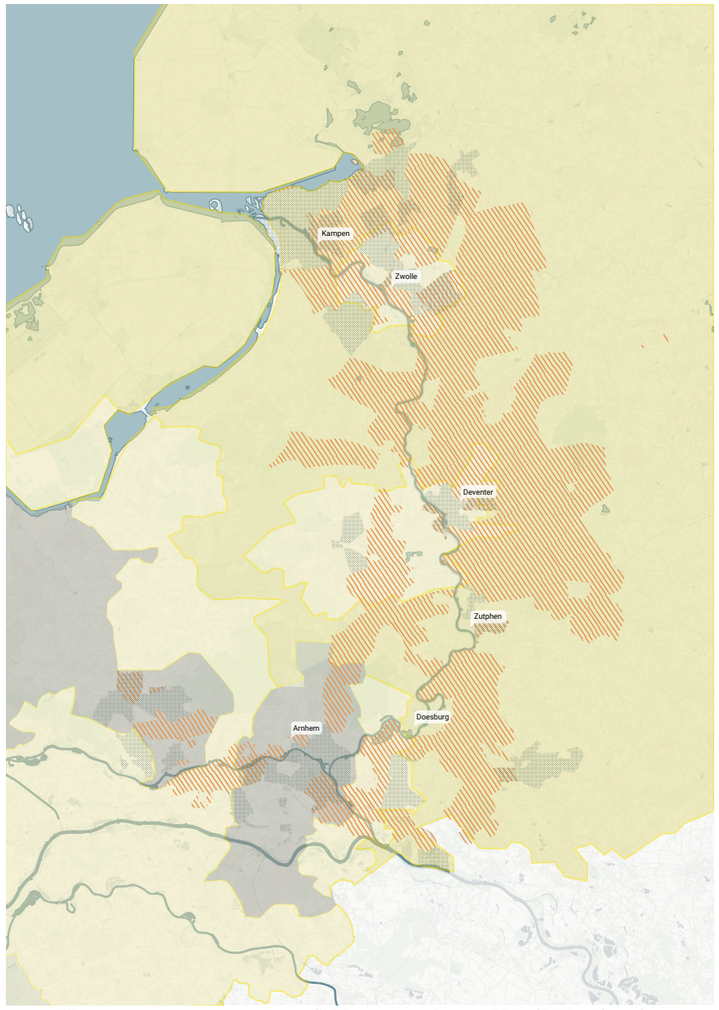


Figure 83: Housing, Jobs, and Age Group (CBS Wijken en Buurten 2024 (OGC API), z.d.)

Owner-occupied housing dominates the region, which can limit accessibility for young adults entering the housing market. Job accessibility is relatively low, with only approximately 50% of jobs within an acceptable distance, although this improves toward the Randstad. The distribution of the 25–45 age group indicates the current locations of young adults and highlights potential pressures on housing and employment opportunities

Income and Accessibility

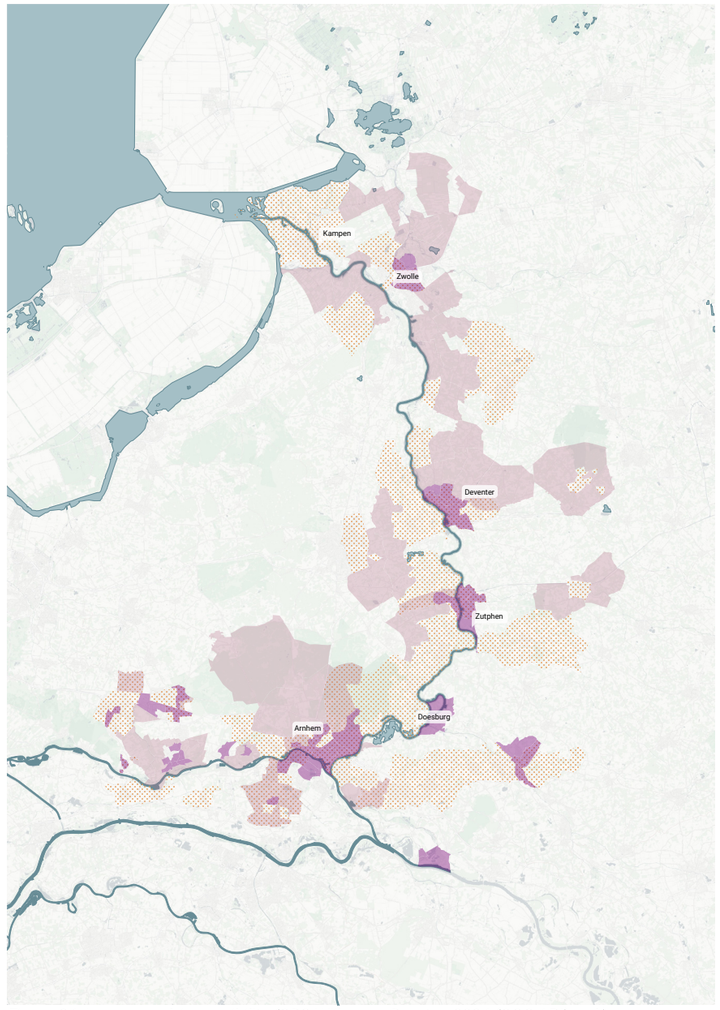


Figure 84: Income and Accessibility (CBS Wijken en Buurten 2024 (OGC API), z.d.)

Access to train stations is generally adequate, facilitating mobility for work and study, although Deventer and central Zutphen are less accessible. Higher incomes are concentrated in the northern areas along the IJssel, while lower incomes are more prevalent around Zutphen and Deventer. These economic disparities influence where young adults can afford to live and work.

Education and Labour Participation

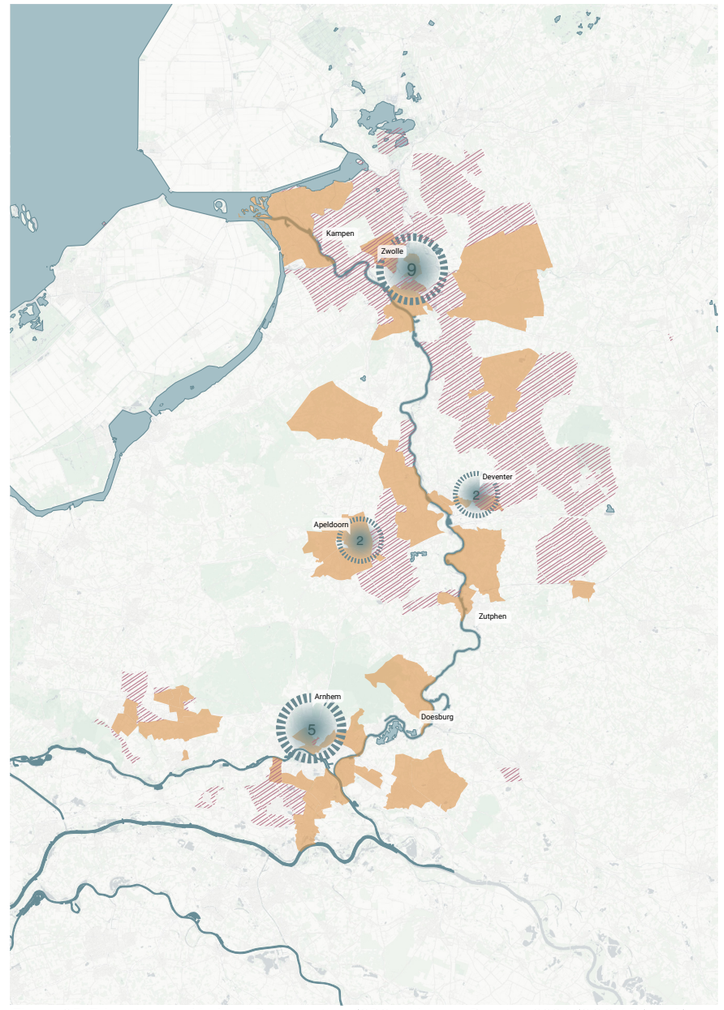


Figure 85: Education and Labour Participation (CBS Wijken en Buurten 2024 (OGC API), z.d.)

Labour participation is high, especially in the northern part of the region. Higher-educated populations are distributed across the area but are often located at the edges of cities rather than in the centres. Zwolle and Arnhem are notable for their educational institutions, while cities such as Kampen, Zutphen, and Doesburg lack higher education facilities. This distribution affects young adults' opportunities to study, work, and remain in the region.

Young adults’ presence and potential

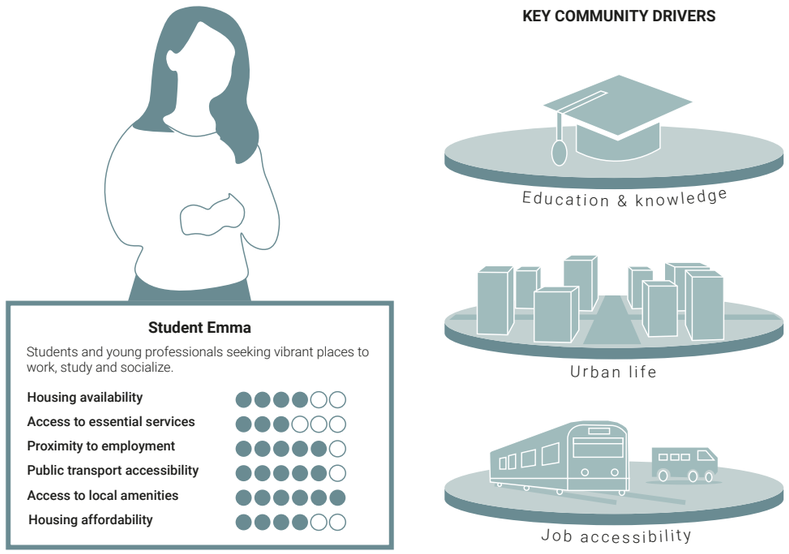


Figure 86: What young adults’ value when moving to the Hanseatic cities

The map combines three analytical layers and their underlying data to identify spatial patterns related to the young adult community. The selected indicators—education and knowledge, urban life, and job accessibility—are key drivers of where young adults are most likely to live and remain.

Areas where all indicators overlap represent locations where young adults are currently most present. In contrast, areas with only partial overlap are identified as potential zones, offering favourable conditions but lacking a complete environment for this group.

This layered analysis highlights existing concentrations and future opportunities, emphasising the need to strengthen educational networks, improve job access, and enhance urban living environments to better support and retain young adults in the Hanseatic region.

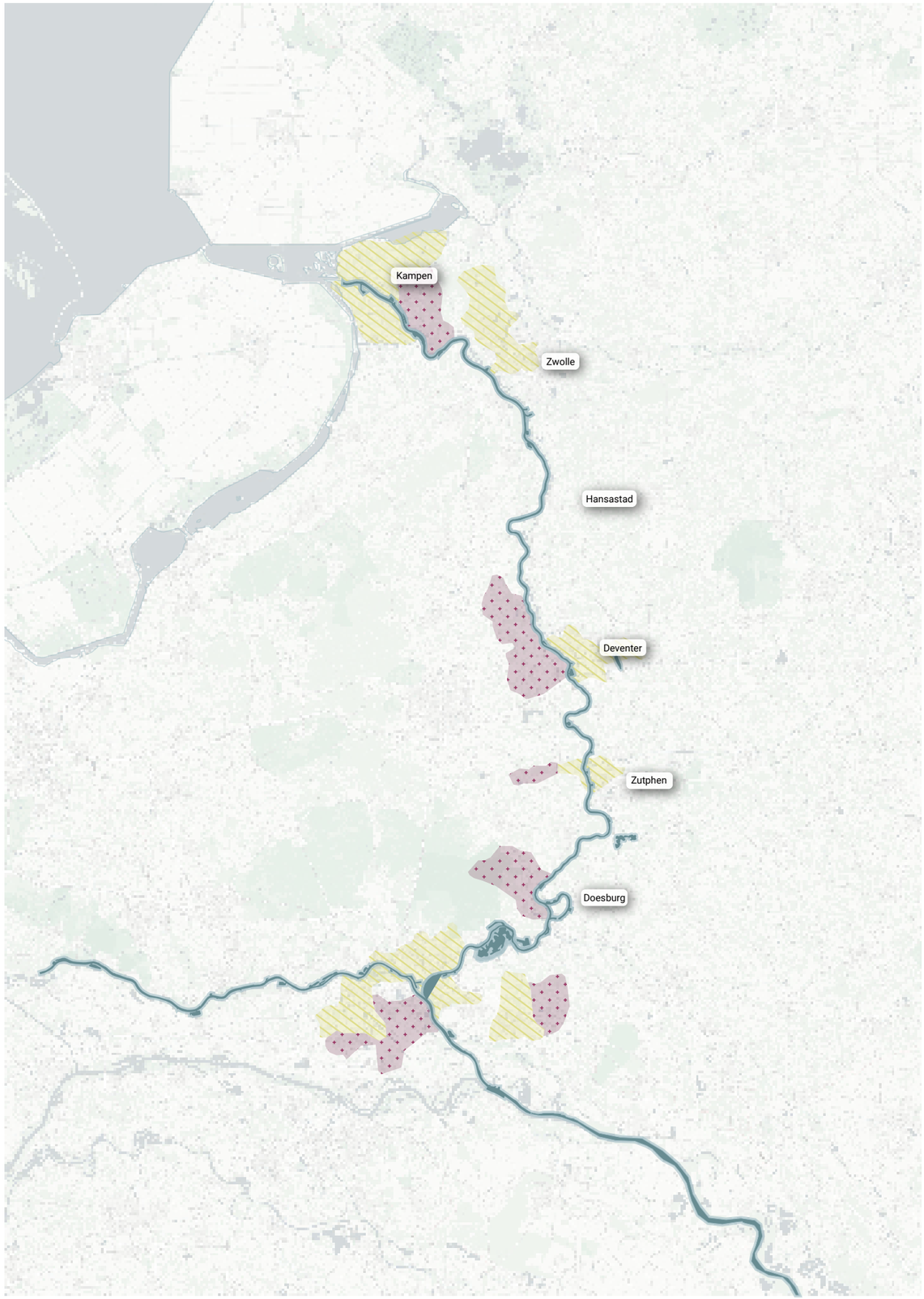


Figure 87: Young adults: current presence and potential hotspots

Community overlap, conflicts, and synergies

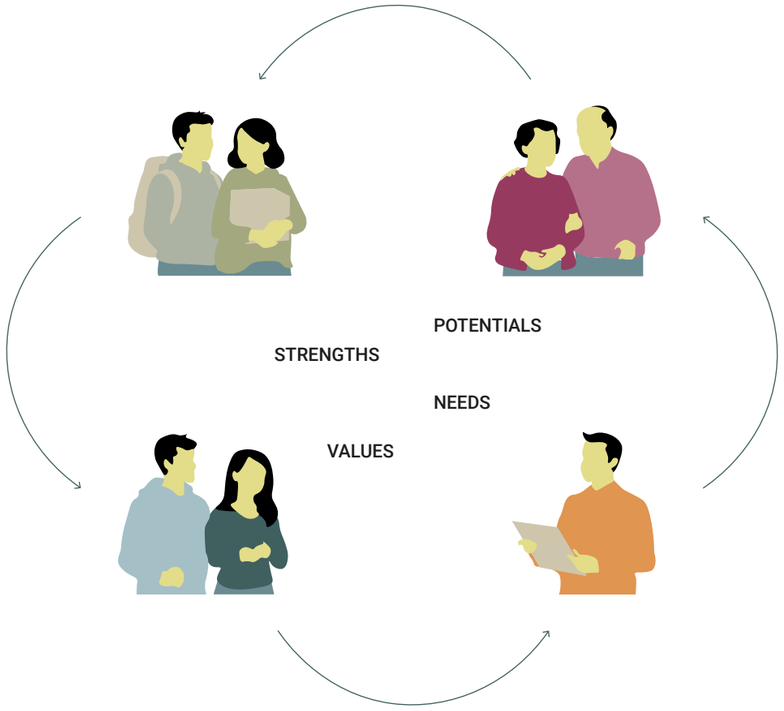


Figure 88: Collage - understanding what each community values and contributes

The map combines the three community analyses—newcomers, aging residents, and young adults—by overlaying their spatial patterns to identify areas of co-presence. By interpreting the key drivers of each group, the map reveals where these communities are most likely to intersect within the Hanseatic region.

Areas where all three communities overlap are defined as focus areas. These locations hold strong potential for participatory planning, as multiple perspectives, needs, and interests converge. However, these areas are also where spatial and social tensions are most likely to emerge due to competing demands on housing, services, and public space. Therefore, they require careful, inclusive design strategies that balance different needs while fostering interaction and mutual understanding.

Areas where two communities overlap are identified as potential synergy zones. These zones already accommodate multiple user groups and provide opportunities to gradually introduce a third community. This process should occur in an organic and context-sensitive manner by responding to the specific needs and preferences of the missing group. Enhancing relevant spatial, social, or economic conditions can make these areas more attractive and inclusive, supporting a more balanced community composition over time.

This integrated analysis demonstrates that the spatial distribution of communities is not fixed and can be actively shaped through design and policy. It highlights where conflicts may arise, where synergies can be strengthened, and where targeted interventions can support more inclusive and resilient community development across the Hanseatic region.

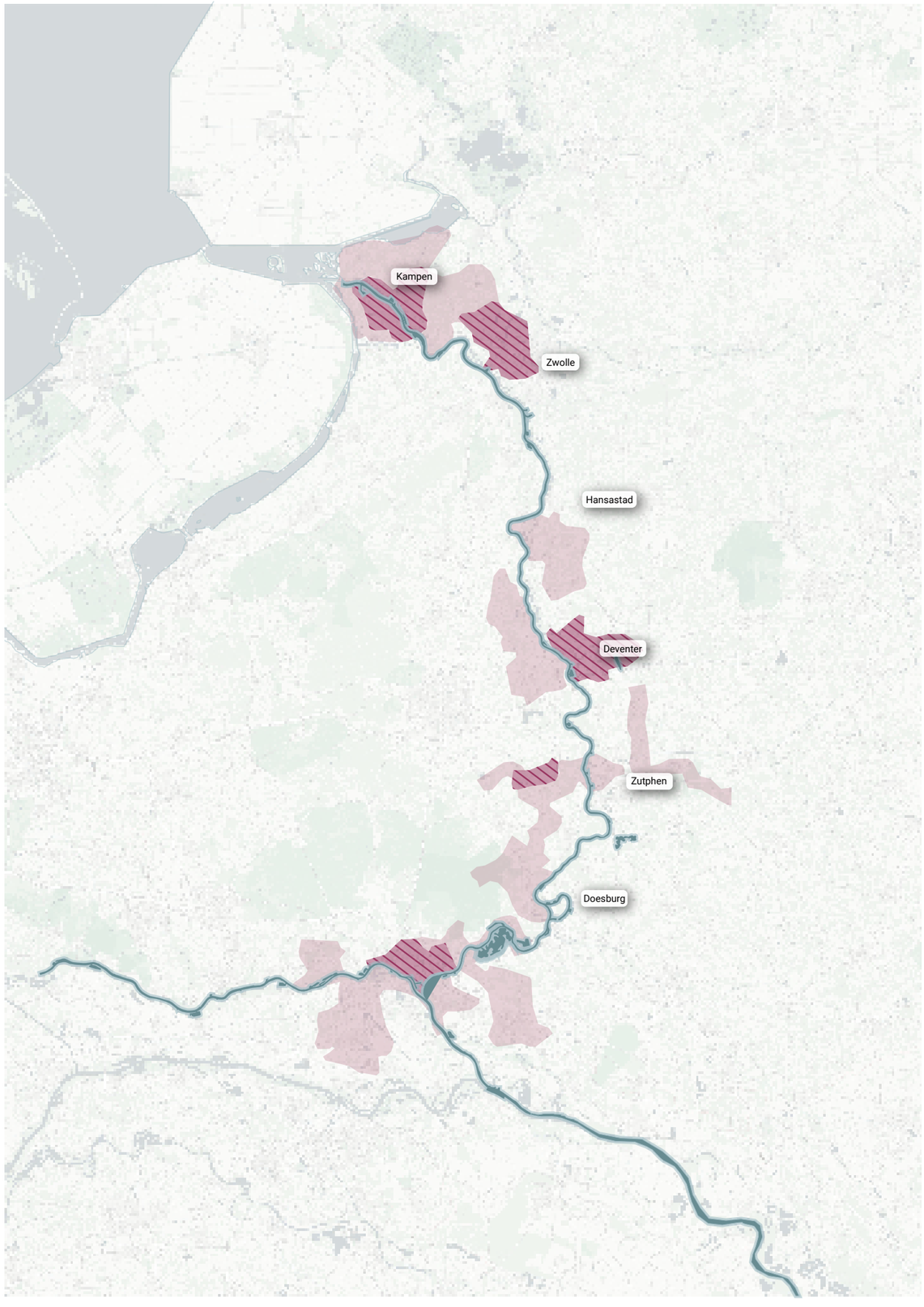


Figure 89: Community overlap: conflicts, synergies, and focus areas

Synthesizing the conclusions

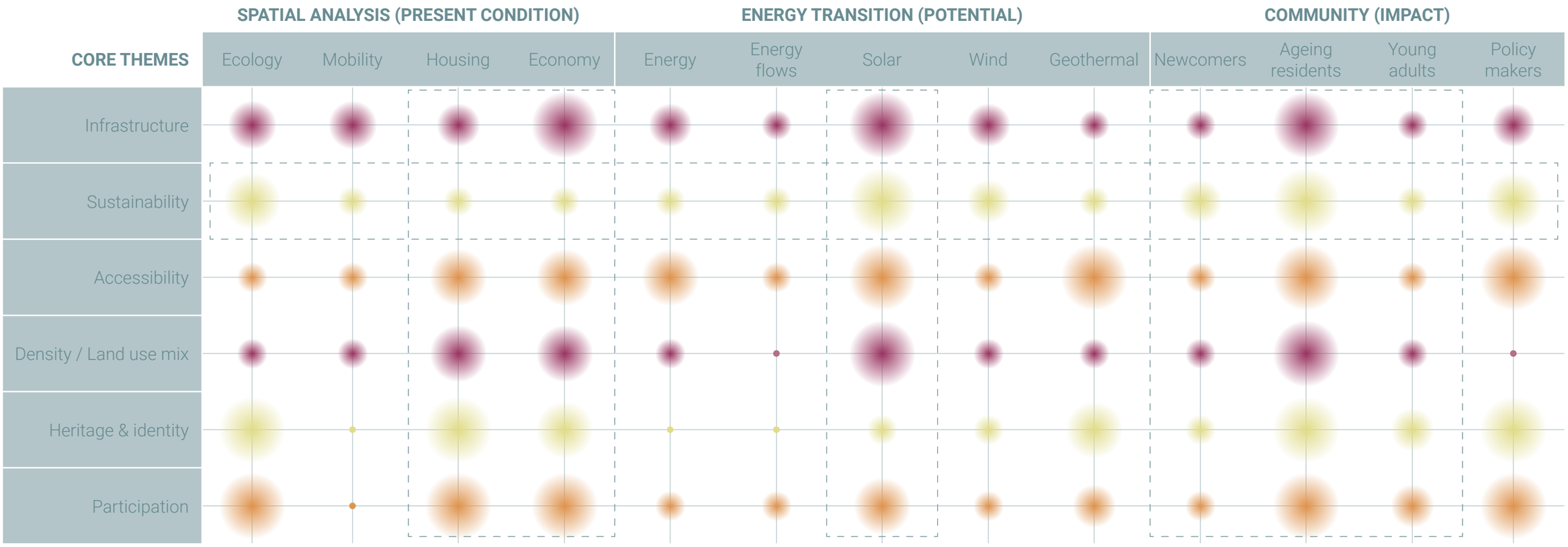


Figure 90: Conclusion rating matrix - grading key categories derived from the regional analysis against core themes of urban development

The conclusion rating is constructed as a multi-layer matrix that evaluates key thematic domains against a set of spatial and social criteria. The columns represent three overarching pillars - spatial analysis, energy transition, and community - each broken down into specific themes such as housing, economy, solar, and demographic groups. The rows define the evaluation criteria, including accessibility, infrastructure, sustainability, participation, and heritage. The intensity of the markers indicates how strongly each theme influences or responds to these criteria, allowing for a comparative understanding of priorities, gaps, and overlaps across the system.

The results show that development is largely driven by the housing market and existing economic structures, which means it is functioning primarily as market-led growth. Energy and mobility, despite their systemic importance, appear underrepresented, suggesting limited integration into current planning frameworks.

There is also a clear imbalance in how different community groups influence these themes. Resultingly, some groups have more influence over spatial and infrastructural outcomes than others. This imbalance risks overlooking intra-generational needs.

Within the energy transition, solar energy emerges as the most prominent strategy. However, its implementation creates tension with heritage and identity, highlighting a trade-off between sustainability goals and the preservation of historic character. Other energy sources remain less developed, indicating an opportunity for new implementation.

Overall, while there is visible ambition from policy makers toward sustainability, this is not yet strongly reflected in practice. Efforts in the built environment and energy systems remain limited, pointing to a gap between strategic intent and on-ground implementation.

Experimental scenario's

Introduction into Research by design

The process of experimentation within the project was conducted through individual exploration and collective synthesis. Each team member selected a specific theme and developed experimental scenarios independently, allowing for deep focus and radical thinking. These ideas were then brought together and synthesised into broader visions, where each scenario pushed boundaries by prioritising certain systems, stakeholders, or policies over others. This approach allowed us to act as bold designers - testing extremes and imagining futures that may seem conflicting. Through this method, we were able to identify not only what strategies are effective, but also where tensions, clashes, and limitations arise, providing critical insight into the complexity of transition processes.

Scenario 1 – The Regenerative preservation network

This scenario proposes an eco-village model that merges technological advancement with ecological integration. It envisions the expansion of the Veluwe toward urban areas, strengthening natural systems while reshaping human settlement patterns. The IJssel is extended and softened at its edges, enhancing ecological resilience and water-based systems. Mobility is restructured through eco-ducts, allowing both human and non-human movement across infrastructures. Central to this vision are self-sufficient eco-villages designed for newcomers, where living, energy production, and agriculture co-exist. This creates a dual economy where food and energy systems are locally embedded, reinforcing autonomy while maintaining a regenerative relationship with the landscape.

Figure 91: Illustration imagining scenario 1

Scenario 2 – The energy archipelago

This scenario envisions a decentralised system of energy “islands” that together form a self-sufficient regional energy ecosystem. The region is strategically zoned, assigning specific areas dedicated roles within the energy network while co-locating industries that support production and distribution. Kampen becomes a key production hub, while the corridor between Zwolle and Deventer is densified through geothermal energy provision. These nodes are interconnected through infrastructure such as hydrogen pipelines, enabling efficient energy exchange across the region. Rather than relying on a centralised model, this archipelago structure promotes resilience, adaptability, and regional autonomy, ensuring that energy self-sufficiency is achieved through a distributed yet highly coordinated system.

Figure 92: Illustration imagining scenario 2

Scenario 3 – The heritage network

This scenario focuses on preserving historic urban cores while enabling adaptive reuse and socially driven retrofitting. It emphasises maintaining the identity and structure of existing cities, particularly along the IJssel, while balancing growth across both sides of the river. The historic role of the IJssel as a logistical corridor is reactivated, integrating water-based transport into contemporary systems. A new central business district is introduced to accommodate emerging industries and economic activities, relieving pressure on historic centres. The intent is to create a dialogue between past and future, where heritage becomes a foundation for sustainable transformation.

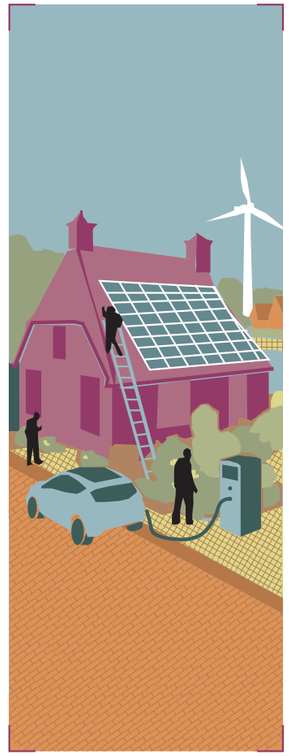


Figure 93: Illustration imagining scenario 3

Scenario 4 – The river metropolis

This scenario positions the IJssel as the primary economic and infrastructural backbone, shaping a new metropolitan condition along its course. A dense urban system emerges, effectively linking and expanding Zutphen and Deventer while stretching toward the Veluwe, treating it as a more accessible and integrated green edge. The region is highly densified to accommodate growing populations, supported by a ring-based transportation network that organises movement externally while maintaining strong internal connectivity. At the same time, surrounding cities retain and strengthen their distinct identities: Kampen evolves as a port and heritage hub, Zwolle as a vibrant campus town, and Doesburg as an agricultural centre. This approach balances metropolitan growth with local specificity.

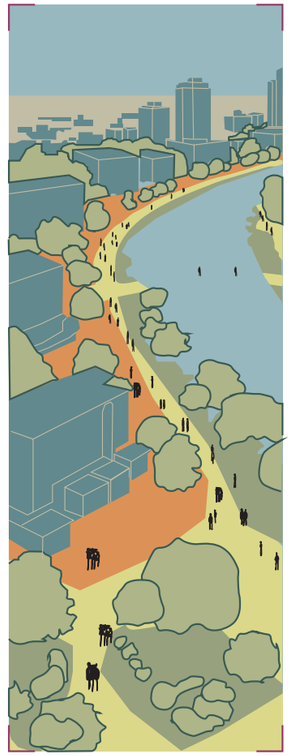


Figure 94: Illustration imagining scenario 4

Scenario 1: The regenerative preservation network

This scenario imagines an eco-village strategy where nature and technology are integrated to reshape living patterns. It expands natural landscapes, reworks water systems, and creates self-sufficient communities combining housing, energy, and agriculture. The approach focuses on local autonomy while strengthening ecological connections.

Total densification

Accommodate 75.000 households
Eco-village capacity: 5.000 household (size of Doesburg)
Number of Eco-villages: 15

Stakeholder impact

Older residents: Support small-scale retrofitting within historic buildings to preserve heritage.
Newcomers: Favour green, low-impact lifestyles
Students: Slow, affordable, and comfortable mobility across the region.

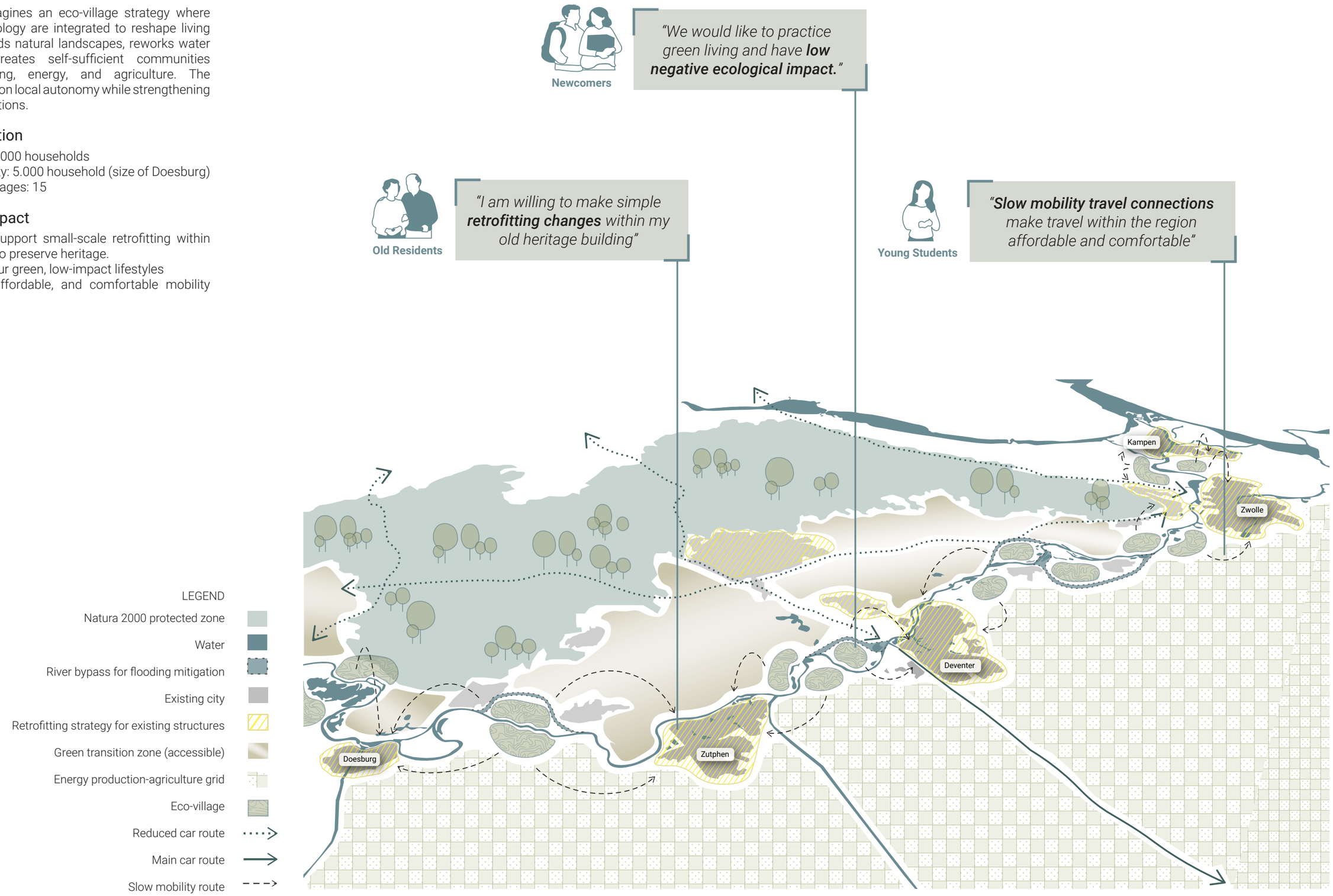


Figure 95: Bird's eye view perspective conceptualising strategies in scenario 1 with predicted and/or assumed reaction from key stakeholders
Source: Base image from Google Earth - reworked for illustrative language

Scenario 2: The heritage network

This instance explores strategies to preserve historic city centres while adapting them for new uses and growth. It reactivates the river for transport, introduces a new business district, and redirects infrastructure to protect the existing urban fabric. The approach balances development with heritage conservation.

Total densification

Total densification:	Accommodate 100.000 households
No. of households added in Kampen:	3.000
No. of households added in Zwolle:	40.000
No. of households added in Deventer:	30.000
No. of households added in Zutphen:	15.000
No. of households added in Doesburg:	23.000
No. of households in new Business District:	10.000

Stakeholder impact

Newcomers seek affordable, energy-efficient housing with access to the IJssel and strong regional connectivity. Elderly residents prefer to maintain their current living conditions and preserve the historic character of their surroundings. Students value the new business district for providing local job opportunities, reducing the need to relocate elsewhere.

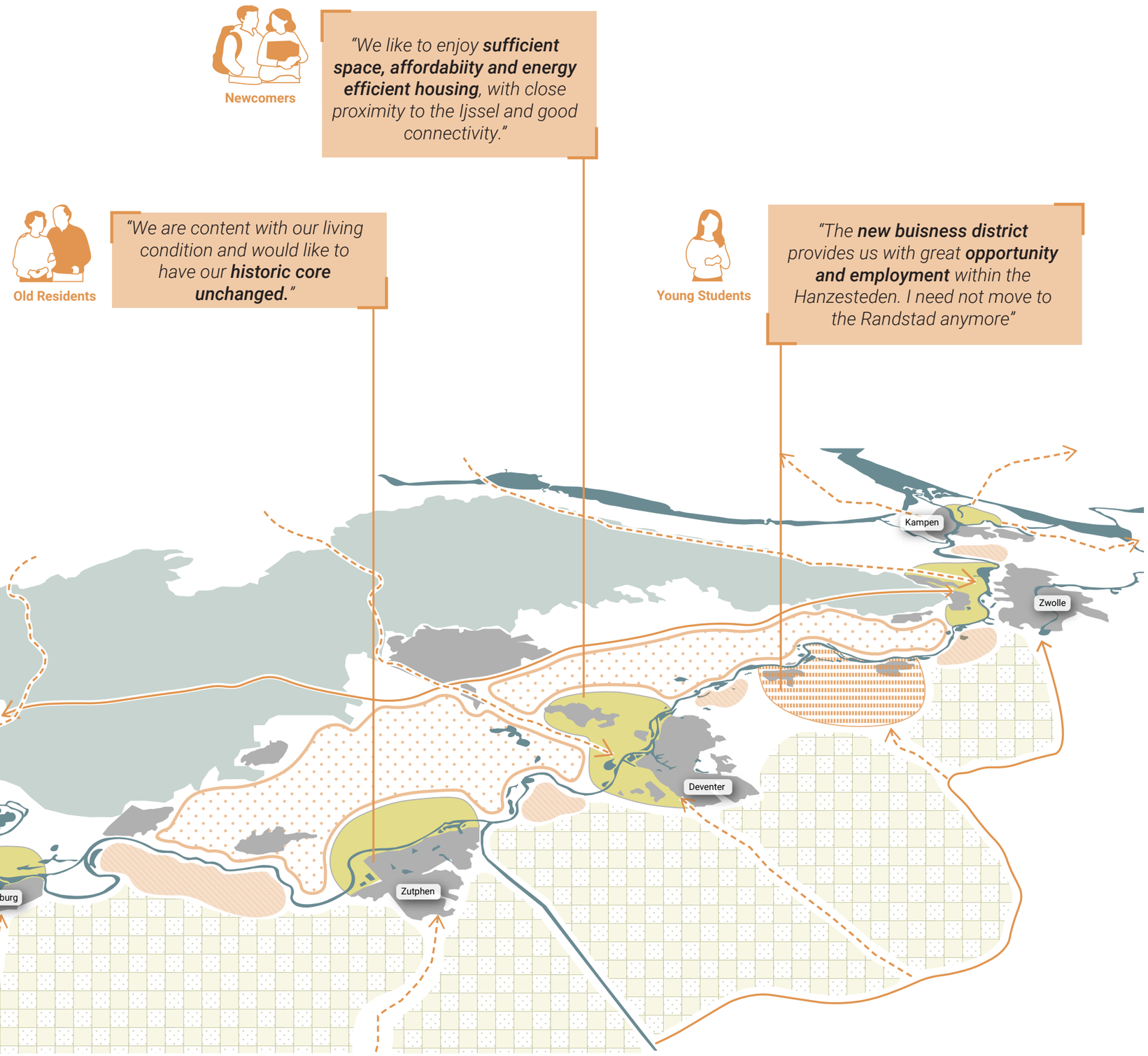


Figure 96: Bird's eye view perspective conceptualising strategies in scenario 2 with predicted and/or assumed reaction from key stakeholders
Source: Base image from Google Earth - reworked for illustrative language

Scenario 3: The energy archipelago

As suggested by the name, this scenario imagines the region to be organised into decentralized energy "islands," each with specific roles - hubs like Kampen and Zwolle focused on different mean of energy production, between Zwolle and Deventer is an upcoming city on the base layer of geothermal energy, Zutphen acting as a distribution linking point with hydrogen pipeline connection and Doesburg to accommodate consumption in new upcoming energies. This strategy creates a resilient, self-sufficient regional energy network.

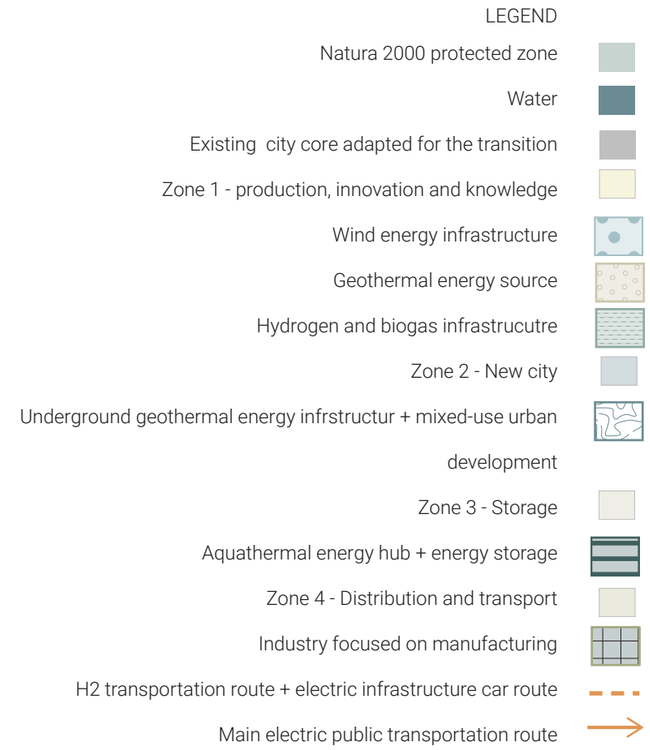
Total densification

Accommodate 120.000 households

No. of households added in Kampen :	0
No. of households added in Zwolle:	30.000
No. of households added in Deventer :	0
No. of households added in Zutphen:	20.000
No. of households added in Doesburg:	20.000
No. of households in the new geothermal city:	50.000

Stakeholder impact

The elderly in this scenario feel negatively affected by industrial concentration, fearing the city's character has changed. Students see opportunities for research, innovation, and affordable energy, thus affordable living costs. Newcomers appreciate the modern, futuristic energy systems shaping the city.



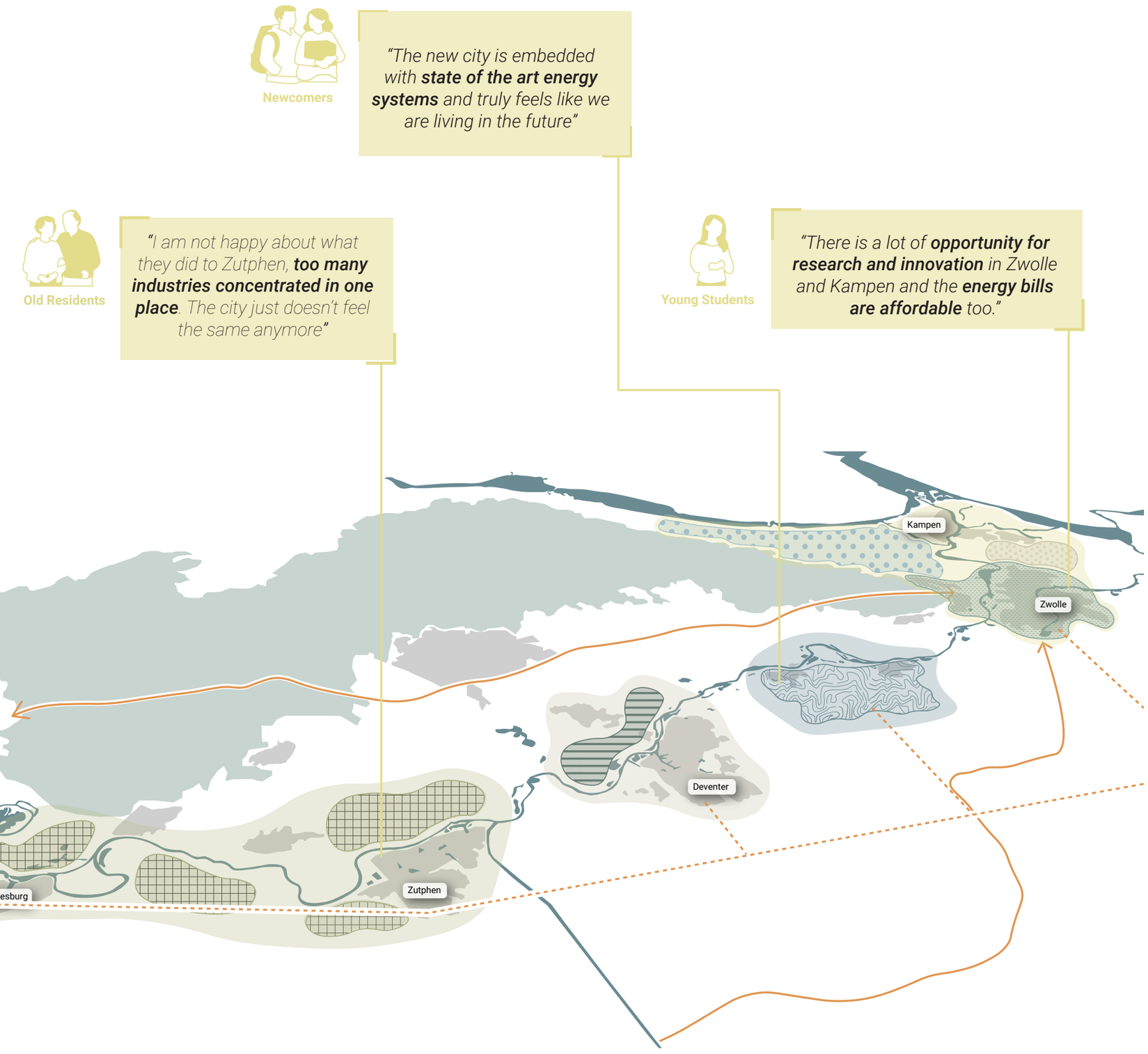


Figure 97: Bird's eye view perspective conceptualising strategies in scenario 3 with predicted and/or assumed reaction from key stakeholders
Source: Base image from Google Earth - reworked for illustrative language

Scenario 4: the river metropolis

The scenario envisions the IJssel as a central economic and infrastructural spine, connecting and expanding cities like Zutphen and Deventer until the edge of the Veluwe, treating part of it as an accessible green edge. The region becomes highly dense with a ring-based transport network around it, keeping the internal routes aligned more to green mobility. The enveloping thought is to support growth while preserving city identities: Kampen as a port, Zwolle as a campus town, and Doesburg as an agricultural hub.

Total densification

Total densification: Accommodate 200.000 households
No. of households in the created metropolis by introducing verticality: 200.000

Stakeholder impact

This scenario receives appreciation from the elderly, preserving some of the cities in their original identities, but they feel concerned that Zutphen and Deventer have been completely consumed. Newcomers value the metropolis for its ample space and long-term livability, and students see Zwolle as an ideal campus town with excellent amenities and housing opportunities.

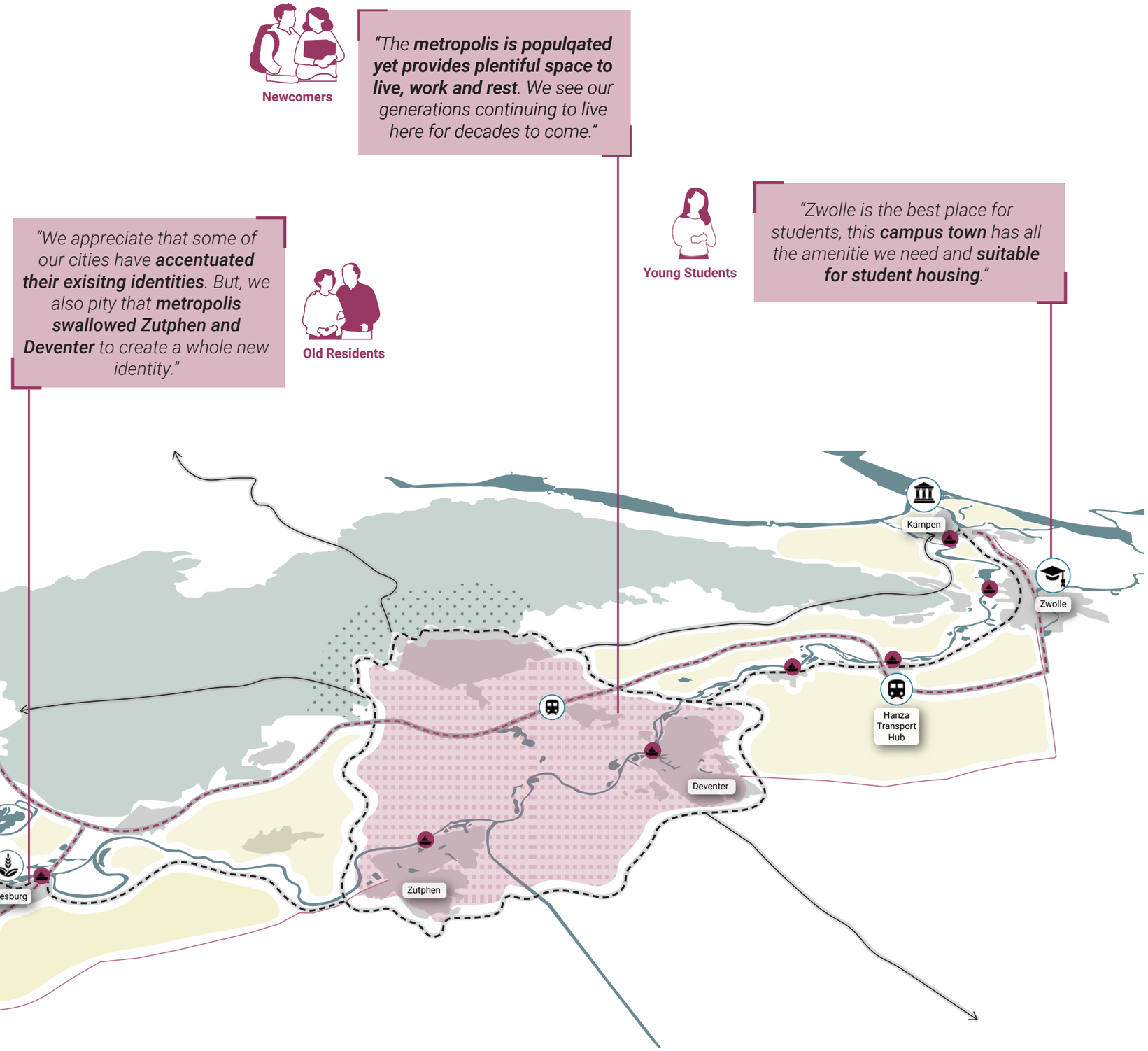
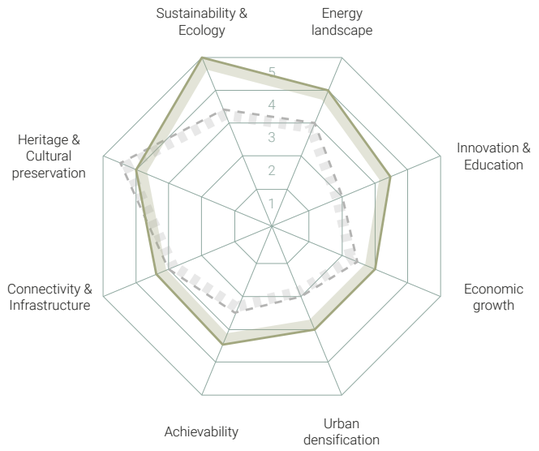


Figure 98: Bird's eye view perspective conceptualising strategies in scenario 4 with predicted and/or assumed reaction from key stakeholders
Source: Base image from Google Earth - reworked for illustrative language

Evaluating the scenarios

Scenario 1 – The Regenerative preservation network

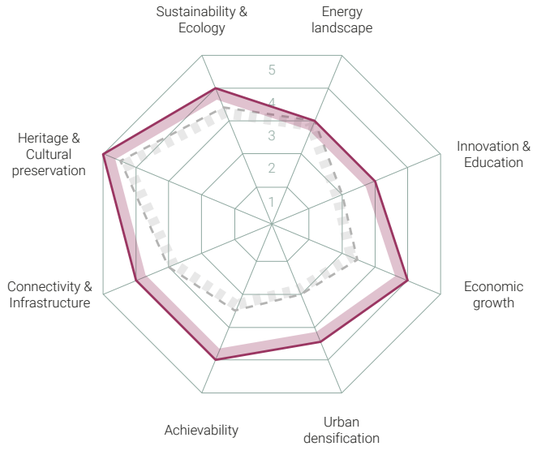
This scenario performs strongly in sustainability and ecological integration, clearly prioritising a regenerative relationship between settlement and landscape. It also demonstrates solid innovation through self-sufficient systems and experimental mobility. However, its impact on economic growth and urban densification is more limited, reflecting a smaller-scale, decentralised approach. Implementation may be complex due to the need for new systems and coordination. Overall, it is a strong environmental model but less effective as a driver of large-scale urban or economic transformation.



Grading chart: scenario 1

Scenario 2 – The energy archipelago

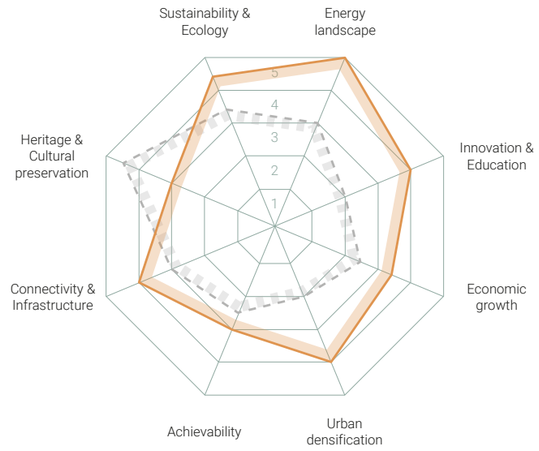
This scenario excels in heritage preservation, maintaining strong cultural continuity while allowing for controlled growth. Its approach to adaptive reuse and infrastructure minimises disruption and supports balanced development. Economic growth and innovation are present but not dominant, reflecting a cautious and context-driven strategy. Connectivity is well integrated without compromising urban identity. Overall, it is a stable and realistic approach, though less ambitious in driving transformative change.



Grading chart: scenario 2

Scenario 3 – The heritage network

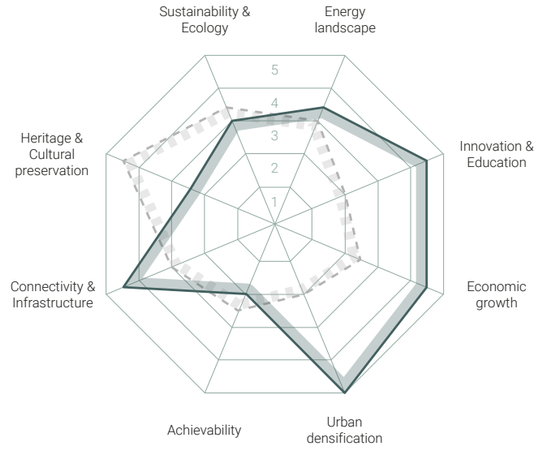
This scenario is highly effective in innovation and sustainability, using energy systems as the main structuring element for regional development. It supports economic growth through strategic clustering and shows good potential for implementation due to its clear spatial logic. However, its impact on heritage and urban form is less pronounced, and densification remains moderate. Overall, it presents a strong, future-oriented model driven by technology and resilience.



Grading chart: scenario 3

Scenario 4 – The river metropolis

This scenario strongly supports economic growth, densification, and overall feasibility, making it the most effective in terms of large-scale urban development. It provides high connectivity through integrated infrastructure systems. However, it performs weaker in ecological integration and heritage preservation, as growth is prioritised over landscape and identity. Overall, it is a highly achievable and growth-oriented model, but less balanced in addressing environmental and cultural concerns.



Grading chart: scenario 4

Conceptual framework

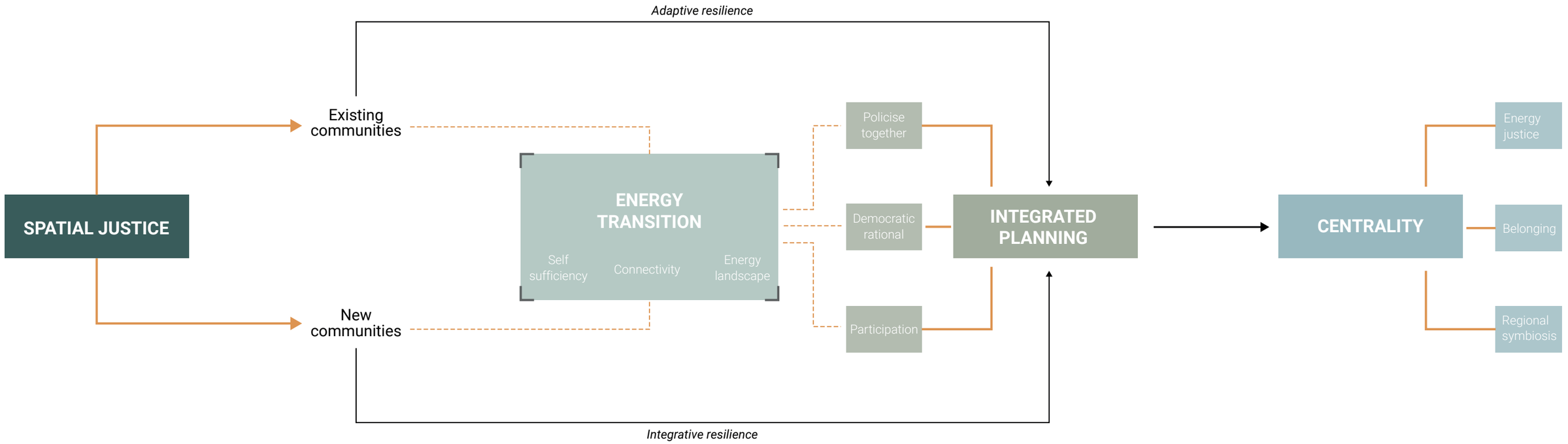


Figure 99: conceptual framework

This conceptual framework identifies spatial justice as the central driver of the project, guiding the transformation of Dutch Hanseatic cities. Spatial justice refers to the equitable distribution of space, resources, and opportunities, and serves as the foundation for the research (Dadashpoor & Dehghan, 2025).
The framework distinguishes two primary actor groups: existing communities and new communities. These groups engage with spatial transformation in distinct ways, reflecting diverse needs, capacities, and relationships to place. Existing communities are embedded within historical, cultural, and social structures, while new communities introduce alternative demands, perspectives, and spatial practices.

Both groups are indirectly connected to the energy transition, which acts as a spatial and systemic mediator. The energy transition is analyzed through three dimensions: self-sufficiency, connectivity, and energy landscapes. These dimensions demonstrate that energy systems are not only technical infrastructures but also spatial frameworks that shape daily life and territorial organization.
The energy transition is closely associated with governance principles including collaborative policy-making, democratic rationality, and participation. These principles emphasize the importance of collective decision-making and inclusive governance structures in spatial and energy transformations. Together, they form the basis for integrated planning that simultaneously addresses social, technical, ecological, and political dimensions.
The interaction between communities and integrated planning is articulated through two forms of resilience. Existing communities display adaptive resilience, which is the capacity to adjust to change while maintaining identity, continuity, and social cohesion. Conversely, new communities demonstrate integrative resilience, defined by their ability to embed within existing spatial and social systems, establish new connections, and contribute to collective structures (Zeng et al., 2022).
These complementary forms of resilience enable both groups to participate actively in integrated planning processes. Such participation leads to a redefinition of centrality within the Hanseatic region. Centrality is reinterpreted as a relational and dynamic outcome of social, spatial, and infrastructural interactions, rather than as a fixed geographical attribute (Noaime et al., 2025).
This renewed centrality is reflected in three key outcomes: belonging, energy justice, and regional symbiosis. Together, these concepts envision a future in which Hanseatic cities function as interconnected, inclusive, and regenerative systems, with communities, landscapes, and infrastructures mutually reinforcing one another.

VISION

Creating the vision for the dutch hanseatic cities

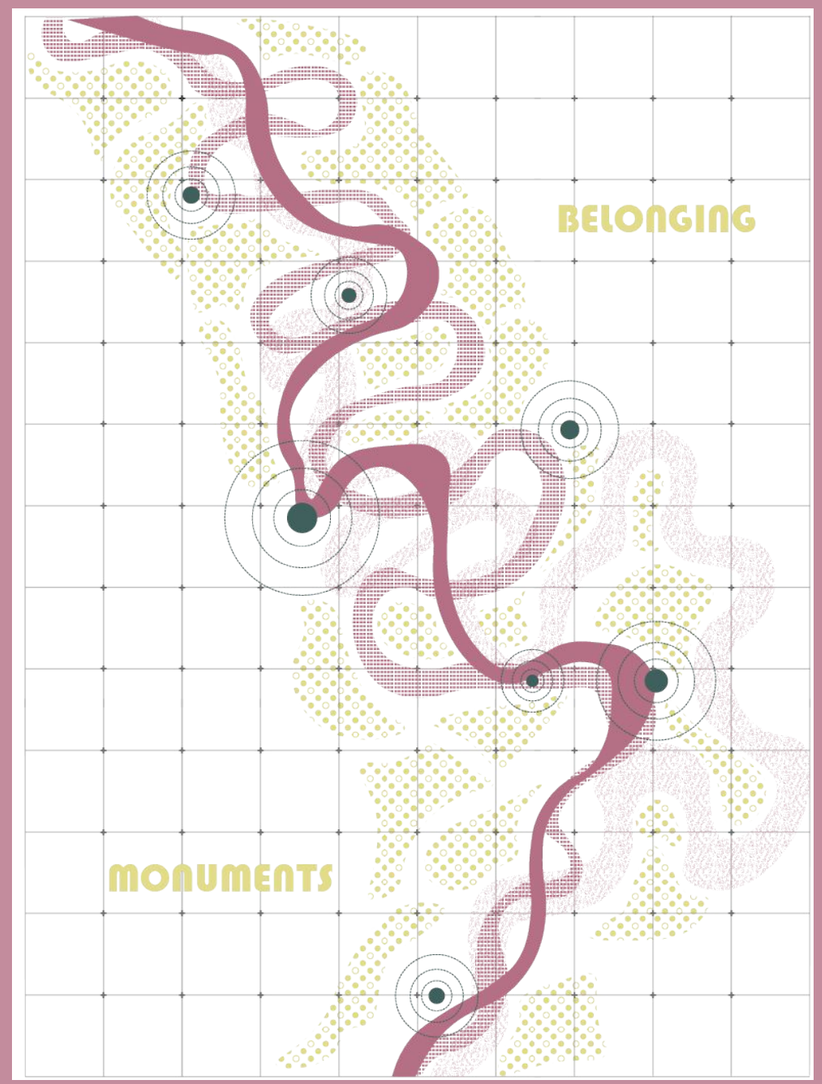


Figure 100: Collage - centrality in Hanseatic region

"By 2075, the Dutch Hanseatic cities have achieved renewed importance through collaborative energy systems that connect the region and unite residents old and new."

Vision goals

The vision for The New Hanseatic Pride is structured around four principal spatial transformations. Each marks a progression from current conditions toward a targeted future, addressing social, spatial, and economic challenges identified during analysis. Together, these transformations redefine the role and centrality of the Hanseatic cities within the Netherlands.
The first transformation, shifting from fragmented communities to inclusive belonging, addresses the region's social dimension. Rising migration has introduced new populations into historically cohesive cities, creating tensions around identity and participation (Kapelle & Kramsch, 2023). The project envisions a future where existing residents and newcomers unite through shared spaces and inclusive design strategies, fostering a collective sense of belonging.

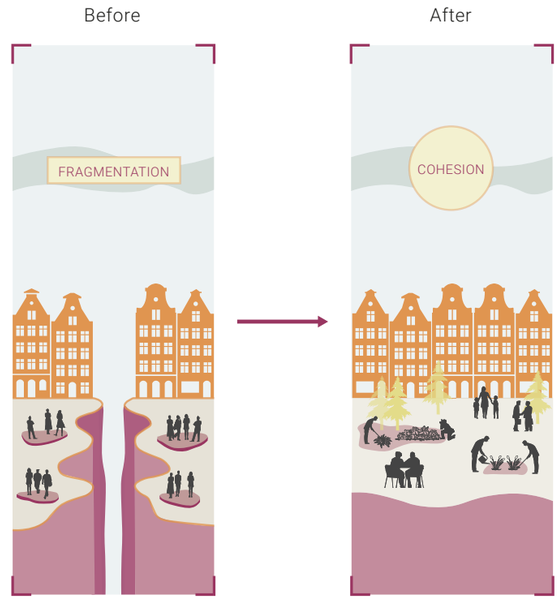


Figure 101-102: Before and after vision goal 1

The second transformation, from peripheral region to polycentric centrality, concerns the spatial positioning of the Hanseatic cities. Though currently seen as peripheral to the Randstad, the region is reimagined as a connected, interdependent network of cities. Strengthening spatial and infrastructural connections, especially along the IJssel River, helps the region regain relevance within the broader national system.

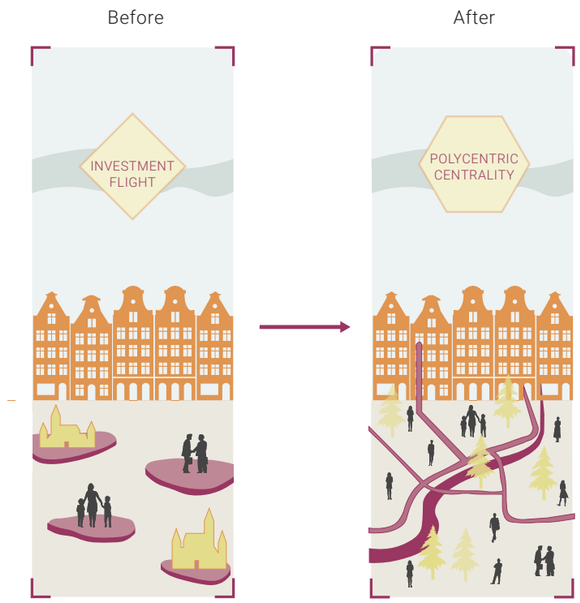


Figure 103-104: Before and after vision goal 2

The third transformation, from an invisible energy transition to an integrated energy landscape, redefines energy's role in spatial design. Instead of treating energy systems as isolated technical solutions, the project integrates them into the landscape, making them visible, multifunctional, and part of daily life. Energy production thus serves as a catalyst for ecological regeneration, spatial quality, and regional cooperation.

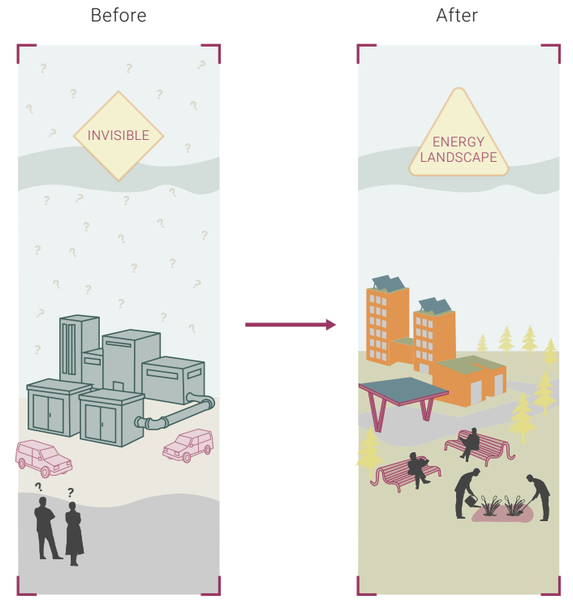


Figure 105-106: Before and after vision goal 3

The fourth transformation, from static heritage to an adaptive reuse economy, repositions historic structures as active elements within the contemporary city. Instead of preserving monuments as isolated artefacts, these structures are reactivated through new programs and economic functions. This approach strengthens local economies and keeps heritage relevant and accessible to diverse communities.
Although presented as distinct transformations, these four themes operate concurrently and reinforce each other. Enhancing belonging supports economic vitality, while integrated energy systems improve both ecological and spatial quality. Similarly, heritage reuse and developing a polycentric network boost the region's overall resilience and attractiveness.
Collectively, these vision objectives show how spatial design can transcend isolated interventions and serve as an integrated framework. By linking social cohesion, spatial structure, energy systems, and economic development, the Hanseatic cities are repositioned as a cohesive, inclusive, and future-oriented region.

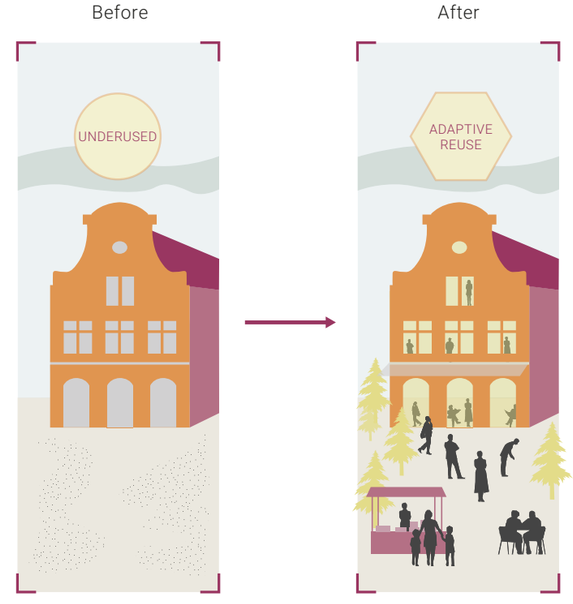


Figure 107-108: Before and after vision goal 4

The Hanseatic Pride I — Ecology

The ecological layer forms the foundation of the vision, positioning the Veluwe as a protected and leading landscape. Instead of encroaching on this area, the proposal improves its ecological value by extending it toward the Hanseatic cities. A green living zone is introduced on the western side of the IJssel, organised around a series of eco-villages. These eco-villages serve as central living clusters, integrated within the expanded Veluwe landscape.
Existing infrastructure through the Veluwe is reduced in capacity and speed to lessen its environmental impact. Ecological connections are improved by adding more eco-ducts, allowing wildlife to move freely across the region. Infrastructure persists but is secondary to the landscape.
The river system is expanded with bypasses and larger floodplains, enhancing ecological resilience along with strengthening the IJssel's natural dynamics. These interventions establish ecology as the leading framework for the regional vision.

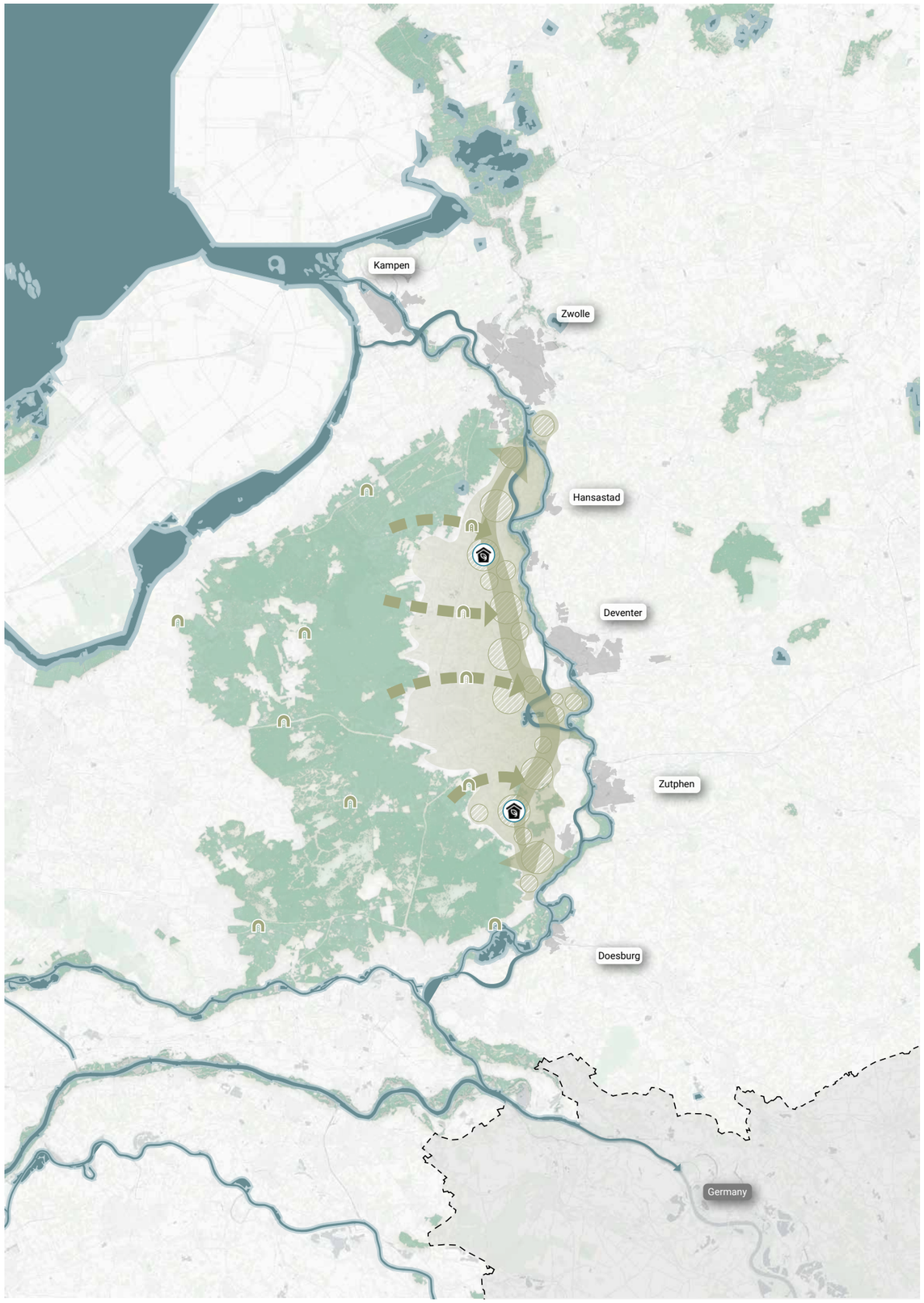


Figure 109: Establishing ecological foundations and connecting the Veluwe to the Hanseatic cities

The Hanseatic Pride II — Ecology + Infrastructure

Building on the ecological foundation, the infrastructural layer transforms the region from a transit corridor into an integrated system. The emphasis shifts from primary roads to regional connectivity. The A12 continues as a key link to the Randstad but is less prominent, and the region is no longer treated as a thoroughfare.

The Hanseatic cities are treated as protected urban areas, with major traffic redirected around them. Two north–south regional routes, one on each side of the IJssel, become more prominent and strengthen city connections. These routes are set away from city centres, requiring minor detours and are not the main focus of mobility.

The railway line is the core of the mobility system, connecting all Hanseatic cities through the region's centre. Service frequency and focus on the Hanseatic route are increased. Key stations, including Zwolle, Doesburg, and the Hanseatic business district, are upgraded. Zwolle becomes the main public transport hub, while Doesburg develops further as a logistics hub due to its proximity to Germany and major infrastructure.

In cities and eco-villages, streets have been designed to be safe, walkable, and green, with a focus on care infrastructure for the elderly. Ports are also opened and better integrated into the transport system to strengthen water-based mobility.

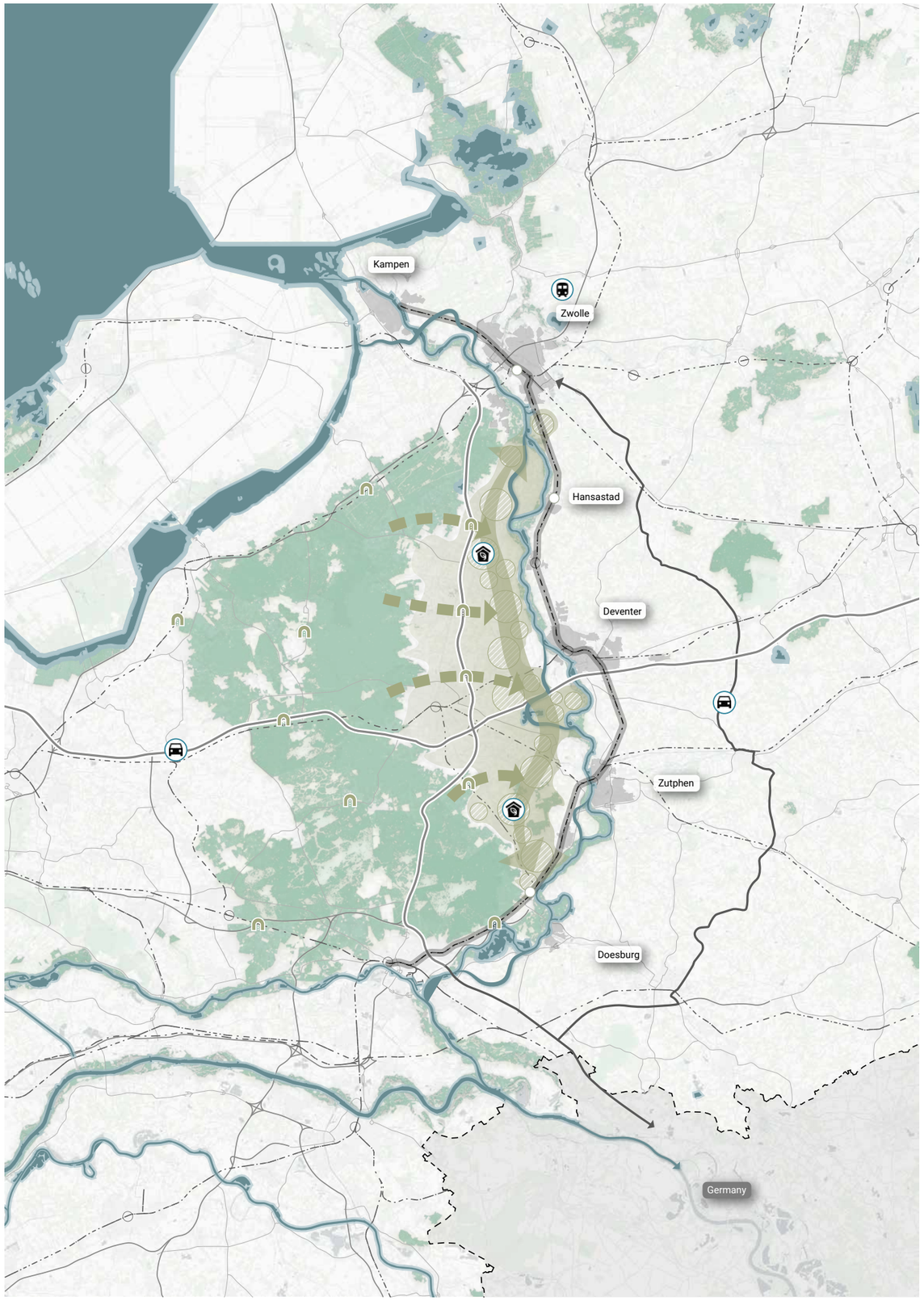


Figure 110: Integrating mobility and connectivity while preserving ecological priorities

The Hanseatic Pride III — Ecology + Infrastructure + Housing

The housing layer balances growth with heritage preservation and landscape considerations. Historic urban areas are preserved, with interventions limited to interior retrofitting to reduce energy use whilst maintaining cultural value.

Significant growth is accommodated through densification on the opposite side of the IJssel, addressing spatial capacity and flood zone restrictions. The region is expected to add about 150,000 households, with most cities growing by around 150%. Zwolle (+25,000), Deventer (+20,000), and Zutphen (+10,000) follow this growth pattern.

Kampen and Doesburg take on different roles. Kampen focuses on harbour activities and industrial development, adding eco-villages instead of expanding as a city. Doesburg is growing rapidly due to its strategic location near Germany and major infrastructure, expanding by 200% (about 5,000 households) to enhance livability and urban vitality.

About 60,000 households are added to existing cities through Robust water densification. Fourteen eco-villages are introduced across the region, each with about 5,000 households, modelled after Doesburg to ensure a critical mass for local facilities whilst maintaining a community focus. This results in approximately 70,000 households in eco-villages, surpassing urban densification. The distribution complies with national regulations, including those from Rijkswaterstaat, that limit construction in flood-prone areas.

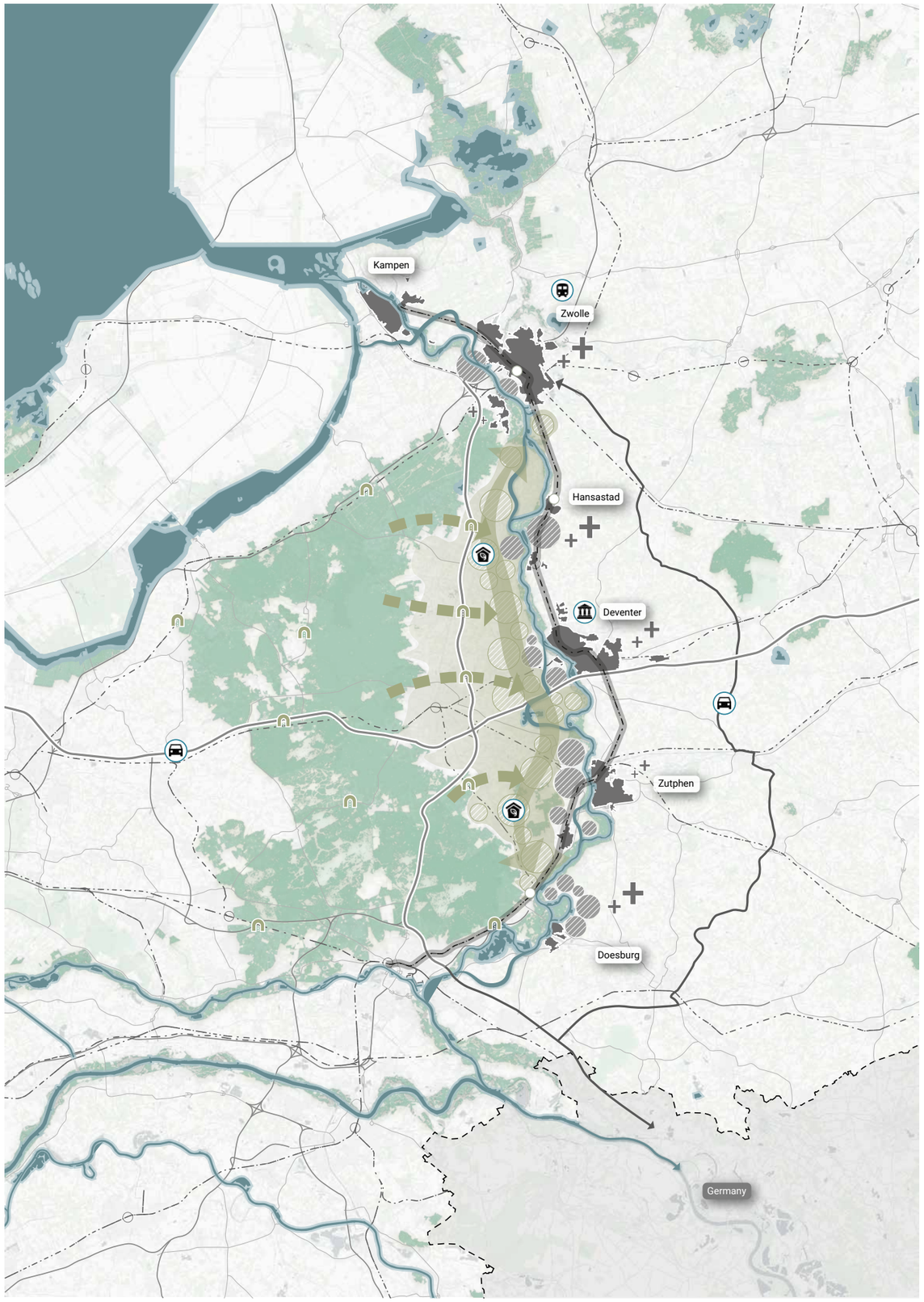
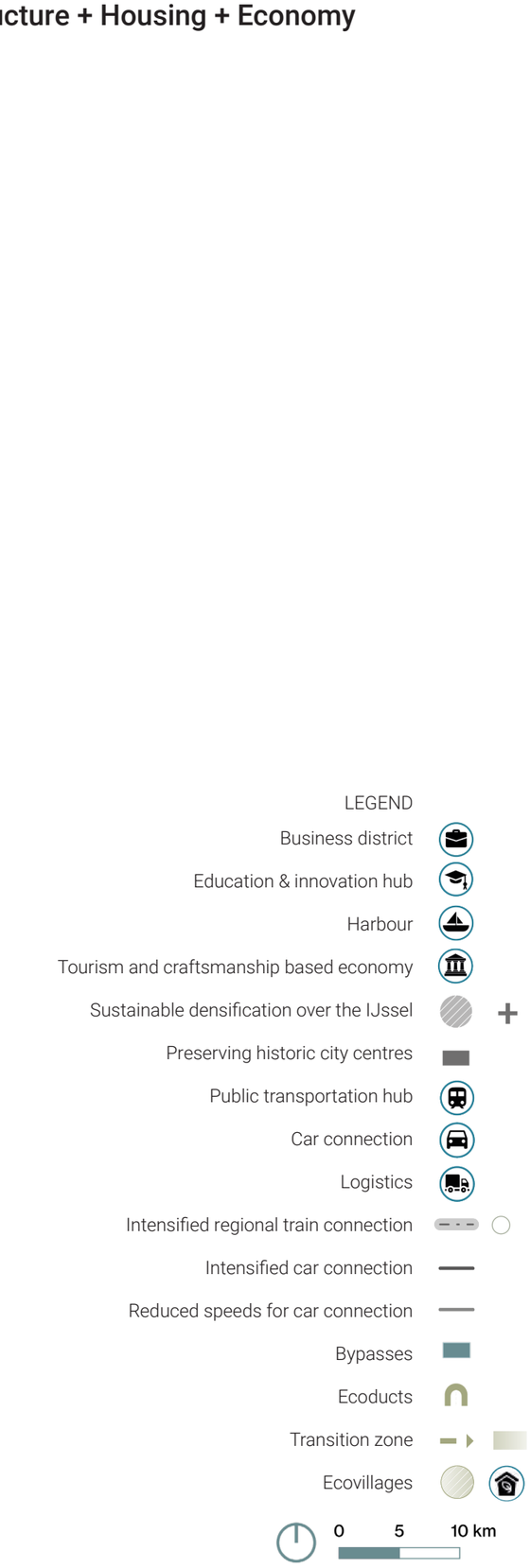


Figure 111: Balancing urban growth, heritage, and eco-village development

The Hanseatic Pride IV — Ecology + Infrastructure + Housing + Economy

The economic layer builds on the spatial and infrastructural framework by assigning complementary roles to each city. Zwolle develops further as an education and innovation hub, seeking to attract and retain students and knowledge workers. This existing role is considerably strengthened in the vision.
Kampen, Doesburg, and the Hanseatic business district focus on harbour expansion and water-based transport. Their edge locations position the region as a key node in future logistics networks. These sites serve as both transport hubs and economic centres.
Deventer emphasises craftsmanship, small-scale economic activity, and tourism, strengthening its historical identity and attracting more visitors than other cities in the region.
A new business district between Zwolle and Deventer functions as a central engine for economic growth. It offers space for offices, companies, and new forms of work, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors. Its location bridges innovation and production, and its close link to Zwolle's innovation hub stimulates collaboration, knowledge exchange, and economic development, strengthening the regional economy.



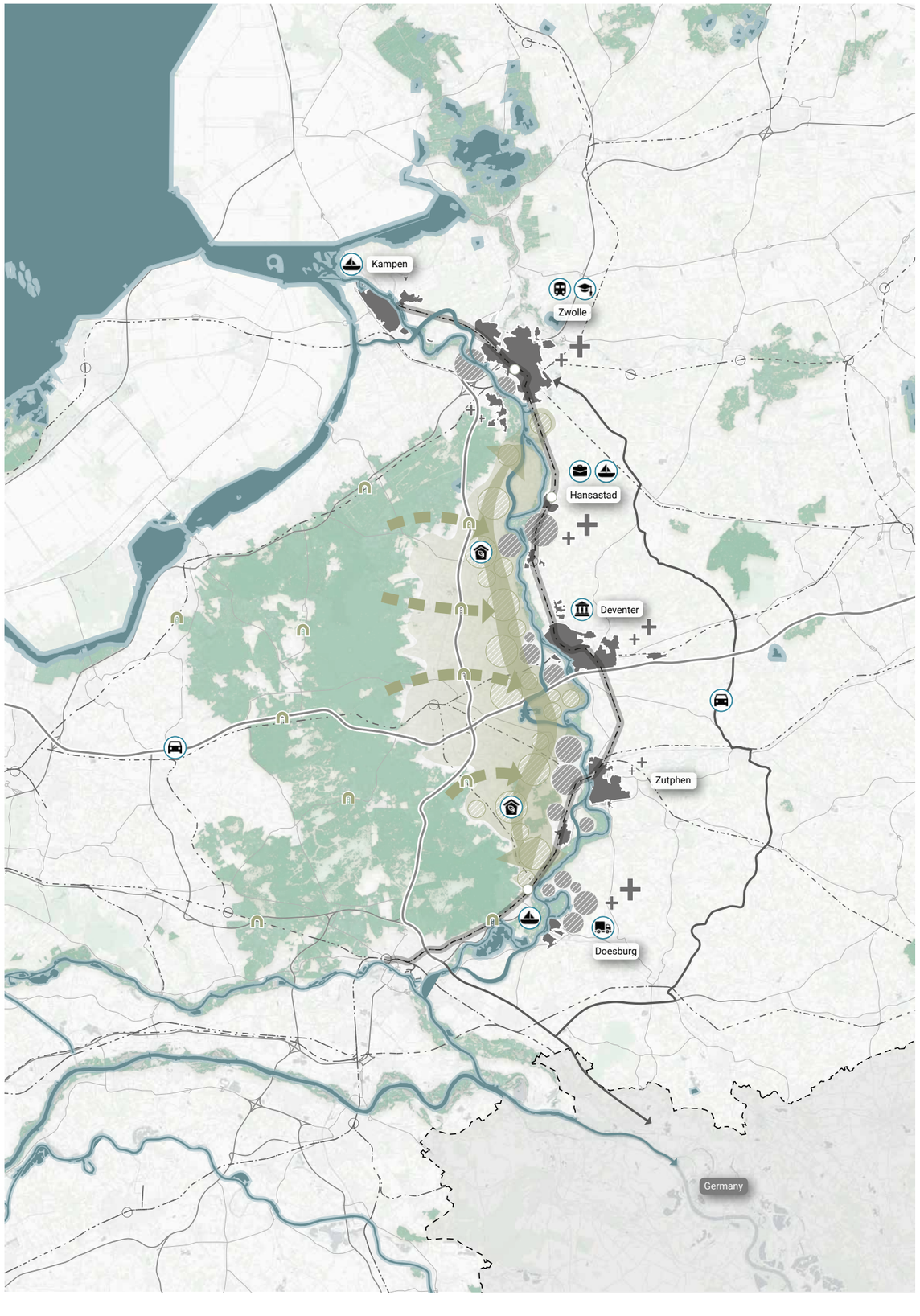


Figure 112: Defining complementary economic roles across the Hanseatic region

The Hanseatic Pride V — Ecology + Infrastructure + Housing + Economy + Energy

The final layer integrates all previous systems into a comprehensive, future-proof vision, using energy as the unifying element. The goal is to create a region where everyone belongs, whether in historic city centres, eco-villages, or urban districts, while guaranteeing affordability and a higher quality of life.
The region transitions to a renewable, self-sufficient energy system. In historic city centres, measures include aquathermal energy for heating, solar panels on less visible surfaces, internal insulation, high-performance glazing, and roof insulation. These interventions improve sustainability while not compromising heritage values.
At the regional scale, energy production is diversified. Wind energy is significant, with about 175 turbines generating 12.5 PJ. Large-scale solar parks cover roughly 3,437.5 hectares and also produce 12.5 PJ. Geothermal energy is introduced at two sites (0.3 PJ), and aquathermal energy is used in Doesburg (up to 0.6 PJ).
Solar panels are installed on all new buildings and, where possible, on existing homes, covering about 250,000 households and contributing around 5 PJ.
As the final layer, energy supports the region's functioning and unifies all previous strategies, completing The Hanseatic Pride as an integrated spatial vision.

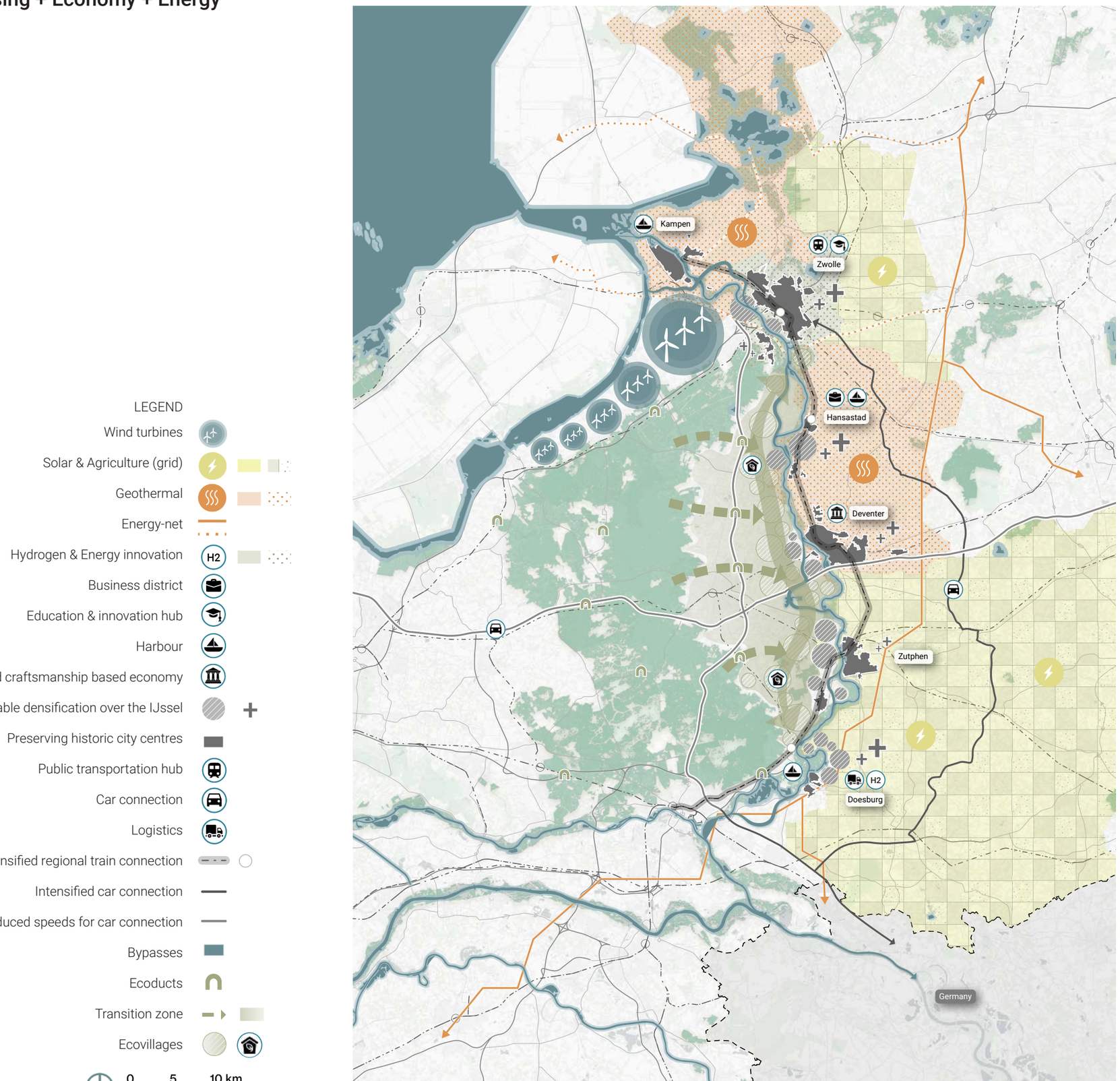


Figure 113: Unifying energy transition with all regional systems for a resilient future

Figure 114: Stakeholders reviewing the vision's building blocks

At the roundtable...

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the future of the Hanseatic Cities, this project incorporates four positioning papers representing the Rijkswaterstaat, the municipality of Zutphen, students and elderly residents as key stakeholders (see Appendix). These viewpoints identify a significant and ongoing challenge for the region from each stakeholder's perspective and their views on our vision based on varying research methods.

...with the Rijkswaterstaat

From the perspective of Rijkswaterstaat, the Hanseatic Pride vision for the IJssel region presents both opportunities and challenges within the context of the Netherlands as a water-sensitive delta. With a large share of the country vulnerable to flooding, water and soil must remain leading priorities in all spatial decisions. While the vision already addresses pressing issues such as climate change, it raises concerns when proposing developments that conflict with water safety, long-term resilience, and the river system's functioning. The planned urban expansion of cities such as Zwolle, Deventer, Zutphen, and Doesburg westward into the IJssel floodplains is considered highly problematic. These areas are essential for water storage during peak discharge, and urbanisation would increase flood risk. Development is therefore only acceptable outside high-risk zones or, where unavoidable, through water-robust solutions. In contrast, the proposed transition zone between the Veluwe and the IJssel offers potential if designed as a multifunctional landscape that supports water storage, ecological corridors, and climate adaptation.

Economic strengthening through port development along the IJssel is recognised as an opportunity to enhance sustainable transport. However, intensification must not compromise the river's natural flow or its capacity to function as a self-supporting system. Similarly, infrastructure adjustments must respect the existing road hierarchy to maintain safety and accessibility.

The envisioned energy transition aligns with sustainability ambitions, particularly through integrated systems such as aquathermal and geothermal energy, provided that impacts on water and soil systems are carefully managed.

Overall, support for the vision depends on ensuring that spatial development, economic growth, and energy systems reinforce water safety, ecological balance, and the long-term resilience of the IJssel region through efficient infrastructure.

See appendix for full version of the position paper

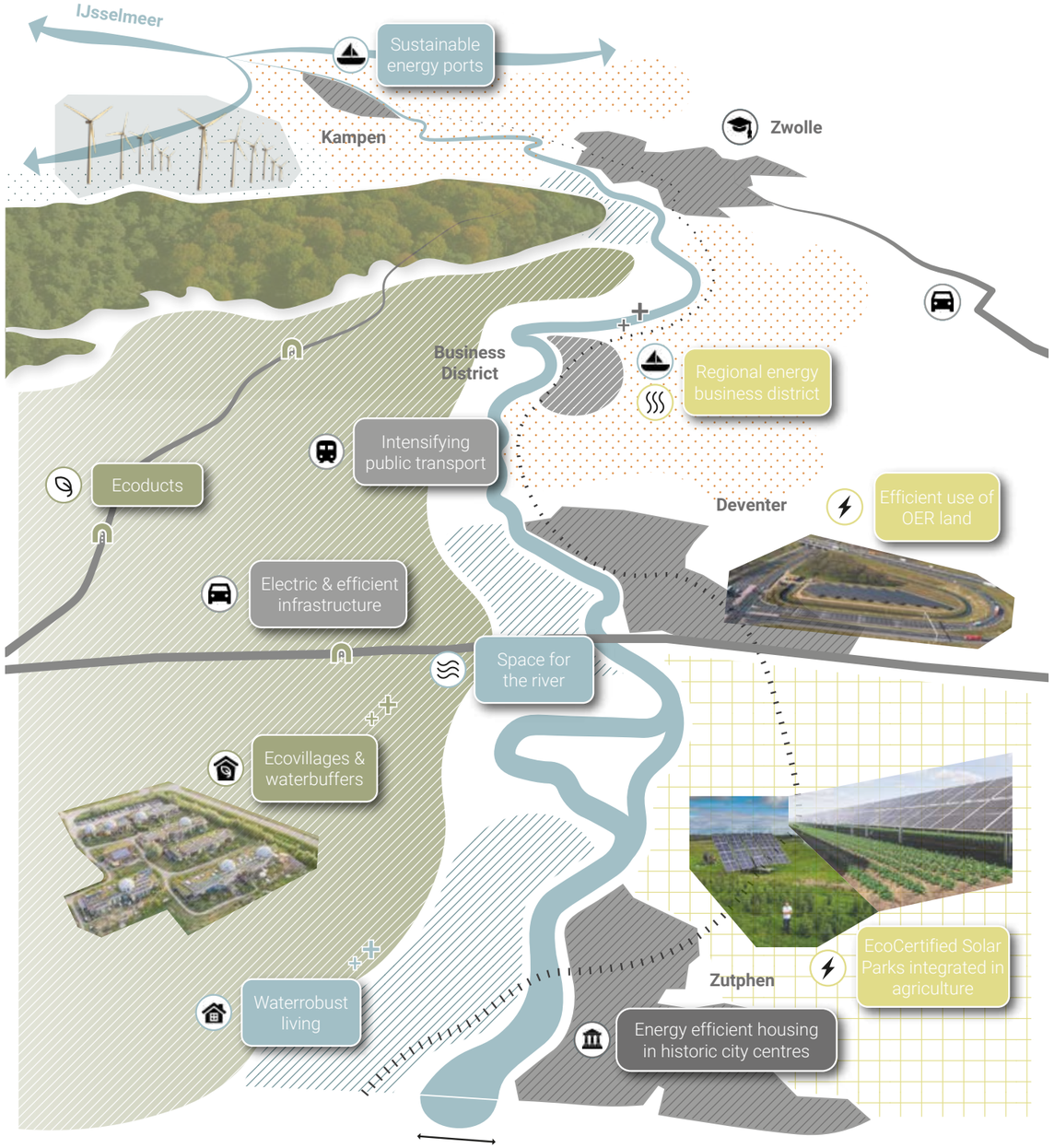


Figure 115: Rijkswaterstaats vision for the hanseatic pride

At the roundtable with the municipality of Zutphen

The Municipality of Zutphen broadly supports our vision ‘The New Hanseatic Pride,’ a spatial vision exploring how the energy transition can contribute a new collective identity for the Hanseatic cities, connecting newcomers from the Randstad with existing residents. This core idea aligns closely with the municipality’s own policy objectives as outlined in the Environmental Vision 2040 and the Heat Transition Vision: carbon neutrality by 2040 through aquathermal energy and collective heat networks, population growth toward 55,000-60,000 inhabitants, economic strengthening through the expansion of business park De Revelhorst, and careful densification within the constraints of its nationally protected cityscape. ZutphenEnergie, the local energy cooperative, illustrates how collective energy management is already deeply embedded in the municipality’s transition strategy.

Despite this broad support, the municipality raises three critical points. First, the proposed eco-villages must be socially mixed combining different incomes, ages, and lifestyles to prevent them from becoming isolated enclaves for newcomers rather than genuine transition zones between the Veluwe and the city. Second, energy retrofitting of the old city center demands careful heritage assessment and resident participation, as Zutphen’s protected urban silhouette is central to its Hanseatic identity and the tensions this already generates with neighboring municipality Bronckhorst. Third, better regional rail connections are essential; with around 2,000 residents commuting out of the municipality daily, the vision’s feasibility depends on concrete public transport improvements.

Spatially, the municipality identifies three priority zones: the station area as an innovation hub, the urban fringes of Noordveen and De Hoven for development, and the protected inner city. With targeted refinements on social mixing, heritage protection, and mobility, the municipality considers the vision a solid foundation for further regional elaboration.

See appendix for full version of the position paper

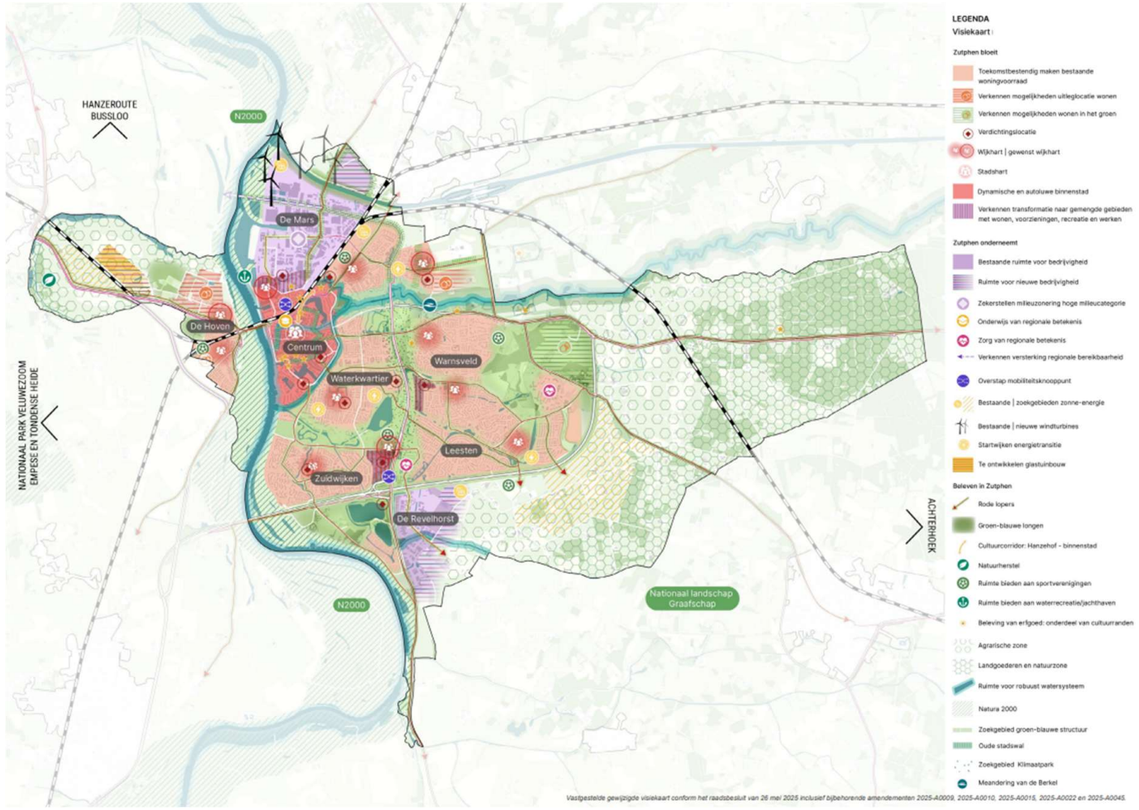


Figure 116: Omgevingsvisie Zutphen, Gemeente Zutphen

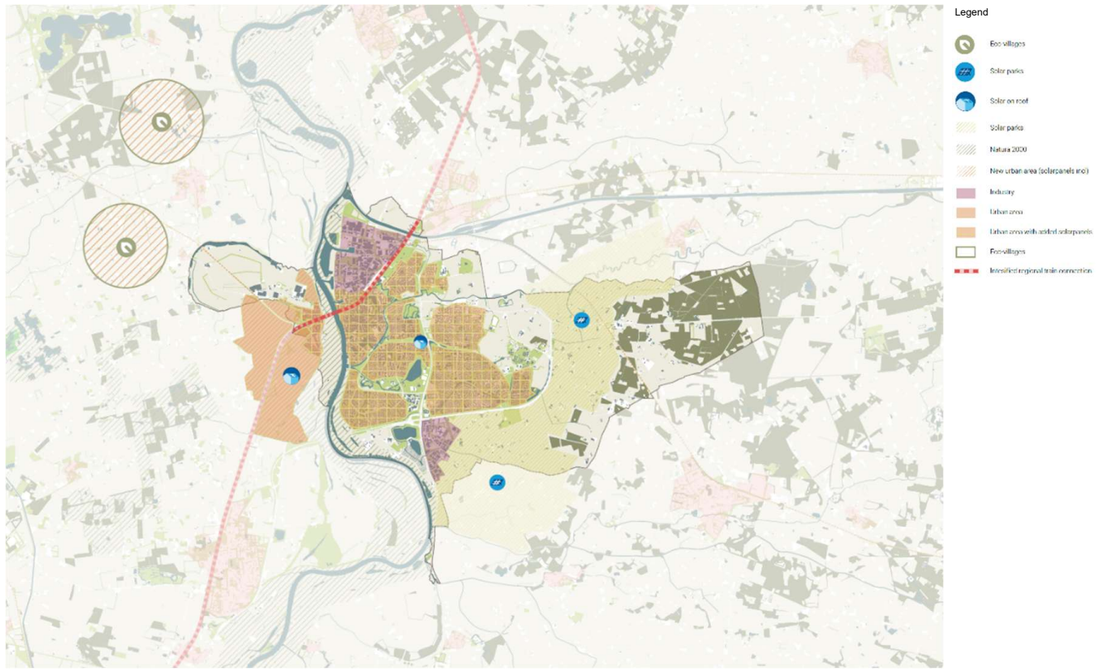


Figure 117: Map showing The Hanseatic Pride vision on Zutphen

A Student's Perspective on the Future of the Hanseatic Cities

The paper examines how well the Hanseatic region along the IJssel offers conditions for students to establish their future locally, focusing on education, employment, housing, accessibility, and socio-cultural engagement. The analysis shows that structural deficiencies in these areas, including limited higher education opportunities, a shortage of suitable employment, restricted housing availability, and underdeveloped social and cultural networks, continue to prompt student outmigration. These trends align with broader patterns in peripheral regions throughout Northwestern Europe.

Furthermore, the paper assesses the proposed regional vision, which prioritizes sustainability, infrastructure, heritage, and social cohesion. Although these objectives contribute to a robust long-term outlook, they have not yet been effectively translated into specific measures that address the immediate needs of students. This disconnect highlights a gap between strategic planning and the daily experiences of young residents.

The findings emphasize the need to move from conceptual ambitions to practical strategies. Without targeted interventions, the Hanseatic Cities will likely continue the cycle of student outmigration. The paper presents key recommendations: developing new higher education programs aligned with the regional labor market, creating affordable student housing through partnerships between municipalities and housing associations, and improving regional accessibility by enhancing public transport services. Additionally, reinforcing socio-cultural networks through events and initiatives aimed at young residents is essential to fostering a stronger sense of belonging.

Implementing these measures will enable the Hanseatic Cities to better support students in living, studying, and working in the region, thereby enhancing the long-term vitality and resilience of the area.

See appendix for full version of the position paper

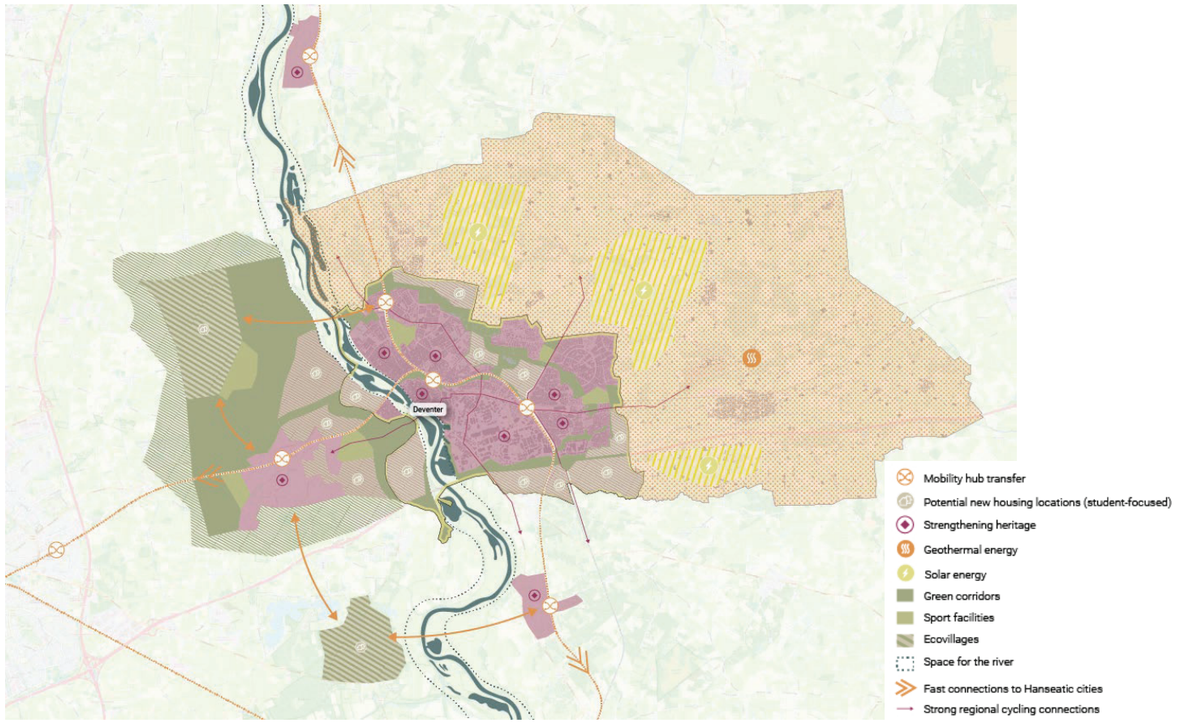


Figure 118: Core values and existing strengths of vision

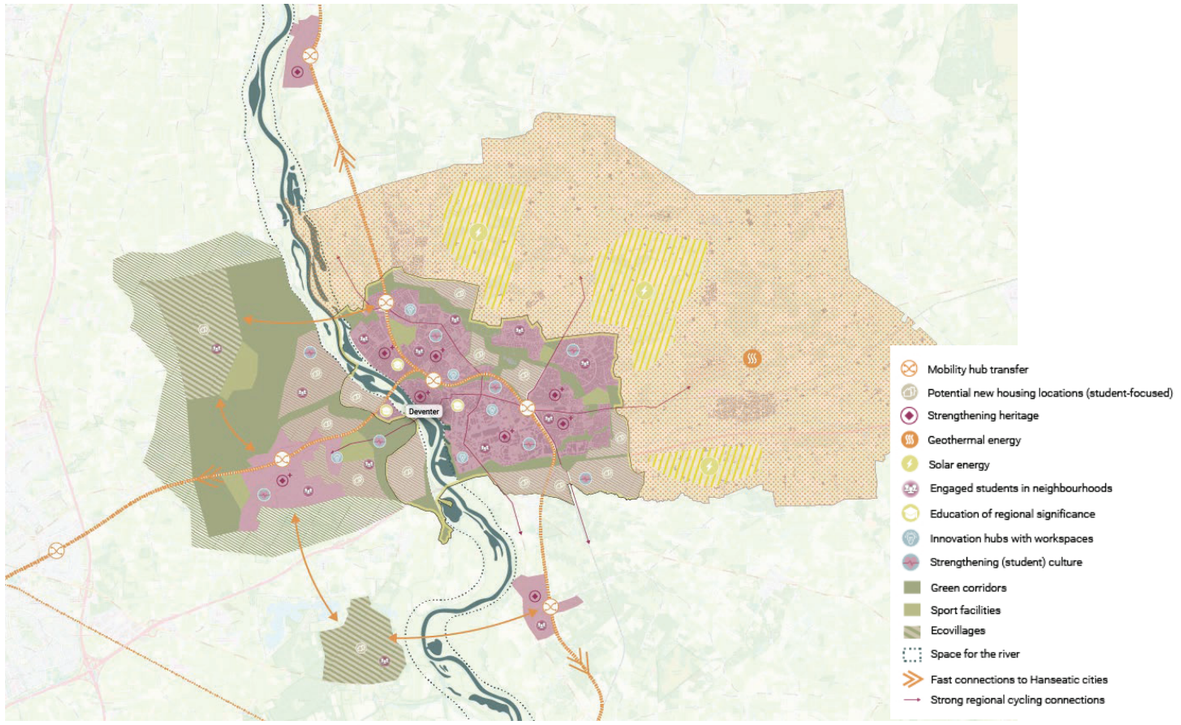


Figure 119: Future needs and opportunities for students

At the roundtable with the elderly residents

This position paper presents the perspective of the elderly residents in the Dutch hanseatic cities, a demographic group deeply embedded in the social and historical fabric of the region, As the ageing population continues to grow, particularly in provinces such as Overijssel and Gelderland, the paper identifies the need to address their spatial and social needs within future planning strategies((CBS), 2023)(te Riele, et al., 2019) (Haartsen & Venhorst, 2010). Elderly residents value stability, familiarity, and strong community ties, often rooted in historic centres and post-war neighbourhoods that shape their identity and daily routines (Rowles & Bernard, 2013).

The analysis highlights key priorities for this group, including proximity to healthcare, local services, and social spaces, aligning with the principles of age-friendly environments (WHO Global Network, 2007). While regional connectivity is appreciated, it should not come at the cost of local character or environmental quality (van den Berg, Arentze, & Timmermans, 2011; (Bartolini & Rubin, 2016). The paper acknowledges positive aspects of the "new Hanseatic Pride" vision, particularly its emphasis on heritage preservation, climate adaptation, and regional cooperation (van der Kooij, 2015; Dutch Delta Programme, 2023).

However, it also identifies significant concerns, large-scale transformation may disrupt everyday life, increasing tourism pressure, and prioritise economic growth over social stability, potentially marginalising elderly residents (Floor et al., 1996; Wiles et al., 2011). The vision risks overlooking the importance of ageing-in-place and inclusive development (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Support, 2018).

In response, the paper advocates for a shift toward care-oriented and age-friendly urbanism, emphasising accessible housing, preservation of everyday spaces, and stronger social infrastructure (Power & Mee, 2019). Greater inclusion of elderly residents in decision-making is essential to ensure that future developments support dignity, interdependence and long-term belonging in the region(van der Kooij, 2015).

See appendix for full version of the position paper

Figure 120: Collage for What the elderly look for as factors that make up a more liveable environment
Source: Public source images reworked for illustrative purposes

STRATEGY

Defining the who, when and how of the New Hanseatic Pride

Contents

- X-curve
- Policies & Governance
- Shift in stakeholders & the engagement strategy
- Intervention cards
- The district tiles
- Phasing timeline
  - Spatialising the strategic vision in 2040
  - Spatialising the strategic vision in 2075
  - Energy flow timeline 2040
  - Energy flow timeline 2075
- Zoom-in's
  - Zoom-in 1: Kampen
  - Zoom-in 3: Deventer
  - Zoom-in 2: Zwolle
- Strategy on a national level

X-curve

An X-curve diagram is a transition framework that visualises the simultaneous phase-out of existing systems and the emergence and scaling of new ones over time. Building on Transition Management Theory as developed by Jan Rotmans, our X-curve understands transition as a non-linear process unfolding through distinct yet overlapping phases (Rotmans, 2009).

Our X-curve is structured as a dual-lane model, distinguishing between an energy transition lane and a social transition lane, which operate in parallel and are deeply interdependent. Together, these parallel trajectories highlight that the transition is not solely technological but also socio-cultural, requiring synchronised change across both domains for a resilient and sustainable future.

On the declining curve, the existing system - characterised in our project by fossil fuel dependency, fragmented communities, and rigid infrastructures - moves from pre-development, where underlying pressures remain largely unaddressed, into destabilisation, where inefficiencies such as energy network congestion and social isolation become more visible. This leads to breakdown and phase-out, where outdated practices like fossil fuel consumption and exclusionary spatial patterns are actively questioned and gradually dismantled.

Simultaneously, the ascending curve captures the emergence of new systems through experimentation and innovations, such as renewable energy integration, aquathermal and geothermal planning, and participatory community models. These early initiatives mark the take-off phase, where pilot projects and localised interventions begin to gain traction. With policy support and the scaling of pilots, the transition enters acceleration, enabling structural changes in infrastructure, markets, and social organisation. Over time, this leads to stabilisation and institutionalisation, where the new system is defined by energy self-sufficiency, net-zero regions, and socially cohesive communities.

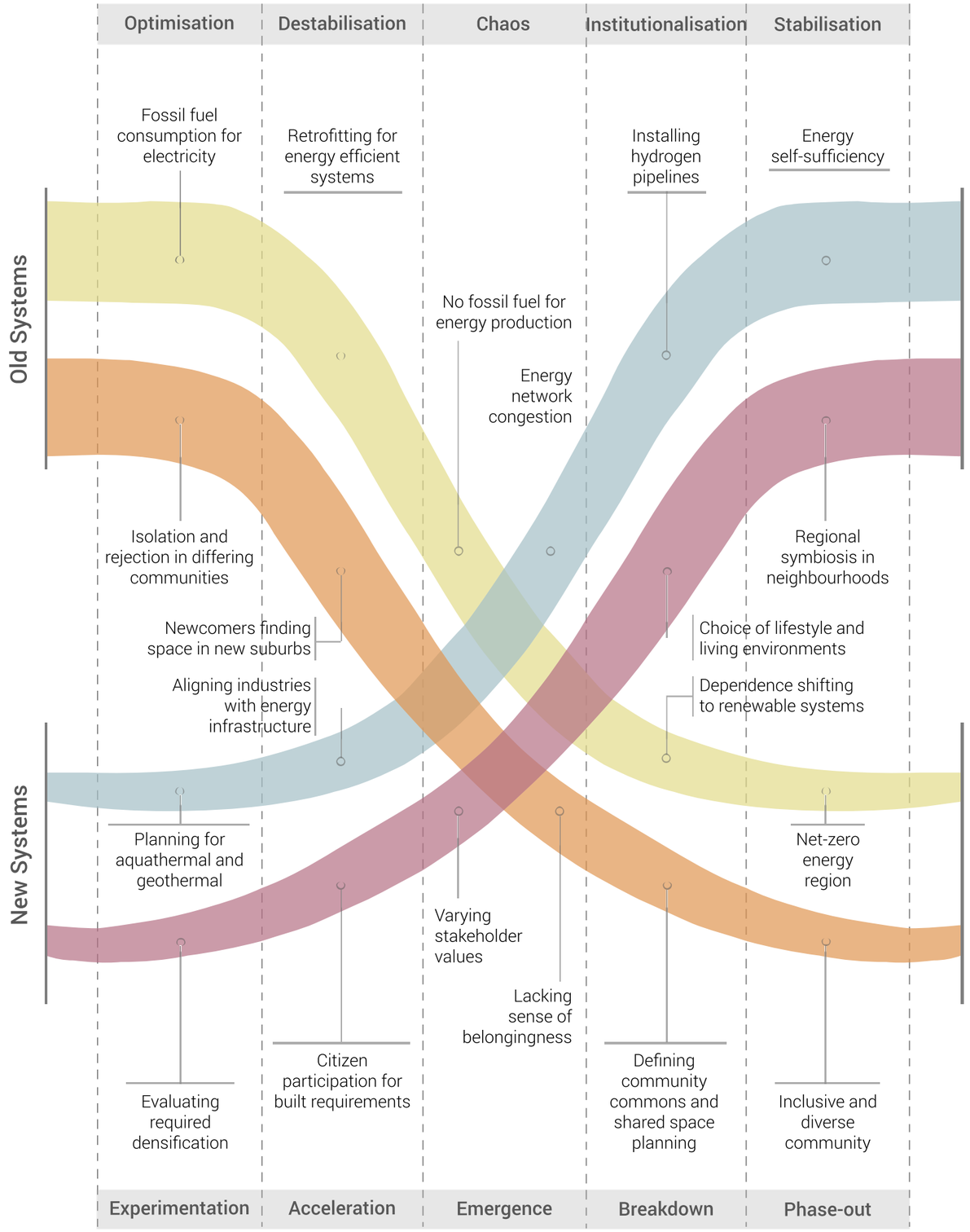
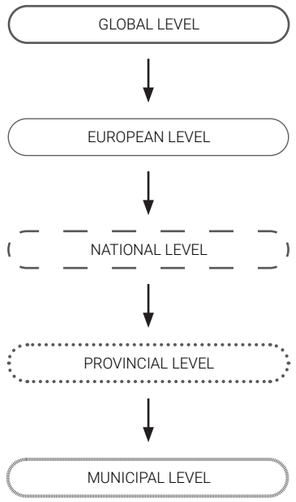


Figure 121: X curve diagram or transition in and out diagram
Source: X curve diagram adapted from Hebinck et al. (2022)

Policies & Governance



The main policies influencing the vision exist across different levels, from global to municipal scale, with each level influencing development in its own way. Global and European policies provide broad directions, while national, provincial, and municipal policies translate these into more specific actions and spatial strategies. To better understand their role, the policies are grouped into five categories: housing, energy, infrastructure, ecology, and cross-sector. This division helps to clarify how different themes are addressed and how they relate to each other within the overall policy framework.

Housing
Energy
Infrastructure
Ecology
Cross-sector

GLOBAL LEVEL

Sustainable Development Goals

- Legally non-binding
- A set of 17 global goals established by the UN as a framework for sustainable development.
- Key points:
  - SDG 11: sustainable cities
  - SDG 7: clean energy
  - SDG 15: biodiversity

Paris Agreement

- Legally binding
- A global climate agreement aimed at limiting global warming to well below 2°C.
- Key points:
  - Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) required
  - Net-zero target towards 2050
  - Strong influence on national energy and spatial strategies

EUROPEAN LEVEL

European Urban Agenda

- Legally non-binding
- An European policy framework for sustainable urban development.
- Key points:
  - Inclusive and affordable cities
  - Integrated planning (housing, mobility, ecology)
  - Focus on compact and sustainable urban growth

Energy Efficiency Directive (EED)

- Legally binding (via national implementation)
- EU directive aimed at improving energy efficiency across member states.
- Key points:
  - Mandatory energy savings
  - Building renovation requirements
  - "Energy efficiency first" principle

Renewable Energy Directive (RED)

- Legally binding
- Directive setting targets for renewable energy production in the EU.
- Key points:
  - Targets for wind and solar energy
  - Requires national implementation
  - Strong spatial impact (energy production sites)

TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network)

- Legally binding
- A European network of transport corridors for passengers and freight.
- Key points:
  - Cross-border infrastructure connections
  - Focus on rail, ports, and inland waterways
  - Strengthens urban nodes and logistics networks

Natura 2000 (EU)

- Legally binding
- A European network of protected nature areas aimed at conserving biodiversity.
- Key points:
  - Protection of habitats and species
  - Strict assessment of spatial developments
  - Constraints on housing and infrastructure

NATIONAL LEVEL

Nationale Omgevingsvisie (NOVI)

- Legally non-binding
- The national long-term spatial strategy of the Netherlands.
- Key points:
  - Protection of habitats and species
  - Strict assessment of spatial developments
  - Constraints on housing and infrastructure

Nationale Woon- en Bouwagenda

- Legally non-binding
- Policy framework addressing the national housing shortage in the Netherlands.
- Key points:
  - 900,000 homes target by 2030
  - Acceleration of housing production
  - Focus on affordability and densification

Nationaal Waterstof Programma

- Legally non-binding
- A national programme coordinating the development of a hydrogen economy in the Netherlands.
- Key points:
  - Development of hydrogen infrastructure and networks
  - Integration with renewable energy systems
  - Decarbonization of industry and heavy transport

Programma Energie Hoofdstructuur (PEH)

- Legally non-binding
- A national programme guiding the spatial development of the future energy system in the Netherlands.
- Key points:
  - Spatial planning of national energy infrastructure (electricity, hydrogen, heat)
  - Coordination between energy supply, demand, and networks
  - Integration of energy systems into spatial planning

Nationaal Energie- en Klimaatplan (NECP)

- Legally binding (EU obligation)
- A national plan outlining how the Netherlands will meet EU energy and climate targets.
- Key points:
  - CO_2 reduction and renewable energy targets
  - Measures across energy, built environment, and mobility
  - Alignment with EU climate policy frameworks

Mobiliteitsvisie

- Legally non-binding
- A strategic vision for the future of mobility and transport in the Netherlands.
- Key points:
  - Transition to sustainable and smart mobility systems
  - Integration of spatial development and accessibility
  - Focus on multimodal transport networks

Natura 2000 (NL)

- Legally binding
- The Dutch implementation of the European Natura 2000 network of protected areas.
- Key points:
  - Protection of designated habitats and species
  - Strict permitting and environmental assessments
  - Major constraints on spatial development

Natuurnetwerk Nederland (NNN)

- Indirectly legally binding (via provincial regulation)
- A national network of nature areas and ecological corridors in the Netherlands.
- Key points:
  - Protection of biodiversity
  - Connection of natural areas
  - Spatial restrictions on development

Klimaatakkoord

- Legally non-binding
- A national agreement between government, industry, and stakeholders on climate measures.
- Key points:
  - Sector-based approach (energy, built environment, mobility, industry)
  - Concrete measures for CO_2 reduction
  - Implementation of energy transition policies

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Omgevingsvisie (Gelderland, Overijssel)

- Legally non-binding
- Strategic spatial vision at the provincial level.
- Key points:
  - Translation of national policies
  - Guidance on landscape and urban development
  - Direction-setting for municipalities

Woondeals (Gelderland, Overijssel)

- Legally non-binding
- Agreements between national, provincial, and local governments on housing delivery.
- Key points:
  - Housing targets
  - Spatial distribution of development
  - Coordination across governance levels

Regionale Energiestrategieën (RES) (Gelderland, Overijssel)

- Legally non-binding (but politically agreed)
- Regional implementation of national energy transition goals.
- Key points:
  - Allocation of wind and solar energy locations
  - Alignment with grid capacity
  - Significant spatial impact

Natuurbeheerplan (Gelderland, Overijssel)

- Legally binding (indirectly)
- A provincial plan defining the management and development of nature areas.
- Key points:
  - Defines target habitats and nature types
  - Supports biodiversity and ecological connectivity
  - Influences land use and development constraints

MUNICIPAL LEVEL

Omgevingsvisie (municipality)

- Legally non-binding
- A long-term strategic vision outlining the desired development of the municipality's physical environment.
- Key points:
  - Strategic direction for spatial development
  - Integration of key themes
  - Basis for the Omgevingsplan

Figure 122: Current main policies for our vision, from global- to manicipal level
The sources, used for the individual policies can be found in the bibliography under policy sources.

Changes in policies & Governance

In the diagram on the left, the selected policies were further analysed in relation to the vision. Each policy was assessed based on how well it supports the vision for the Hanseatic region and was grouped into three categories: No adjustments needed, Needs expansion/ adjustments, and Not aligned/conflicting. Doing this helps to understand the relevance and influence of each policy on the vision.
The analysis shows, unfortunately, that only a limited number of policies fall under No adjustments needed. These are mainly broader frameworks that already align well with the vision's integrated and long-term approach. For example, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement both these global policies support a combination of environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and long-term resilience, which closely matches the principles of the vision. Another example is the Energy Efficiency Directive, which includes improving existing buildings, aligning with the focus on upgrading historic urban fabric, while the National Housing and Construction Agenda supports expansion, densification and diverse housing supply in existing cities.

No adjustments needed

Sustainable Development Goals
In the SDGs there are no adjustments needed. Combining social, environmental, and economic goals. The SDGs align with our vision of inclusive and balanced urban systems and communitys.

Paris Agreement
In the Paris Agreement there are no adjustments needed. It aligns with our goal of a fossil-free and energy-integrated region.

Energy Efficiency Directive (EED)
In the EED there are no adjustments needed. It improves building energy performance. This supports our focus on upgrading existing urban fabric and creating efficient energy systems.

Nationale Woon- en Bouwagenda
In the Nationale Woon- en Bouwagenda there are no adjustments needed. The agenda supports housing growth and urban densification. This aligns with our interventions on expansion and diverse living environments.

Needs expansion/adjustments

European Urban Agenda
In the European Urban Agenda are some adjustments needed. The agenda supports inclusive and sustainable urban development. However, it lacks strong integration with energy systems and regional spatial strategies.

Renewable Energy Directive (RED)
In the RED there is some expansion needed. The RED promotes the expansion of renewable energy sources. However, it focuses on production rather than spatial integration and local context.

TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network)
In the TEN-T there is some expansion needed. The TEN-T strengthens international connectivity and transport corridors. However, it is less focused on regional cohesion and local accessibility.

Nationale Omgevingsvisie (NOVI)
In the NOVI there are some adjustments needed. The NOVI offers an integrated national spatial strategy. However, it remains abstract and lacks concrete implementation at regional scale.

Nationaal Waterstof Programma
In the Waterstof program there are some adjustments needed. The program supports the development of hydrogen as an energy carrier. However, it is sector-focused and not fully integrated into urban systems.

Programma Energie Hoofdstructuur (PEH)
In the PEH there are some adjustments needed. The PEH guides the spatial development of energy infrastructure. However, it remains largely top-down and lacks community integration.

Nationaal Energie- en Klimaatplan (NECP)
In the NECP there are some adjustments needed. The NECP provides a comprehensive framework for climate and energy targets. However, it lacks strong spatial and local implementation.

Mobiliteitsvisie
In the Mobiliteitsvisie there are some adjustments needed. The Mobiliteitsvisie encourages sustainable and multimodal mobility systems. However, it is not strongly linked to social cohesion or regional identity.

Natuurnetwerk Nederland (NNN)
In the NNN there are some adjustments needed. The NNN supports ecological networks and biodiversity. However, it can be rigid and difficult to combine with urban and energy development.

Klimaatakkoord
In the Klimaatakkoord there is some expansions needed. The Klimaatakkoord defines sectoral measures for CO_2 reduction. However, it lacks integration across spatial and social dimensions.

Omgevingsvisie (Gelderland, Overijssel)
In the Omgevingsvisie from Gelderland and Overijssel the are some adjustments needed. The Omgevingsvisie translate national strategies to the regional level. However, they remain policy-driven and lack strong focus on social innovation.

Woondeals (Gelderland, Overijssel)
In the Woondeals there are some adjustments needed. The Woondeals encourage coordination between government levels. However, they focus more on quantity than on integrated spatial quality.

Regionale Energiestrategieën (RES)
In the RES there are some adjustments needed. The RES define regional energy production and locations. However, they are technocratic and weakly connected to local identity and spatial quality.

Natuurbeheerplan (Gelderland, Overijssel)
In the Natuurbeheerplan from Gelderland and Overijssel there are some adjustments needed. The Natuurbeheerplan support biodiversity and ecological management. However, they offer limited flexibility for multifunctional land use.

Omgevingsvisie (Municipalities)
In the Omgevingsvisie from the municipalities there are some adjustments needed. The Omgevingsvisie provide direction for local development and planning. However, fragmentation between municipalities limits regional cohesion.

Not aligned/conflicting

Natura 2000 (EU)
The Natura 2000 (EU) is conflicting with our vision. The Natura 2000 strongly protects biodiversity through strict rules and nature protection goals. However, its strongly limits flexibility for integrated development, making it difficult to combine ecological protection with housing, energy transition, and infrastructure within one coherent regional system.

Natura 2000 (NL)
The Natura 2000 (NL) is conflicting with our vision. The national implementation of the Natura 2000 reinforces these protecting goals through strict regulations, particularly around nitrogen emissions. This creates significant constraints on urban development and energy projects, directly conflicting with your vision of integrated, adaptive, and regionally balanced growth.

Figure 123: Current main policies ordered in 3 categories: no adjustments needed, needs expansion/adjustments and not aligned/conflicting

Stakeholders Stakeholders and Power–Interest Matrix

The regional development of the Dutch Hanseatic cities operates within a complex network of stakeholders, each with varying levels of influence and involvement. To clarify these relationships, Mendelow's matrix was used to map stakeholders by their decision-making power and their level of interest in regional development and the energy transition (Mendelow, 1981). The matrix is divided into 4 quadrants, as shown in the figure on the right, which depicts the current dynamics of the stakeholders.

Big power + little interest

Stakeholders in this quadrant hold significant institutional or regulatory power but have a more indirect or strategic interest in the specific regional outcomes. Actors such as the European Union, Rijkswaterstaat, the Dutch water boards, and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands shape overarching policies, funding mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks. While their involvement is essential, their engagement is often less place-specific. Within the project, these stakeholders are understood as institutions whose frameworks must be aligned with but are not directly driven by more local design interventions.

Big power + big interest

This quadrant includes stakeholders who are both highly influential and directly invested in regional transformation. Municipalities, provinces, regional planners, energy grid operators, property investors, and large businesses fall into this category. These actors play a central role in implementing spatial strategies, controlling resources, and shaping development trajectories in cities such as Deventer and Zutphen. As key players, they require close collaboration and active engagement, as their decisions directly determine how the energy transition is spatially embedded and how regional centrality can evolve.

Little power + big interest

Stakeholders in this quadrant have a strong interest in regional development but limited influence over decision-making processes. This includes the newcomers, elderly residents, young adults, small businesses, and agricultural landowners. These groups are directly affected by spatial change, particularly in housing, accessibility, and local identity. Their position highlights the critical challenge in the project: although they are central to the region's lived experience, their voices are often underrepresented. Within the design approach, these stakeholders are considered essential to engage and empower, fostering social inclusion and a sense of belonging.

Little power + little interest

This quadrant consists of actors with limited direct influence and a relatively low immediate interest in the planning process, such as future residents and flora and fauna. Despite their position, they remain important, particularly from a long-term and ecological perspective. Flora and fauna, for example, are directly affected by spatial interventions related to the energy transition, especially in regional landscapes. These stakeholders are therefore considered indirect but essential, requiring representation through policy, design principles, and ecological considerations.

Shift in stakeholders & the engagement strategy

The power–interest matrix not only maps existing relationships but also reveals opportunities for strategic stakeholder repositioning. In the current situation, several groups, particularly residents and ecological actors such as flora and fauna, are positioned in the lower quadrants, reflecting limited influence despite their direct impact on regional transformation. Fieldwork findings indicate that many residents perceive the responsibility for the energy transition as primarily the domain of governmental actors, such as municipalities and provinces. This perception reinforces a passive role, limiting the incorporation of local knowledge, needs, and values into regional development processes. However, for the energy transition to be socially embedded and spatially effective, these stakeholders must become more actively involved. Because of this, the project aims to shift these groups toward higher levels of interest and engagement, thereby strengthening their role in the planning process.

To facilitate this shift, an engagement strategy is introduced, based on the framework developed by Fruzsina Kovács (2025). This strategy for the Hanseatic cities structures stakeholder involvement as an iterative process consisting of three phases: activate, evaluate, and implement (see next page). The activation phase functions as an initial, short-term stage in which stakeholders are identified and informed about their potential roles within the project. This phase serves as a trigger, raising awareness and engaging stakeholders. The evaluation phase introduces a roundtable format, creating a platform for dialogue between stakeholders. Here, the needs, values, and interests of each group are articulated and compared, allowing for the identification of both conflicts and synergies. This process serves as the basis for stakeholder mapping and directly informs spatial design and intervention strategies. The implementation phase translates these insights into concrete outcomes. Design guidelines and policy directions are established and developed into spatial, social, and political interventions. To ensure long-term engagement and adaptability, the process includes recurring roundtable sessions, proposed at five-year intervals, where stakeholders can reflect on outcomes, reassess priorities, and adjust strategies accordingly. Through this phased approach, the engagement strategy seeks to establish a dynamic, inclusive governance model in which underrepresented groups play a more active, ongoing role in shaping the future of the Dutch Hanseatic cities.

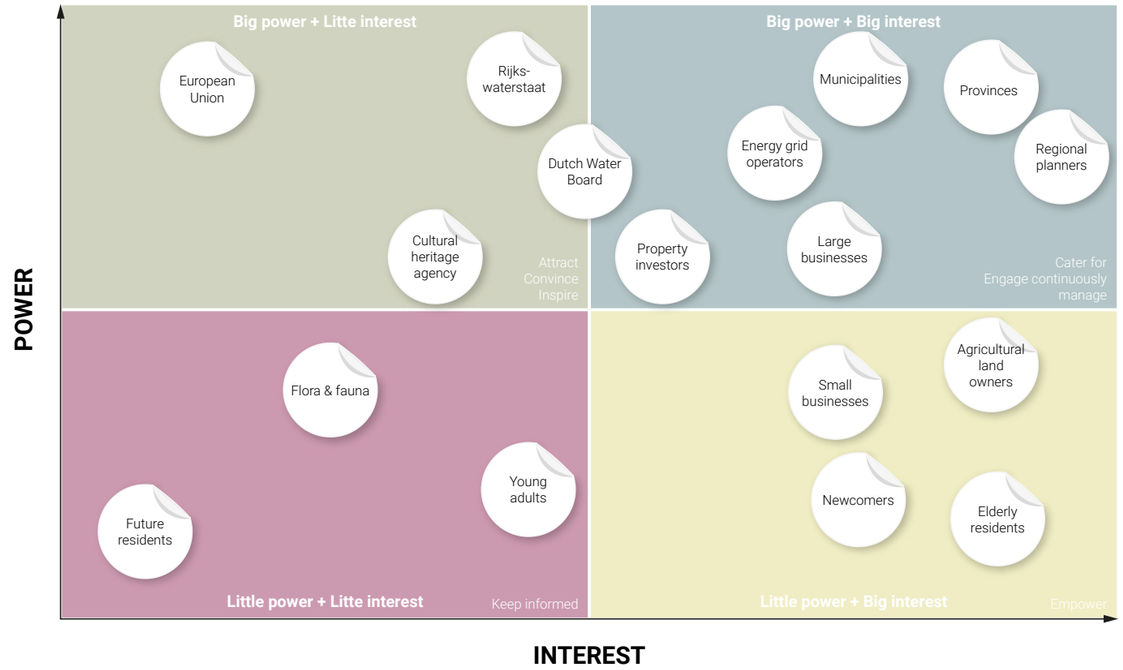


Figure 124: Current situation - Power–Interest diagram

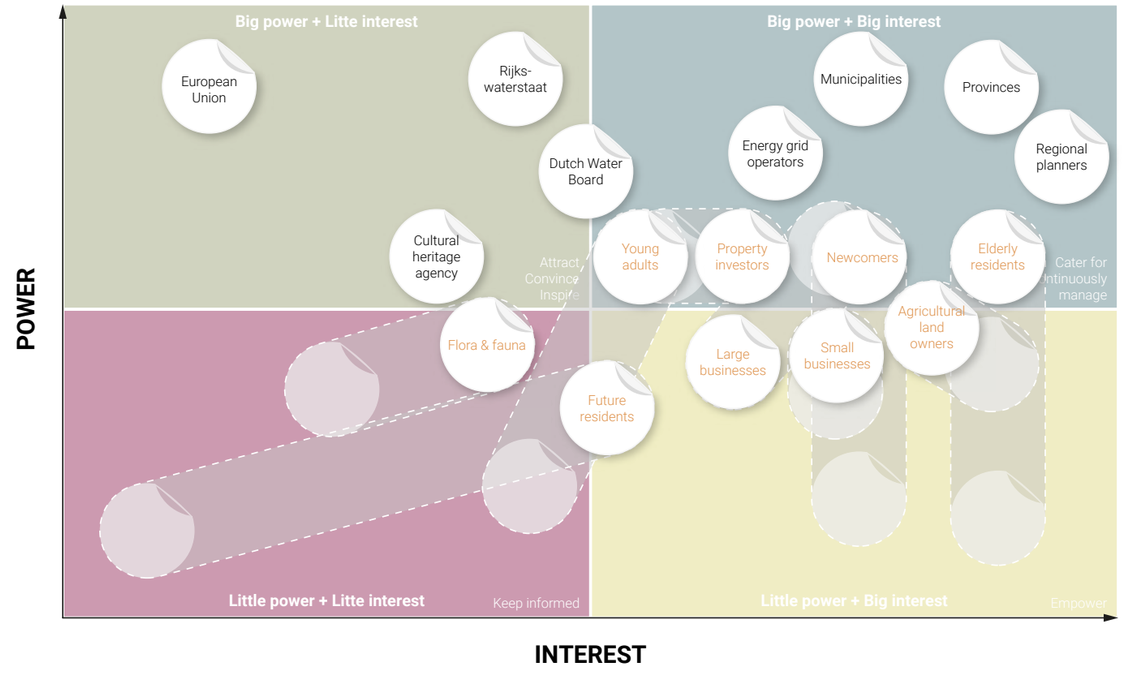


Figure 125: Future scenario - Power–Interest diagram

Engagement strategy

GOAL Engaging the stakeholders

ACTIVATE

	European Union	Rijks-waterstaat	Provinces	Dutch Water Board	Munici-palities	Regional planners	Cultural heritage agency	Large businesses	Energy grid operators	Property investors	Agricultural land owners	Small businesses	Flora & fauna	Future residents	Newcomers	Elderly residents	Young adults
How	Consult	Consult & Collaborate	Consult & Collaborate	Consult & Collaborate	Consult & Collaborate	Consult & Collaborate	Collaborate	Collaborate	Collaborate	Collaborate	Empower	Empower	Inform & Empower	Inform & Empower	Empower	Empower	Inform & Empower

Top down → Bottom up

GOAL Finding the common ground

EVALUATE

	European Union	Rijks-waterstaat	Provinces	Dutch Water Board	Munici-palities	Regional planners	Cultural heritage agency	Large businesses	Energy grid operators	Property investors	Agricultural land owners	Small businesses	Flora & fauna	Future residents	Newcomers	Elderly residents	Young adults
Values & Needs	Sustainability, cross-border cohesion	Flood safety, infrastructure reliability	Spatial balance, economy, mobility	Water safety and quality, climate adaptation	Housing, livability, local economy	Spatial justice	Preservation of heritage	Profit, accessibility, workforce	Grid stability, energy transition	ROI, land value increase	Land continuity, income stability	Affordability, walkable cities	Biodiversity, habitat continuity	Affordable housing, quality of life	Inclusion, access to housing	Accessibility, healthcare proximity	Affordable living, jobs, mobility
Conflicts	Strict regulations	Space claims for urban development	Urbanization vs rural preservation	Space for water vs urban development	Urban expansion vs environmental limits	Long-term vs short-term politics	Preservation vs sustainable development	Space for industry vs sustainability	Energy infrastructure expansion vs landscape	Short-term profit vs long-term quality	Space for farming vs urban expansion	Rising rents, competition	Habitat loss from development	Competing land use priorities	Integration vs housing shortage	Accessibility vs large energy systems	Affordability of housing
Synergies	Funding for green and innovative projects	Climate-resilient infrastructure	Regional coordination	Nature-based solutions	Local implementation power	Multi-scalar Strategic integration	Identity and tourism value	Investment capacity	Enable renewable energy	Finance urban development	Landscape stewardship	Vibrant local economies	Healthy ecosystem services	Demand for sustainable living	Cultural diversity	Stable communities	Innovation, urban vitality

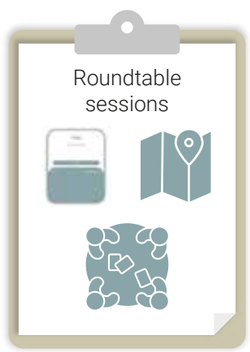
Roundtable sessions → Defining the common ground → Stakeholder mapping

GOAL Implementing the strategy

IMPLEMENT

The guidelines define the key actions and interventions of the strategy, informed by the stakeholder mapping from the evaluation phase. They are presented as themed action cards, helping to structure and spatially translate the strategy.

The intervention action cards are translated into a spatial development strategy. By integrating insights from previous phases, this step supports informed and spatially just decisions across multiple scales.



Roundtables during the implementation phase ensure stakeholder alignment and continuous dialogue throughout the implementation of the design strategy. The roundtables support a more bottom-up approach while balancing the influence of top-down actors, leading to more inclusive and coordinated outcomes.

Figure 126: Stakeholder engagement - from activation to implementation

Intervention cards

Figure 127: Example intervention cards

Legend

Key concepts:

C	centrality
I	Identity & belonging
H	Human flows
E	Energy transition
S	Spatial justice

Tools:

- Governance
- Knowledge
- Funding
- Participation
- Regulation

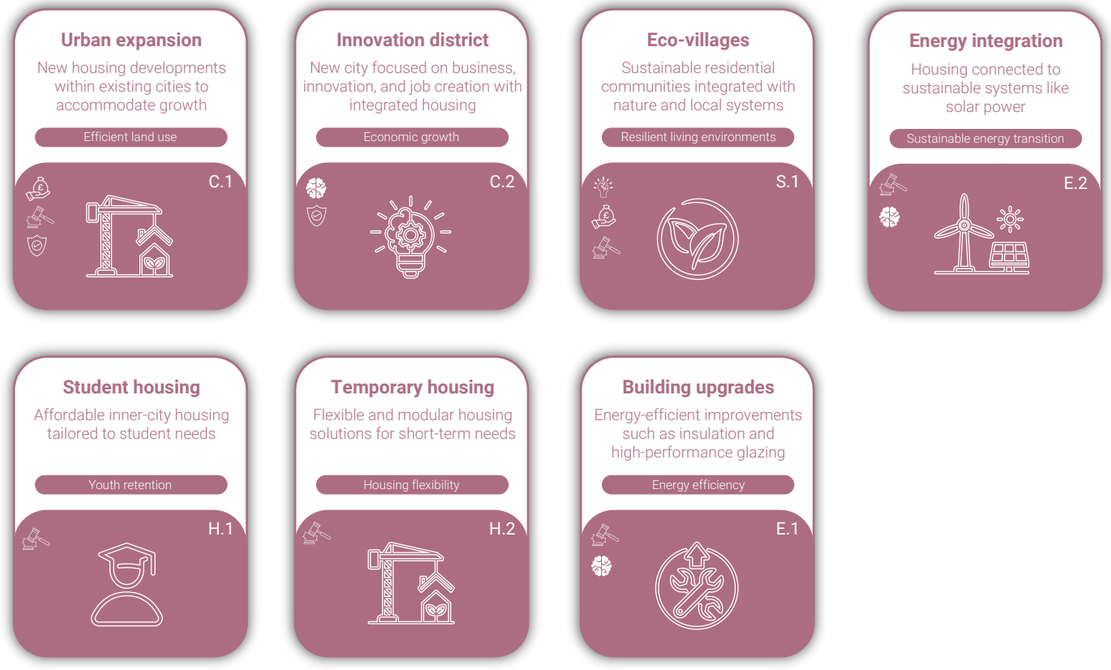
The intervention cards translate the project's vision into practical strategies for the Hanseatic region. Organised into five themes—housing, energy, infrastructure, ecology, and social systems—each theme encompasses interventions that are spatial, organisational, social, or policy-oriented, thereby addressing the multifaceted nature of regional transformation.

Each intervention is directly linked to a key concept from the framework: centrality, identity and belonging, human flows, energy transition, and spatial justice. This structure ensures that interventions constitute a cohesive strategy, with each measure reinforcing one or more core principles.

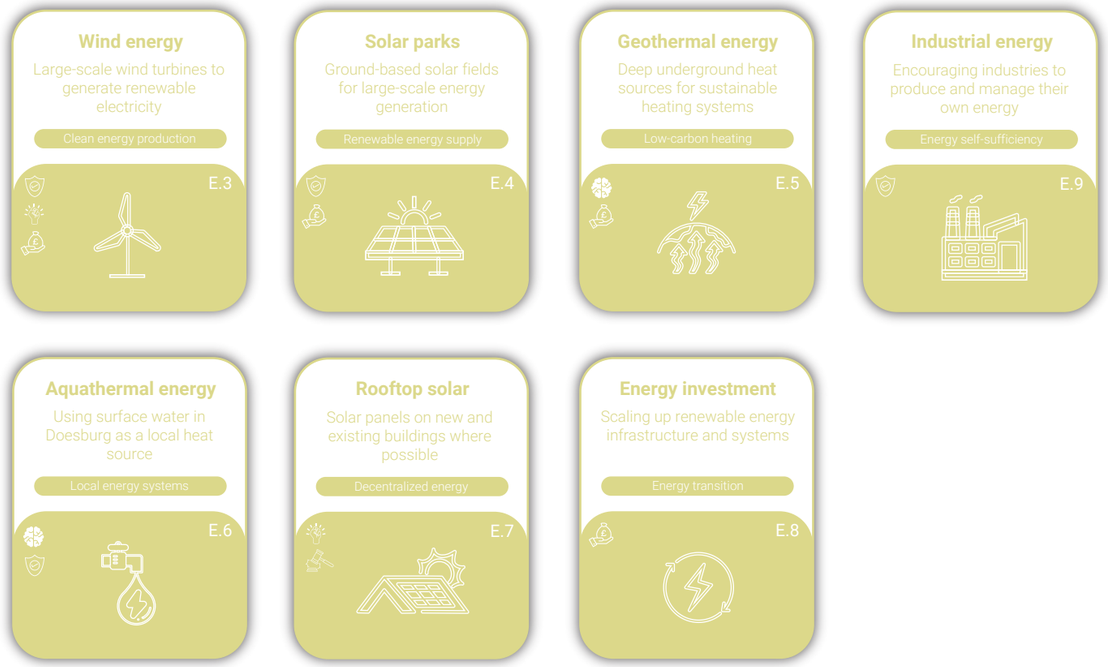
The interventions employ five primary tools: governance, funding, regulation, knowledge, and participation. Governance facilitates alignment among municipalities and regional actors, enabling coordination across various levels. Funding secures public and private investment to advance interventions. Regulation establishes policies, zoning, and legal frameworks for development. Knowledge fosters collaboration with universities and research institutions to promote innovation. Participation engages residents, particularly youth, to ensure that community needs and perspectives are incorporated.

By combining vision, key concepts, interventions, and implementation tools, the intervention cards provide a strategic, actionable framework. They clarify which interventions are needed, why they support the overall vision, and how they can be implemented in a coordinated, inclusive manner. This ensures interventions are systemic, evidence-based, and aligned with the region's spatial and social dynamics.

Housing



Energy



Disclaimer: All intervention cards were created by the authors.

Infrastructure

Regional roads
Upgraded road network connecting the Hanseatic cities

Regional connectivity

C.3

Ecoducts
Wildlife crossings reconnecting fragmented ecosystems

Ecological connectivity

S.2

Public transport
Improved transit within and between cities

Accessible mobility

C.4

Port access
Opening ports for transport and energy logistics

Multimodal transport

C.6

Cycling network
Regional and urban bike infrastructure expansion

Active mobility

C.5

Walkable streets
Safe, green and pedestrian-friendly local streets

Livable environments

I.1

Ecology

Room for river
Bypasses and floodplains to manage water levels safely

Flood resilience

S.2

River widening
Expanding the IJssel for reliable flow and transport

Climate-proof transport

S.3

Green-blue corridors
Connected networks of water and greenery across the region

Ecological resilience

S.4

Agri-energy
Combining solar parks with agriculture in shared landscapes

Multifunctional land use

S.5

Social

Regional identity
Strengthen the collective Hanseatic identity to enhance local pride and belonging

Cohesive communities

I.2

Citizen participation
Encourage general commitment to residents involvement in urban planning and decision-making

Inclusive governance

I.3

Regional cooperation
Policies and initiatives fostering collaboration between Hanseatic cities.

Integrated regional development

C.7

Regional internships
Offer internships and traineeships in local companies for students and young professionals

Practical skill acquisition

H.5

Youth culture
Organize cultural events and networks specifically for young residents

Retain young talent

I.4

Co-working spaces
Create flexible workspaces for students, starters, and local entrepreneurs

Innovation and collaboration

C.8

Youth retention policies
Targeted policies to keep young people in the region, beyond general population measures.

Sustainable demographic balance

C.9

University partnerships
Develop collaborations with universities for knowledge transfer and program support

Strengthened academic ties

H.4

Community facilities
Repurpose large urban spaces and buffers as public amenities and energy commons.

Active and connected residents

I.5

Higher education
Introduce new study programs in the region to expand educational opportunities

Local skill development

H.3

Disclaimer: All intervention cards were created by the authors.

The district tiles

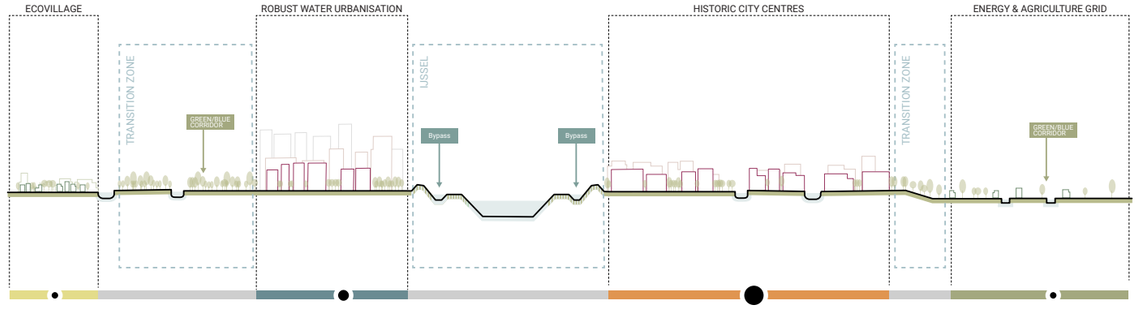


Figure 128: Section of the regional zones (not scaled)

The area along the IJssel is organised into a sequence of spatial "tiles," each delineated by distinct principles and functions. The subsequent pages provide a detailed elaboration of these tiles.

The section demonstrates the spatial integration of four distinct tiles and their interrelationships. Transition zones, defined by green corridors, are introduced between the tiles to ensure ecological and spatial continuity.

The central element of the section is the orange tile, which represents the historic core. The five Hanseatic cities collectively serve as these historic centres, forming the foundation of regional centrality and acting as key nodes within the network. Opposite the IJssel, a zone characterised by intensive water-based urbanisation is situated. This area is linked to the eco-village (yellow tile) via a green corridor, serving as a transitional zone between urban and landscape structures.

Beyond the historic core, an additional transition zone precedes the energy and agriculture tile. Between Deventer and Zwolle, the Hansastad appears as an exception: a new urban development that integrates business and residential functions. Despite its contemporary character, this city adheres to the same spatial logic, with surrounding tiles and interventions adding to a coherent regional system.

Collectively, these tiles constitute a spatial grid that houses various interventions, thereby establishing a strong relationship among landscape, urban development, and energy systems.

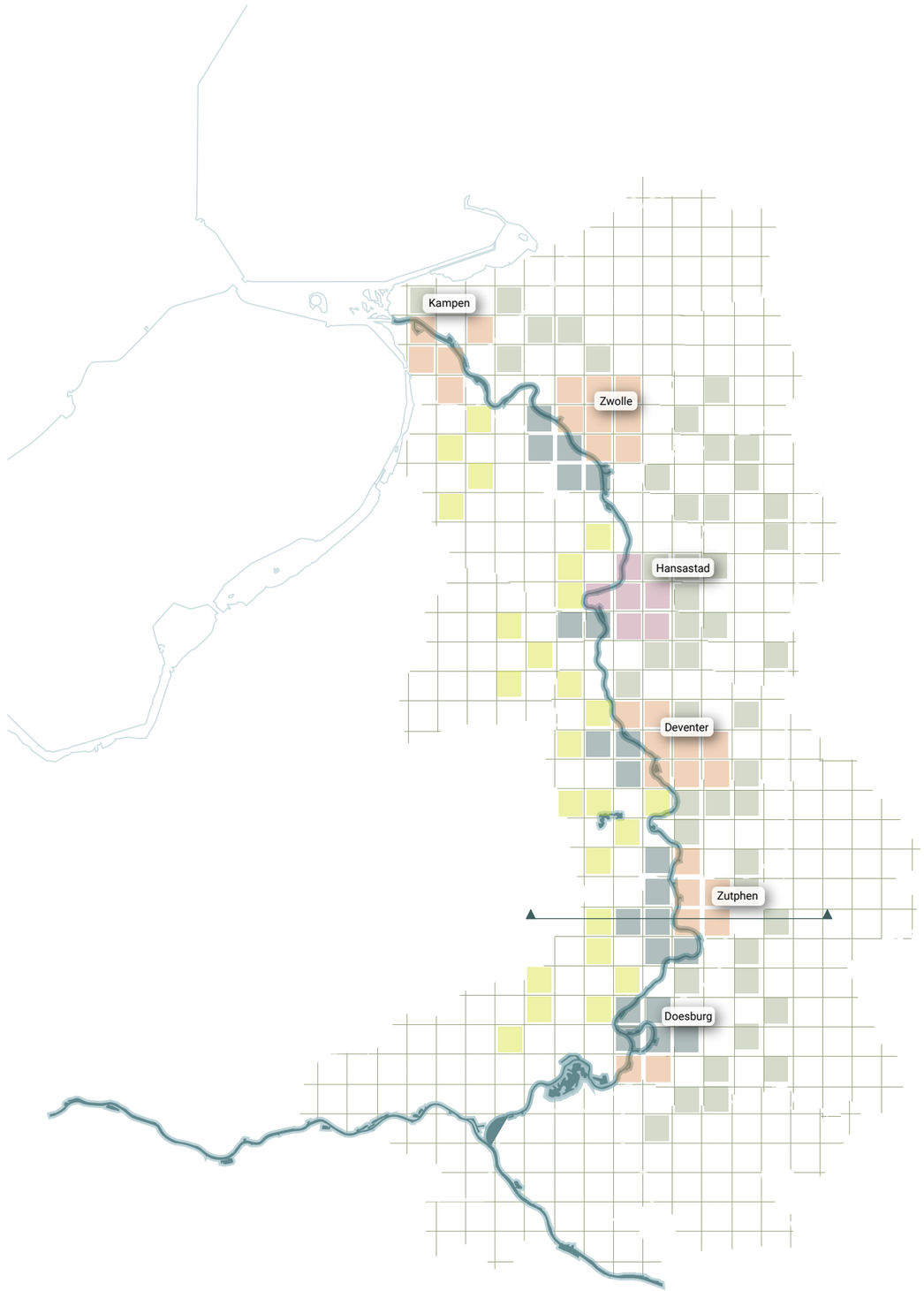


Figure 129: Zoning of the region through a grid system

Historic city centres

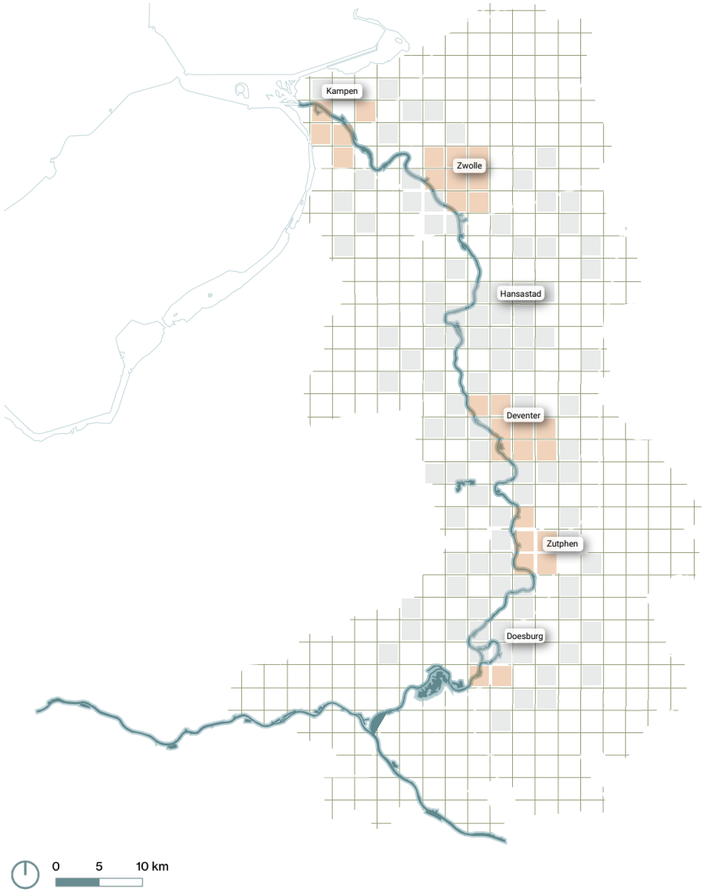


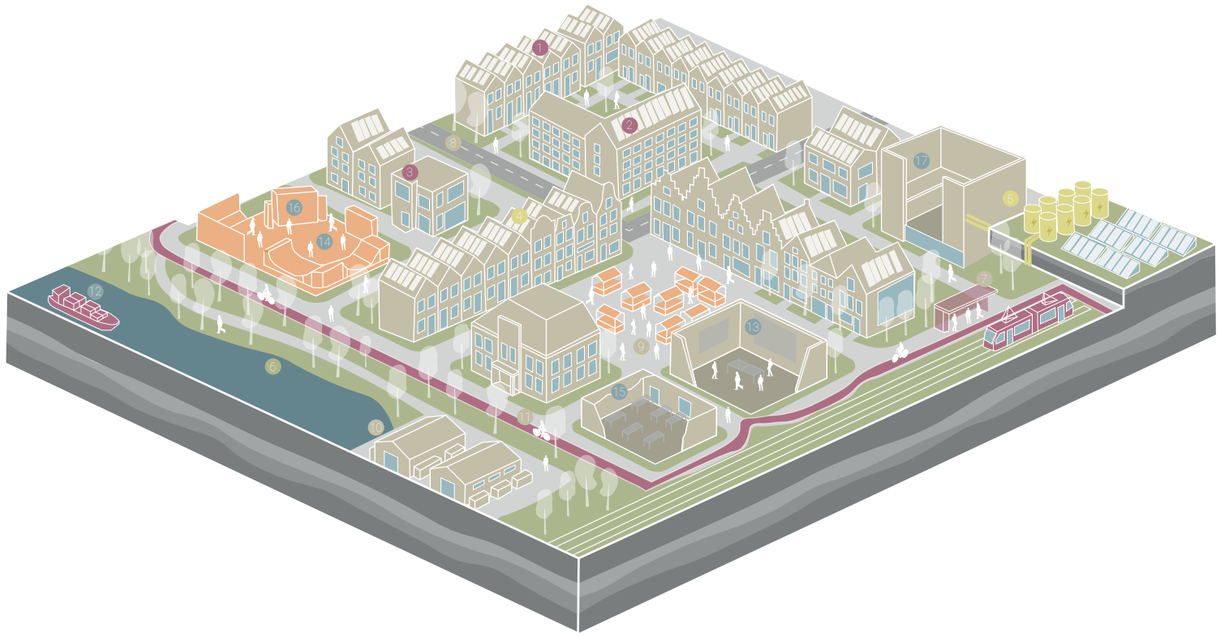
Figure 130: Location of historic Hanseatic city centre tiles

In the historic Hanseatic cities, interventions are implemented with a strong stress on preserving the existing urban fabric and cultural heritage. Instead of large-scale transformations, integrated small-scale interventions are used to improve centrality and liveability. Densification is implemented where suitable, such as through rooftop extensions or the conversion of underused office spaces into housing. These measures support a more diverse and lively urban population. Special attention is given to attracting younger groups, particularly students, through integrating higher education facilities, cultural events, and accessible housing.

Historic centres function as important spaces for participation and social interaction. This is achieved by creating and maintaining areas for meetings, markets, and daily encounters, which reinforce the city's social fabric. Existing spatial structures are largely preserved, with a focus on reducing car traffic and prioritising pedestrian-oriented environments.

Connectivity between the centres is maintained through regional infrastructure and an efficient rail network. Furthermore, the historical relationship with water is reestablished as the river and harbour areas resume a central role in mobility, economy, and identity, reflecting their historical importance.

Regarding energy and sustainability, interventions primarily utilise retrofitting strategies. These measures are frequently subtle and integrated into the existing fabric, requiring active resident participation. For example, installing solar panels may slightly alter the historic appearance, but demonstrates that energy transition can exist alongside heritage, combining past and future within the same urban environment.



1. Urban expansion (housing)
2. Student housing
3. Building upgrades
4. Rooftop solar panels
5. Energy investments
6. Green-blue corridors
7. Public transport
8. Regional road network
9. Walkable streets
10. Port access
11. Cycling network
12. Regional cooperation
13. Citizen participation
14. Youth culture
15. Co-working spaces
16. Community facilities
17. Higher education

Figure 131: Preserving heritage and enhancing centrality through small-scale urban interventions

Robust water urbanisation

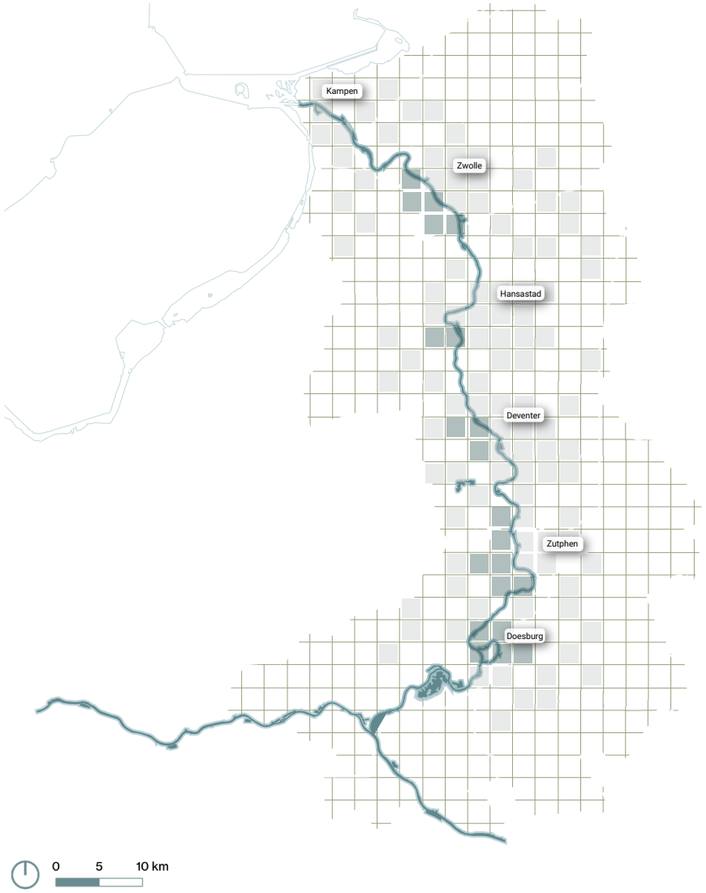


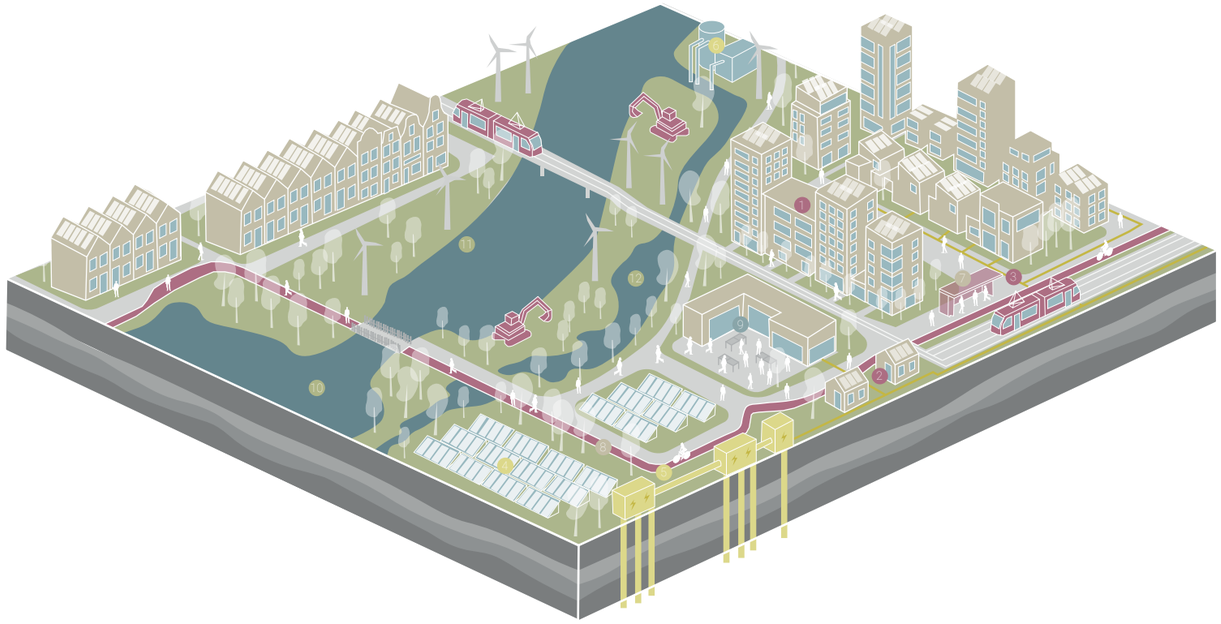
Figure 132: Location of robust water urbanisation tiles along the IJssel

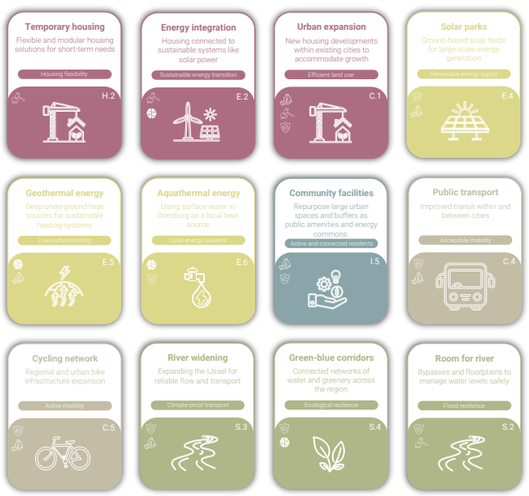
The robust water urbanisation tiles are primarily situated on the opposite side of the IJssel from the historic city centres. These tiles represent a set of defined interventions within this zone. Although the intervention type is predetermined, its spatial implementation remains flexible, enabling context-specific interpretations and design solutions for each location.

A key aspect of this tile is the development of a relatively dense urban fabric, which creates the critical mass necessary to support facilities and high-quality infrastructure. The interventions prioritise strengthening accessibility through public transport and active mobility networks, including cycling and walking.

Since these areas primarily comprise new urban expansions, they offer significant opportunities to implement creative approaches to sustainability and energy systems. In the public realm, these systems are simultaneously functional and visible, embedded into daily life to foster awareness and engagement among dwellers.

Across the IJssel, the historic city centre continues to serve as a primary point of reference. Robust connections via public transit and biking networks reinforce the spatial and functional relationship between new developments and the existing urban core.





1. Urban expansion (new housing)
2. Temporary housing
3. Energy integration
4. Solar parks
5. Geothermal energy
6. Aquathermal energy
7. Public transport
8. Cycling network
9. Community facilities
10. River widening
11. Green-blue corridors
12. Room for the river

Figure 133: Dense urban expansions integrating mobility, facilities, and sustainable systems

Ecovillages

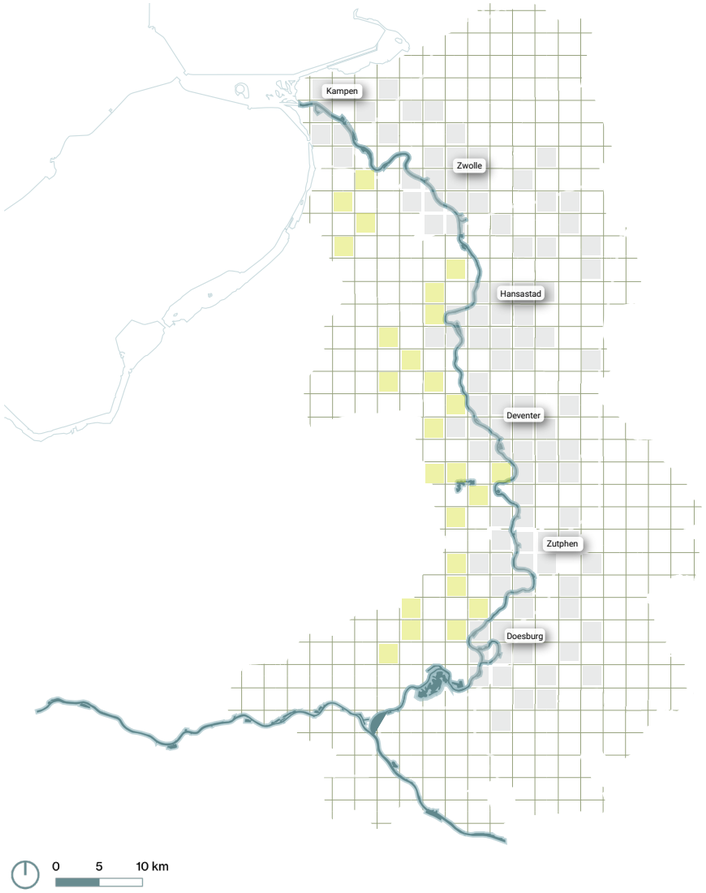


Figure 134: Location of eco-village tiles at the Veluwe edge

The eco-village tiles, like the robust water urbanisation zones, are located on the opposite side of the IJssel from the historic city centres. Situated at the region's edge, adjacent to the Veluwe, these areas serve as a transition between cityscapes and natural landscapes.
Unlike the denser urban tiles, eco-villages exhibit a more dispersed spatial structure and offer a diversity of housing types and price ranges. Proximity to green space is a defining principle. Collective participation is central to the eco-village concept; these are community-driven initiatives, intentionally designed through participatory processes across social, ecological, economic, and cultural dimensions to regenerate both the social and natural environment.

Decision-making procedures are organised collectively to ensure that all members are recognised and heard. This emphasis on participation also allows for the provision of temporary housing. To preserve community cohesion and a collective sense of identity, temporary residency is structured as a selective initiative for individuals who actively contribute to the community.
Mobility within eco-villages prioritises walkability and cycling. To reduce car dependence, these areas are connected to public transport networks, though their peripheral location results in lower connectivity than in more central urban zones.

1. Sustainable residential communities
2. Community facilities
3. Citizen participation
4. Co-working spaces
5. Sustainable energy systems (aquathermal/solar)
6. Temporary housing
7. Green-blue corridors
8. Rooftop solar panels
9. Energy investments and scaling
10. Walkable streets
11. Public transport

Figure 135: Community-driven, participatory villages connecting nature and urban life

Energy & Agricultural grid

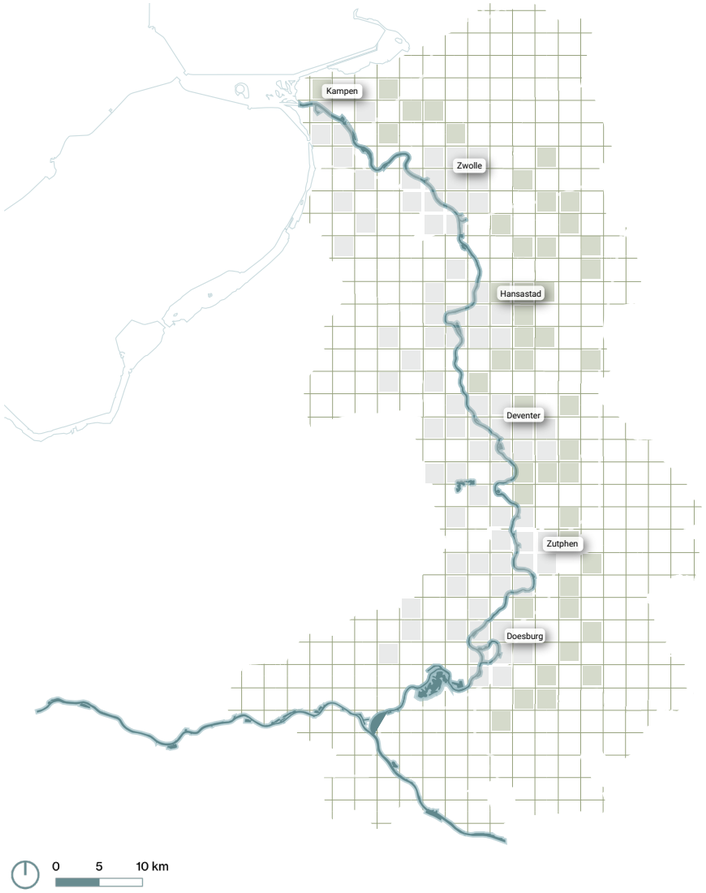


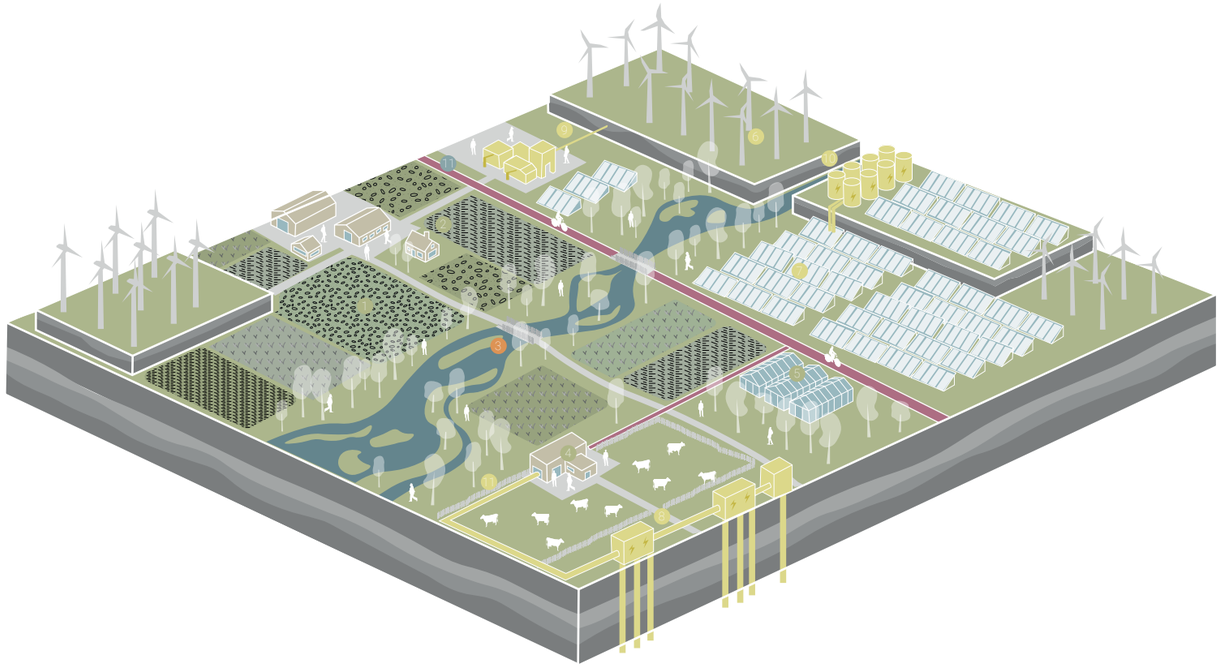
Figure 136: Location of energy and agricultural grid tiles

East of and between the Hanseatic cities, the energy and agricultural grid constitutes a key spatial layer within the region. In these areas, energy production, agriculture, and green structures are central, creating a productive landscape that integrates ecological and economic functions.

The grid accommodates water systems (distinct from the IJssel) and green corridors, which enhance climate resilience and landscape quality. Agricultural production primarily supports the region's food system while generating economic value. Farms are built to operate efficiently and sustainably, applying innovative techniques that correspond with environmental and economic objectives.

Regional cooperation is strongly emphasised, with farmers, municipalities, and other stakeholders collaborating to bolster sustainable production systems. Institutional support, including municipal facilitation, is essential in enabling this transition.

In addition to agricultural activities, dedicated zones for extensive energy generation are integrated within the grid. These energy fields serve both local agricultural needs, which are often high-energy consumers, and the adjacent urban areas. Thus, the grid establishes a dual system in which food production and energy generation coexist, thereby improving the region's self-sufficiency and resilience.



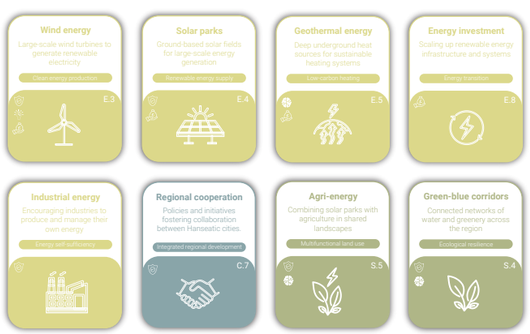


Figure 137: Productive landscapes combining agriculture, renewable energy, and ecological networks

Business district

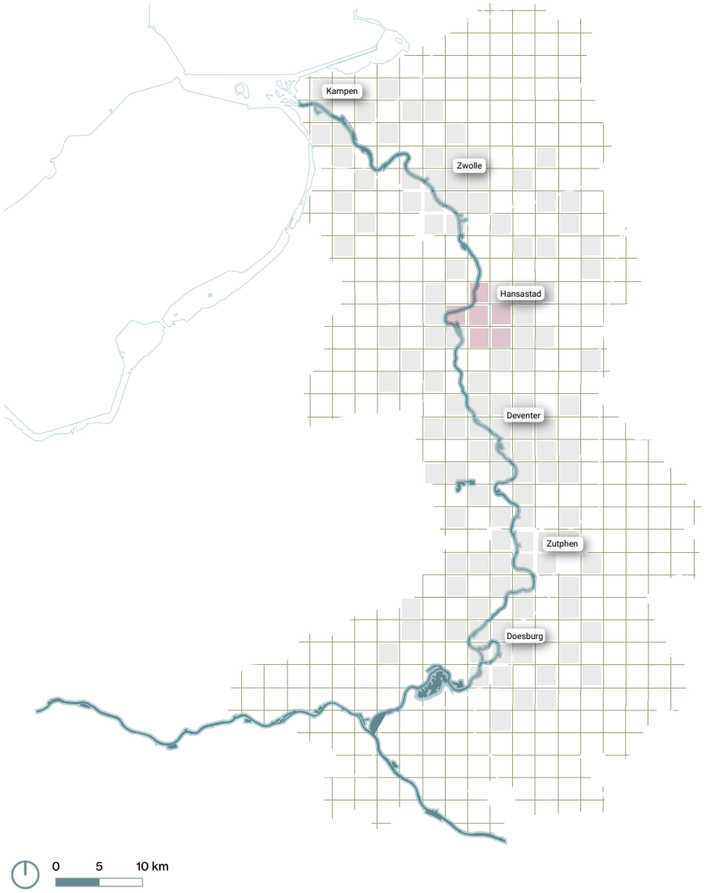


Figure 138: Location of the Hanseatic Business District tiles

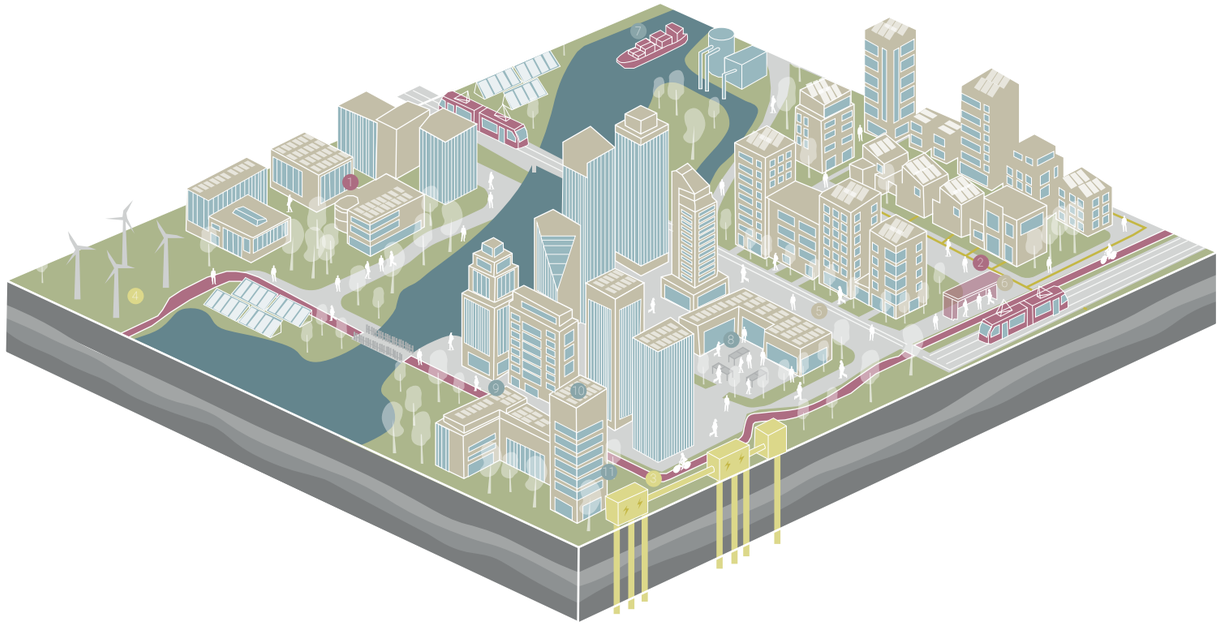
Situated between Deventer and Zwolle, the Hanseatic Business District functions as the region's central economic hub. This key location is intended to strengthen regional centrality by concentrating economic activity and attracting new investment, collaboration, and influence.

The district is intended to promote innovation and knowledge exchange, forming an environment where education, research, and industry intersect. This approach tackles brain drain by retaining and attracting talent, consequently strengthening the region's long-term economic robustness.

Simultaneously, the development is positioned to complement, rather than compete with, the historic Hanseatic cities. Concentrating large-scale economic functions in a new central node reduces pressure on historic cores, enabling them to maintain their cultural and spatial integrity.

The architectural and spatial character of the district is intentionally distinct from generic global business environments, such as the Zuidas. Rather than employing standardised, internationally replicated building typologies, the design emphasises a context-specific identity rooted in the values, scale, and character of the Hanseatic region. This approach makes sure that the district reflects the identity of its users and surroundings.

While maintaining contextual sensitivity, the district features a relatively high density, enabling a mix of working, living, and social functions. This combination creates an energetic urban environment that contributes to both economic productivity and urban vitality in the region.



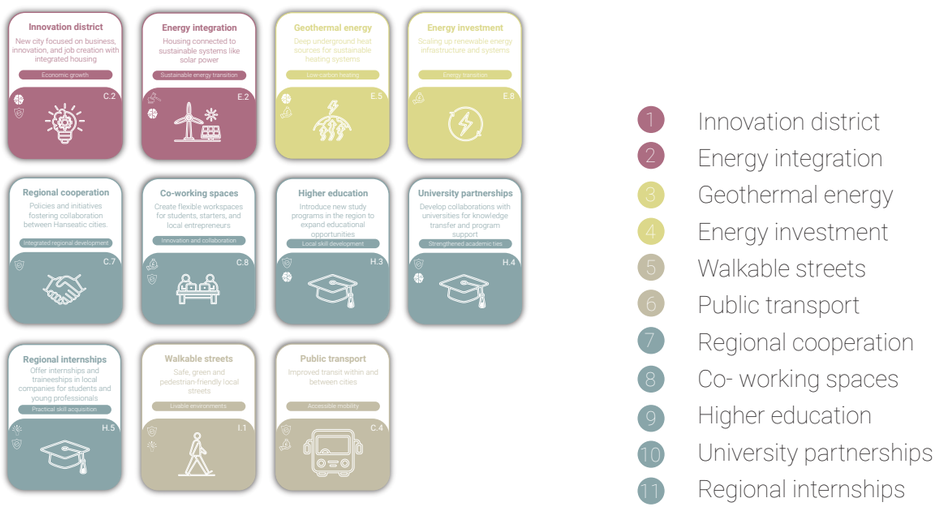


Figure 139: Central economic hub fostering innovation, knowledge exchange, and regional growth

Phasing timeline

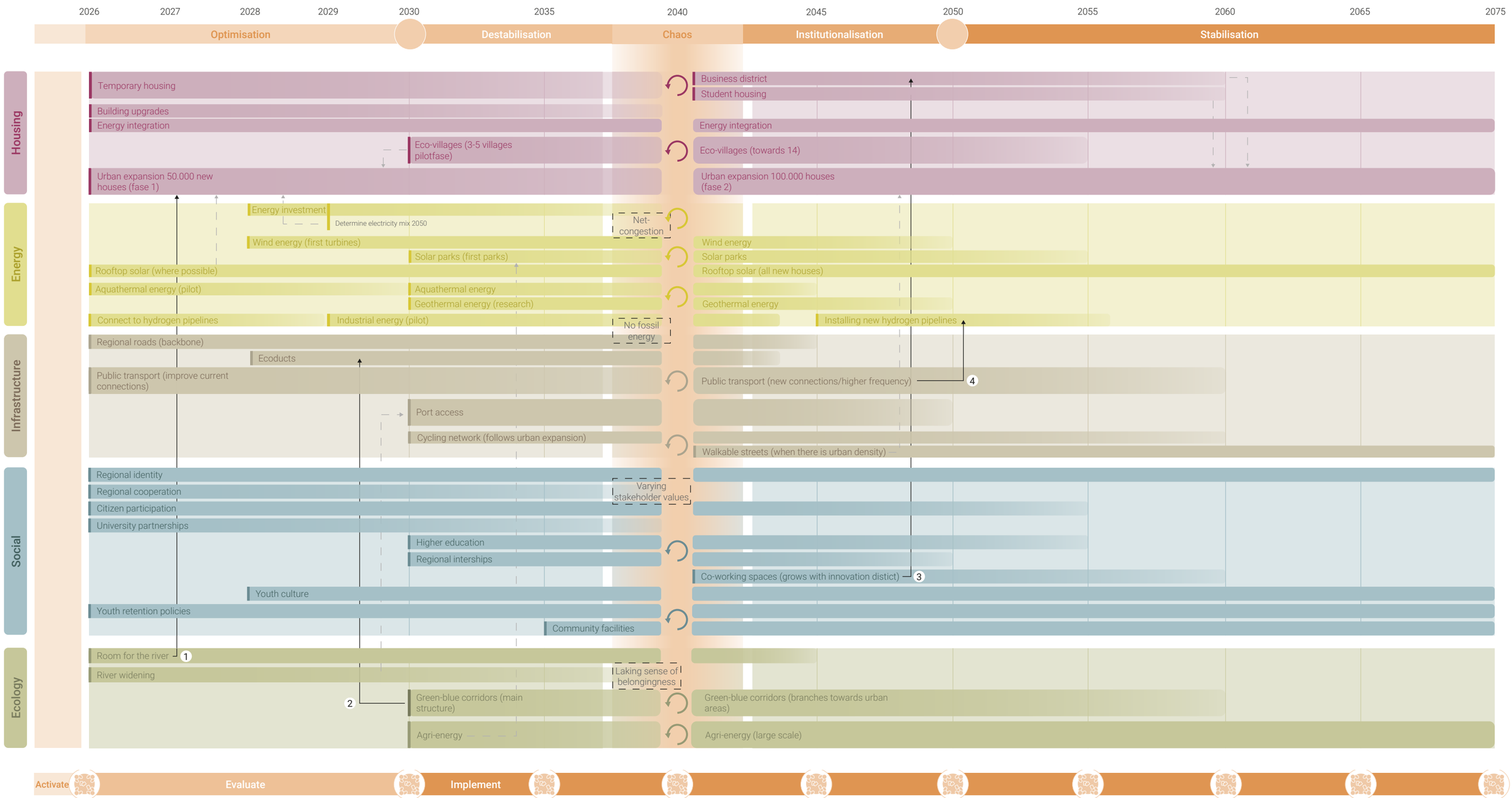


Figure 140: Phasing timeline of the vision showing the different fases from the X-cruve and engagement strategy

Chaos problem · Related interventions · Shift in chaos · Roundtable · Spatial interventions (see next page)

Phasing timeline

The timeline illustrates the interventions over time and is broadly divided into three phases: the period leading up to 2040, the “chaos phase,” and the period up to 2075. In the first phase, most interventions are initiated. The chaos phase is characterised by significant changes and the emergence of several challenges, such as increased grid congestion and a declining sense of community belonging. In the final phase, the disruptions of the chaos phase are stabilised, resulting in a more stable and inclusive society.

Many of these interventions influence one another. A clear example is the relationship between creating space for the IJssel River and urban expansion along its banks. If space is allocated to the river, construction in those areas is no longer possible.

The first two interventions that influence each other are “Room for the River” and “Urban expansion”. The “Room for the River” project gives the river more space to reduce flooding. While this makes the area safer, it also limits land available for expanding towns on the opposite bank. Areas that could have been used for new homes or businesses are now reserved for water management. This shows how river safety and urban growth are connected and impact each other. There needs to be a balance, where there is enough space for both safe rivers and urban expansion.

Figure 141: Zoom in on the connection between “Room for the river” and “Urban expansion”

The Second two interventions that influence each other are the “Eco-ducts” and the “Green-blue corridors (main structure)”. Eco-ducts help animals safely cross roads and other barriers, connecting different parts of the area. This supports the development of green-blue corridors, where we aim to link as many green and water areas as possible across the region. Together, eco-ducts and green-blue corridors create a more connected, healthy environment that benefits both nature and people living in the Hanseatic area.

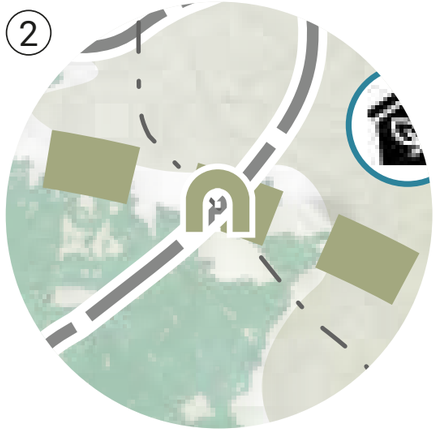


Figure 142: Zoom in on the connection between “Eco-ducts” and “Green-blue corridors”

The third two interventions that influence each other are the “Co-working spaces” and the “Business district”. The development of the business district focuses on creating jobs, attracting companies, and combining work with housing. As this district grows over time, the demand for flexible working environments also increases. This leads to the growth of co-working spaces, which develop alongside the expansion of the business district. In this way, co-working spaces and the business district strengthen each.

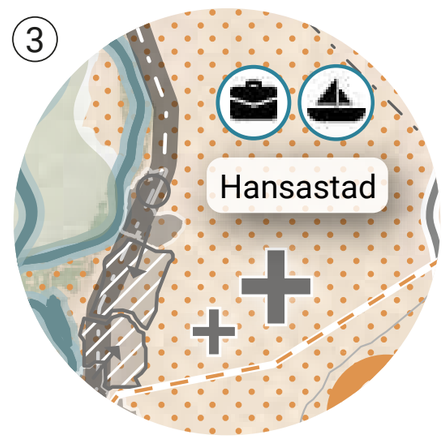


Figure 143: Zoom in on the connection between “Co-working spaces” and “Business district”

The fourth two interventions that influence each other are the “increasing public transport” and the “Installation of new hydrogen pipes”. The shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy means that public transport in the region will become fully electric. This transition increases the demand on the energy grid, requiring a higher network capacity. Hydrogen can be used to store and transport this electricity; the installation of hydrogen pipes helps to reduce this pressure. But hydrogen can also be used as an alternative energy source for public transport. By combining electric public transport with hydrogen infrastructure, the region can create a more reliable and sustainable energy system.

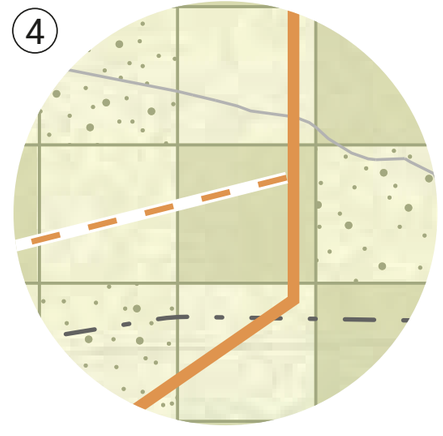


Figure 144: Zoom in on the connection between “Increasing public transport” and “Instalation new hyrdogen pipes”

Spatialising the strategic vision in 2040

By 2040, the Hanzesteden region will be in a strong transition phase. Many energy projects have started and are now ready to be scaled up. Renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, aquathermal, and geothermal are becoming an important part of the region. At the same time, space has been created for the river and new green structures. This improves nature, climate resilience, and the quality of life. These changes also make new urban expansion possible, allowing cities to grow in a more sustainable way.
Overall, the region is developing towards a future where energy, nature, and urban growth are better balanced.

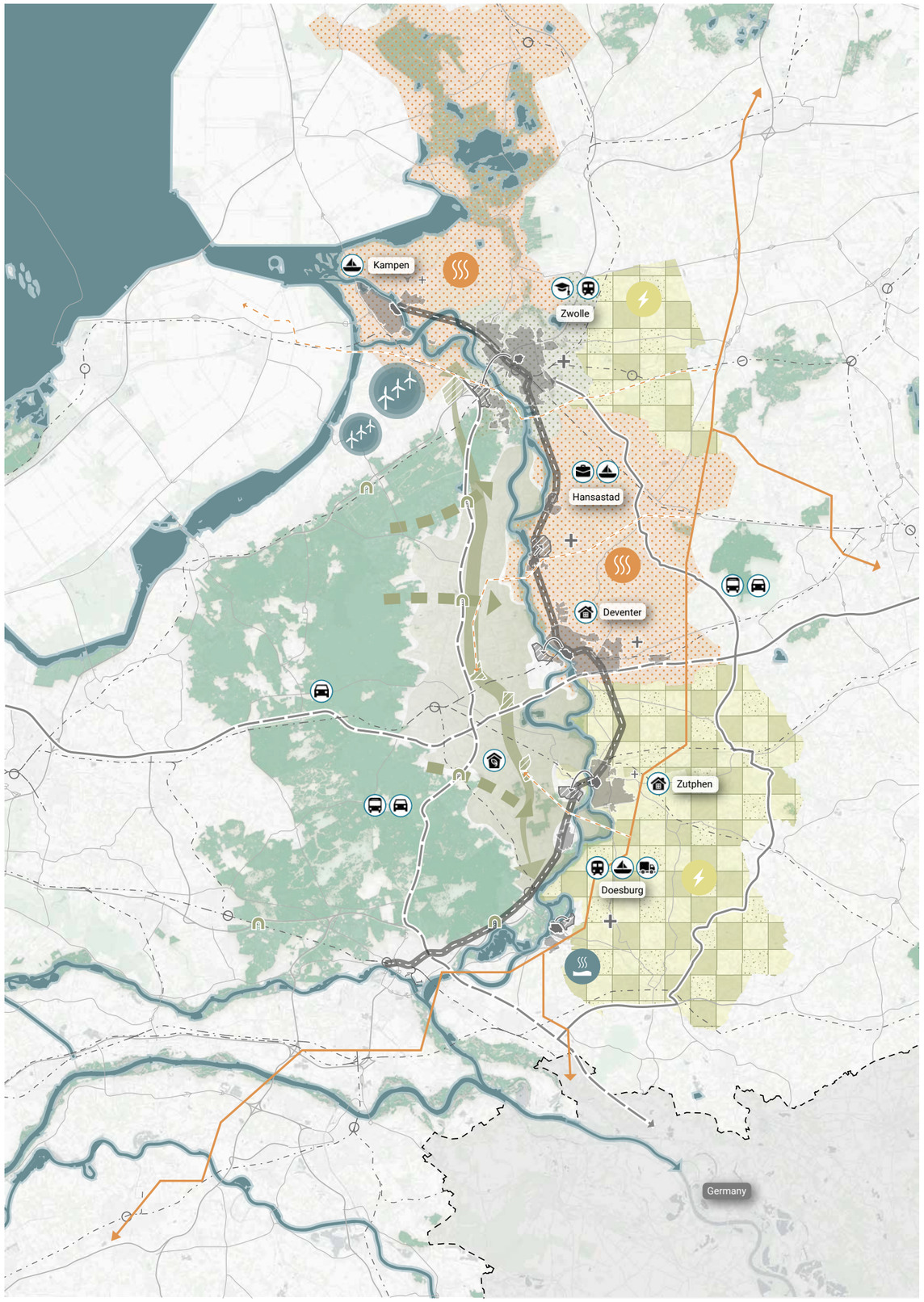
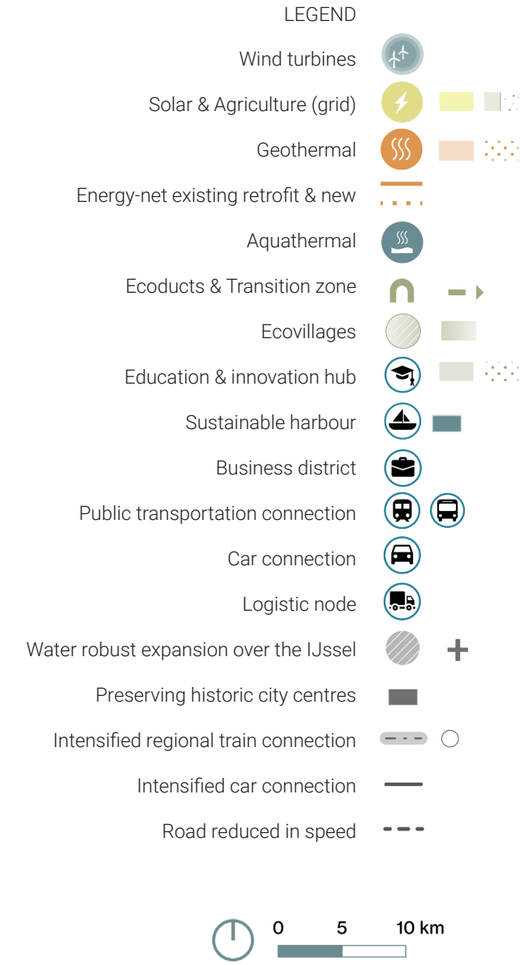


Figure 145: Strategic vision for 2040

Spatialising the strategic vision in 2075

By 2075, the Hanzesteden region will be fully relying on renewable energy in all sectors. Wind, solar, aquathermal, and geothermal energy are widely used, and earlier pilot projects have been scaled up across the region. Most homes have solar panels, and several self-sufficient eco-villages have been established.
The landscape is now well-adapted to both nature and people. The river and green areas are fully integrated, supporting biodiversity and climate adaptation. Cities and towns have expanded in a sustainable way, with space for ecology. Transport and infrastructure have also become cleaner and more efficient, with ports, hydrogen networks, and other systems reducing pressure on the energy grid. The region now represents a stable and inclusive society, where energy, nature, people and urban growth are balanced.



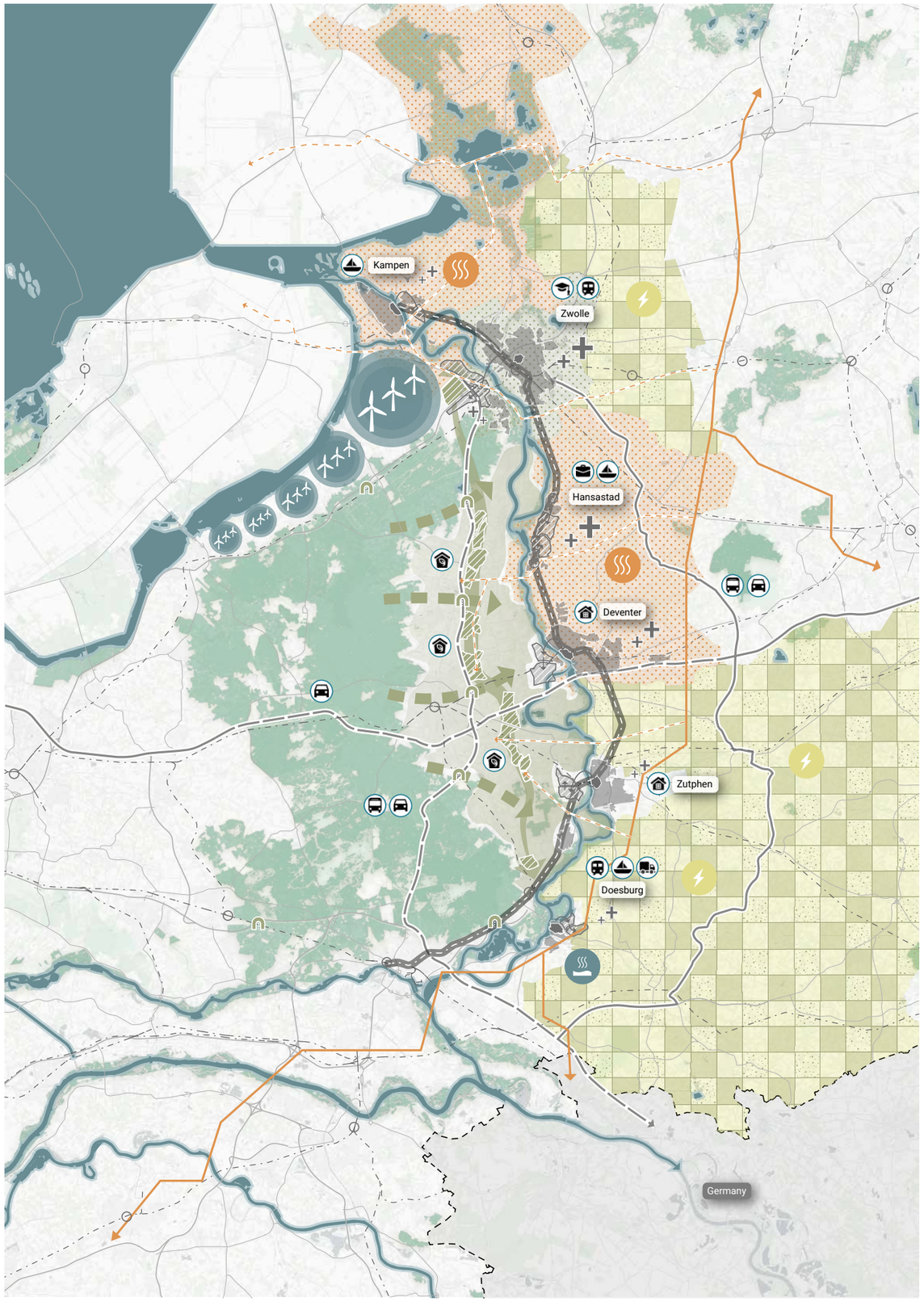


Figure 146: Strategic vision for 2075

Energy flow timeline 2040

When examining the energy flows in the first phase of the strategy, fossil energy still accounts for a significant share of the total energy demand at the outset. At the same time, overall energy demand in the region increases due to urban expansion. However, demand gradually decreases as the transition from fossil fuels to more efficient renewable energy sources progresses. Several pilot projects are initiated, including aquathermal and geothermal energy systems, and the first renewable energy sources are introduced. Examples include the development of a wind turbine park near Kampen, the initial implementation of solar parks combined with agriculture (agri-energy), and the construction of the first self-sufficient eco-villages.

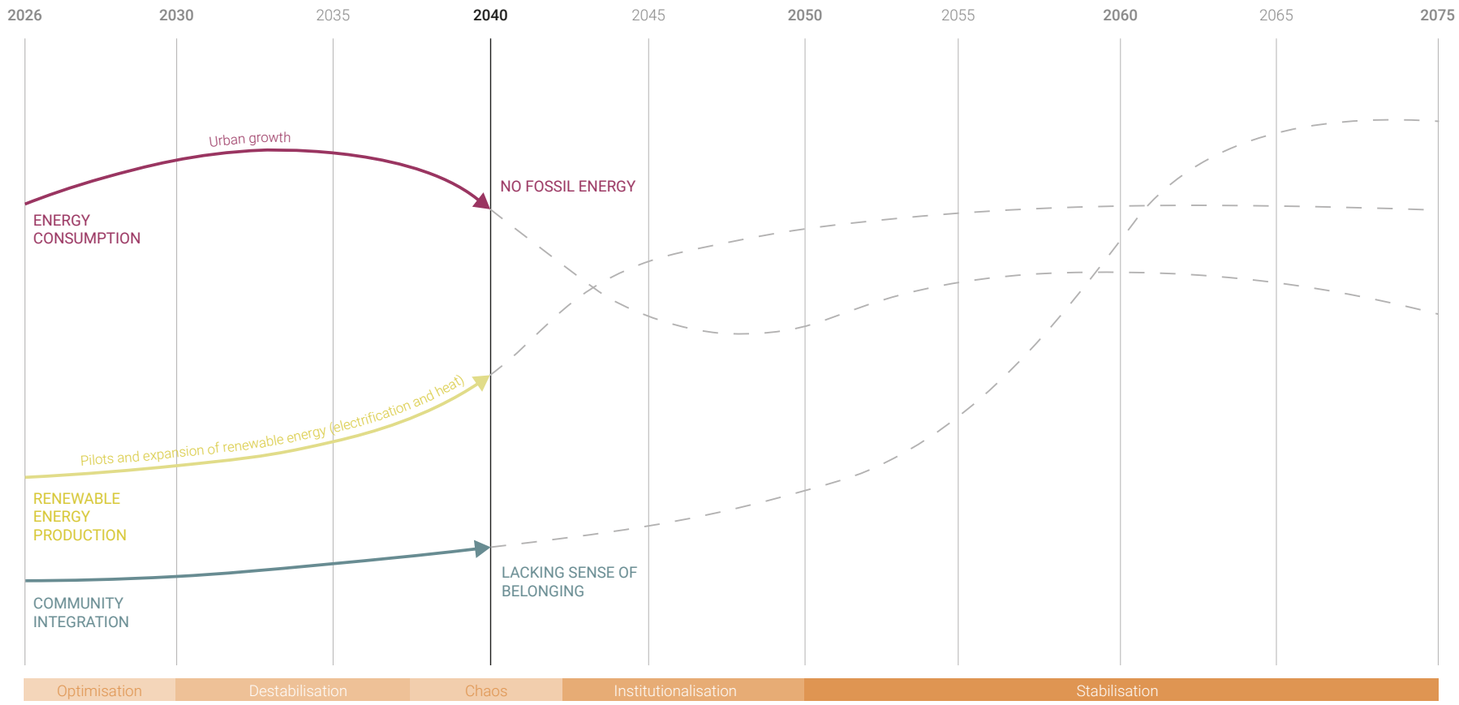


Figure 147: Timeline showing the energy flows towards 2040

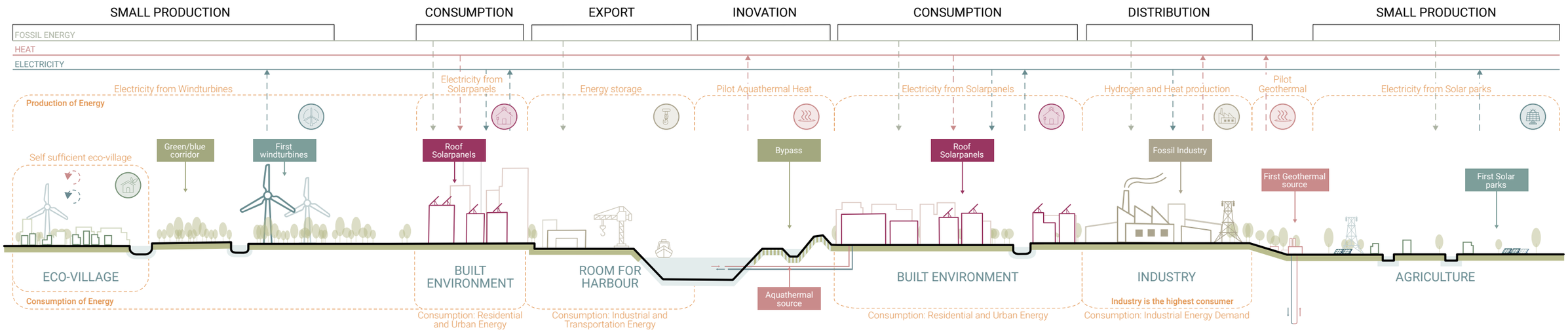


Figure 148: Section showing the energy flows in 2040

Energy flow timeline 2075

By 2075, the Hanzesteden region will have been fully reliant on renewable energy across all sectors for some time. Earlier pilot projects have been fully implemented, and the generation of electricity from wind and solar has been significantly scaled up. Wherever possible, every home is equipped with solar panels, and the region includes multiple self-sufficient eco-villages. Transport infrastructure has also been expanded, including the development of ports and hydrogen networks to help relieve pressure on the energy grid.

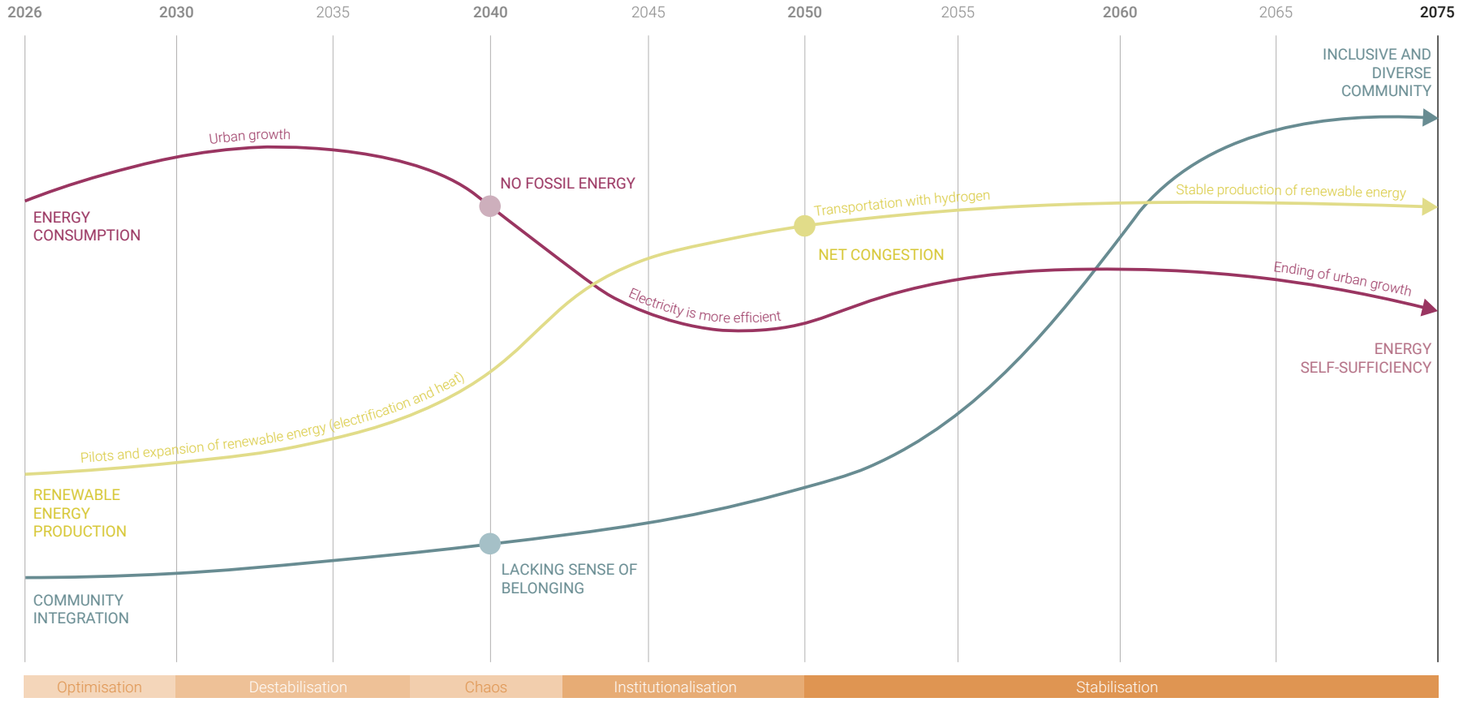


Figure 149: Timeline showing the energy flows towards 2040

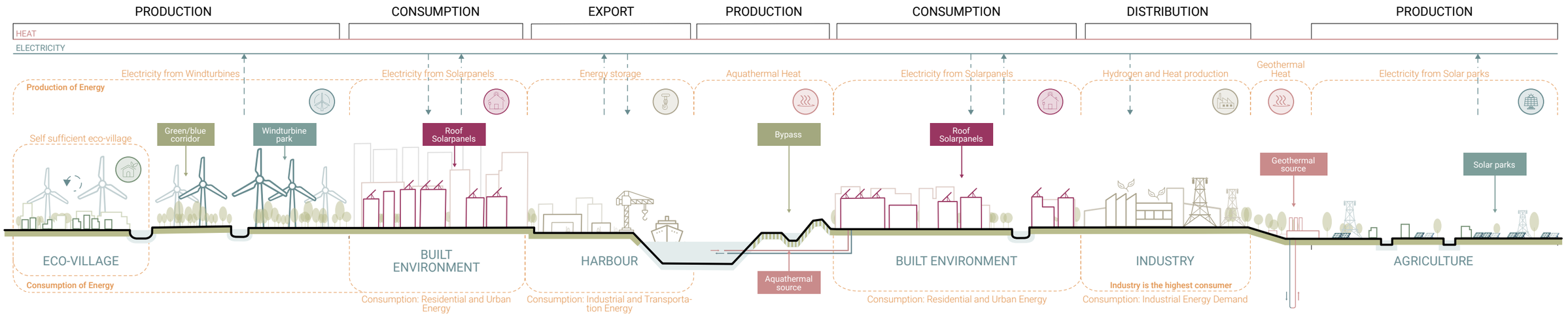


Figure 150: Section showing the energy flows in 2075

Zoom-in's introduction

The zoom in maps of Kampen, Deventer and Zwolle are introduced as a critical step in translating the broader analytical framework and phased strategies of the project into tangible localised expressions. After establishing territorial patterns, typologies and large scale regional planning interventions, this closer conceptualisation allows for a more precise understanding of how these ideas materialise within specific urban contexts. Each city embodies a distinct spatial character and developmental trajectory, making them ideal case studies to test how the proposed strategies interact with the existing fabric. By narrowing the scale the project shifts from abstraction to articulation, revealing how general principles adapt to the nuances of place.
These three cities were deliberately selected for their varied roles and transformations within the project, enabling a comparative reading of different strategic approaches. The zoom-ins are not literal masterplans but rather conceptual representations that capture the essence of how interventions might be positioned and experienced on the ground. They highlight contrasts in density, morphology, and programmatic emphasis in the overall ivision. In doing so they serve as a bridge between analysis and design, illustrating both the diversity of outcomes and the coherence of underlying strategy.

Figure 151: Regional map depicting the three cities that will be further explored for the strategy

Zoom-in 1: Kampen

The zoom-in for Kampen is developed to illustrate how a city with a strong historical identity and strategic riverfront location can evolve into a productive and well-connected node within the regional system. This zoom-in therefore captures how broader strategies are grounded in a context that balances heritage with forward-looking transformation.

In Kampen, the zoom-in highlights the revival of the port as a key driver of regional connectivity and economic activity. The waterfront is reimagined as a river logistics and mobility hub, strengthening river-based transport networks while reconnecting the city to its historical relationship with the water. This intervention positions the port as an efficient and sustainable alternative to road-based systems, reinforcing Kampen's role within a broader river-oriented network.

One can also observe Kampen's transformation into a diversified energy production hub, where renewable systems are carefully integrated into the existing landscape. Wind turbines, geothermal installations, and related infrastructures are strategically positioned in dialogue with agricultural parcels, greenhouses, and food-processing zones. Rather than appearing as isolated technical elements, these energy components are embedded within the rural-urban fabric, contributing to a layered and multifunctional territory.

Finally, the zoom-in demonstrates how mobility networks are intensified to support stronger regional connections, particularly through the enhancement of motorways and public transport corridors. These infrastructures are to be rethought in light of a transition toward electric mobility, incorporating charging networks and reconfigured transit nodes. The result is a more integrated and future-oriented transport system that not only improves accessibility but also aligns with broader sustainability goals.

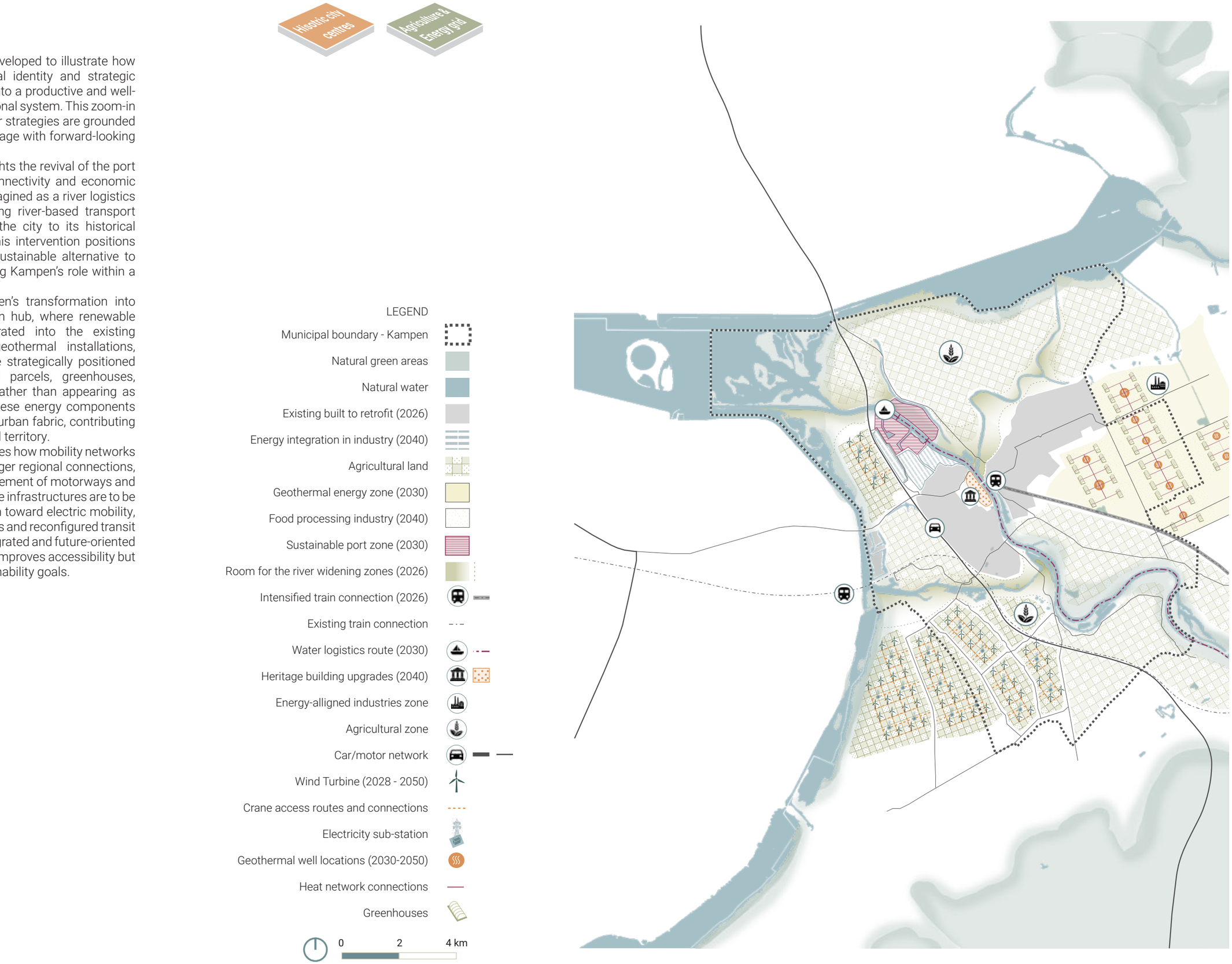


Figure 152: Kampen Zoom-in map illustrating connectivity, energy infrastructure, preservation and urban extents and potential land use

"This region gives me good job opportunities and a stable place for my family." *(Newcomer)*

C.1, C.2, I.4, I.3

"I can live close to nature and still be in Zwolle within 10 minutes." *(Yound adult)*

C.2, C.5, I.4

"Here, I can clearly see how the port, energy and landscape work together." *(Policy officer)*

E.2, E.4, E.8, S.3, S.5

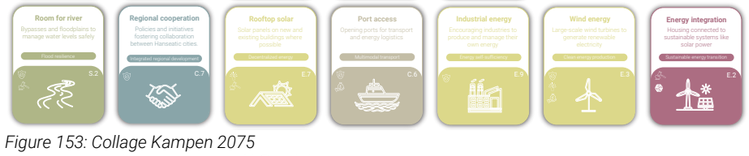


Figure 153: Collage Kampen 2075
source: collage is supported by AI Gemini

The stakeholder statements in this collage are our interpretation of their ideas about our vision and strategy.

Zoom-in 3: Deventer

The zoom-in for Deventer explores how the city can operate as a transition zone between urban settlement, productive landscapes, and large-scale ecological systems. Deventer is selected for its proximity to the Veluwe and its position along the river, making it an ideal context to test how environmental protection, habitation, and resilience strategies can be layered. This zoom-in, therefore, captures a landscape in which boundaries are not fixed, but carefully redefined to support both human and ecological needs.

A key spatial move is the extension of the Veluwe's edges, which are stretched outward to create a more gradual and adaptive transition between protected nature and accessible green areas. By redistributing public access, the strategy ensures that the most sensitive core zones receive greater protection, while newly defined peripheral landscapes absorb recreational use. This results in a richer ecological gradient, where biodiversity is strengthened, and human interaction with nature is guided rather than restricted, enhancing both environmental quality and spatial experience.

Alongside this, the introduction of a self-sufficient eco-village demonstrates a shift toward localised systems of energy production and consumption. Renewable energy infrastructures are embedded within the settlement, supporting closed-loop cycles that reduce external dependencies. This is complemented by the allocation of space within the river plain for controlled flooding, allowing the landscape to absorb excess water and adapt to changing climatic conditions. Together, these elements position Deventer as a model of ecological integration, where living, production, and natural processes are closely intertwined.

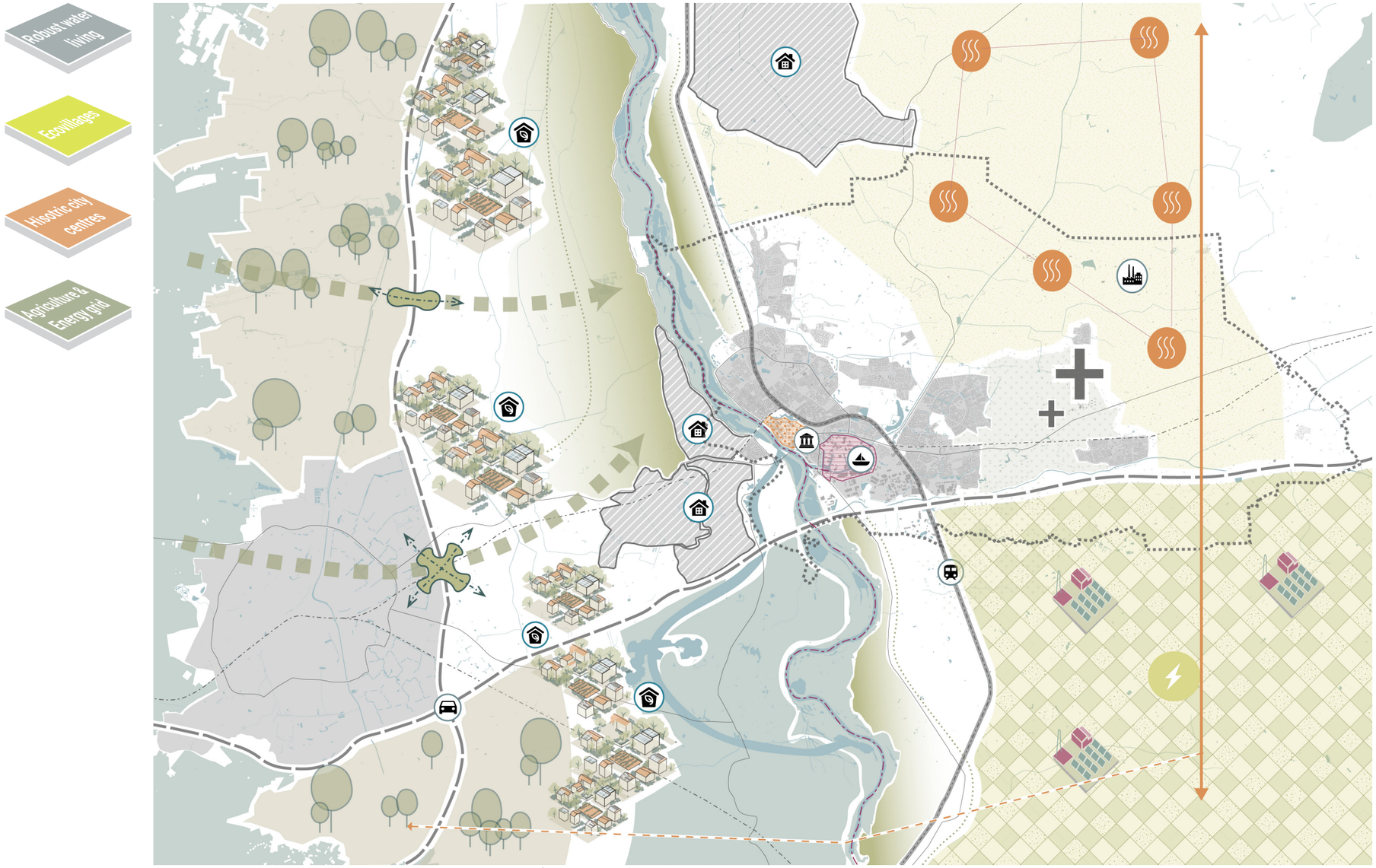


Figure 154: Deventer Zoom-in map illustrating connectivity, energy infrastructure, preservation and urban extents and potential land use

LEGEND

- Municipal boundary - Deventer
- Natural green areas
- Natural water
- Existing built to retrofit (2026)
- Agricultural land
- Geothermal energy zone (2030)
- Food processing industry (2040)
- Sustainable port zone (2030)
- Room for the river widening zones (2026)
- Accessible green transition zone (2030)
- Urban expansion - student housing and innovation (2040)
- Sustainable urban expansion (2026)
- Intensified train connection (2026)
- Existing train connection
- Water logistics route (2030)
- Heritage building upgrades (2040)
- Energy-alligned industries zone
- Agricultural zone
- Car/road logistics network
- Educational development (2040)
- Economic/business development (2040)
- Geothermal well locations (2030-2050)
- Heat network connections
- Greenhouses
- Solar parks (2030-2050)
- Eco villages (2030-2040)
- Ecoducts (2030)

0 2 4 km

"I moved here to build my own home across the IJssel." *(newcomer)*

S.1, C.5, I.1, C.8

"The eco-village is well connected to the city."
(Municipality)

S.2, S.3, I.2

"Deventer is a calm and familiar place to me." *(Ageing resident)*

E.1, I.1, S.4, I.5

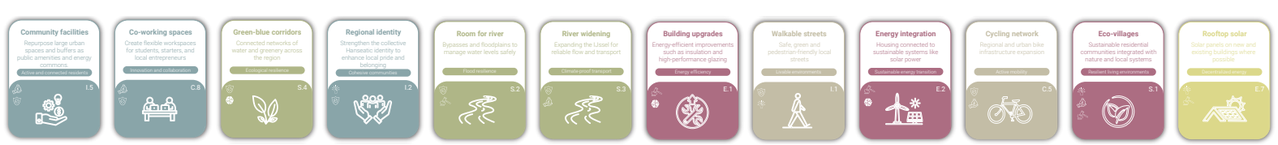


Figure 155: Collage Deventer 2075
source: collage is supported by AI Gemini

The stakeholder statements in this collage are our interpretation of their ideas about our vision and strategy.

Zoom-in 2: Zwolle

The zoom-in for Zwolle presents a unique case compared to Kampen and Deventer, as it focuses on a city that is already well-established within the regional system. Zwolle demonstrates how transformation can occur through strategic intensification and specialisation rather than large-scale territorial expansion. This zoom-in emphasises the city's potential to consolidate its role as a hub for knowledge, research, and innovation.

The primary intervention is targeted urban expansion within the current city extents, specifically allocated for education, research institutions, and student housing. This reinforces Zwolle's identity as a knowledge and innovation centre, fostering collaboration and accessibility while avoiding unnecessary outward sprawl. Parallel to this, the introduction of solar parks illustrates a shift toward renewable energy integration within urban and peri-urban areas. Unlike wind energy infrastructure, which typically occupies dispersed agricultural zones, solar installations are concentrated in carefully chosen plots, minimising land consumption and creating a more compact footprint while complementing existing land uses.

Further transformations are visible in sustainable urban development across the river, where new neighbourhoods are designed to align with low-carbon principles and resource efficiency. Within the existing built heritage, retrofitting interventions update structures for energy performance and functional adaptability without compromising historical character. Together, these strategies demonstrate how Zwolle can accommodate growth, innovation, and sustainability simultaneously, balancing new development with preservation and environmental stewardship.

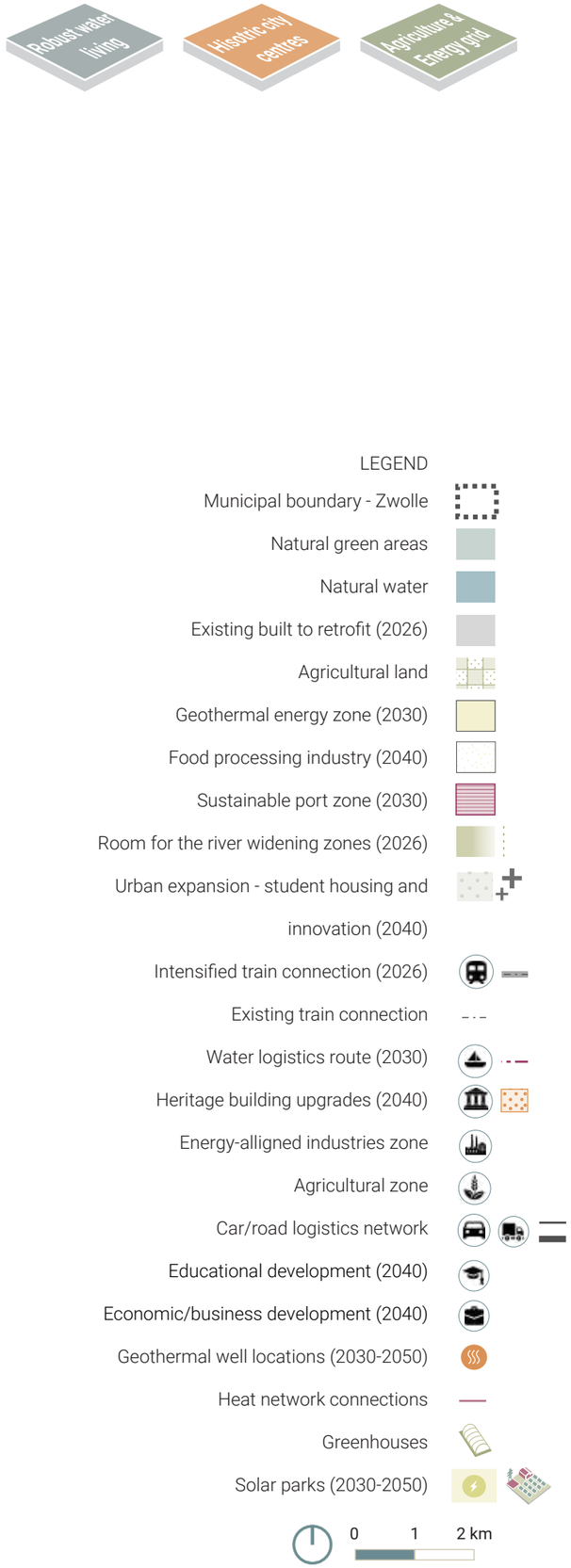


Figure 156: Zwolle Zoom-in map illustrating connectivity, energy infrastructure, preservation and urban extents and potential land use

"I moved here for the mix of tech companies and the opportunities they bring." *(newcomer)*

E.2, C.6, C.7

"I enjoy how Zwolle is growing while staying a comfortable place to live." *(Ageing resident)*

E.7, S.2

"I'm guiding Zwolle's growth through housing, innovation, and business." *(Municipality)*

E.3, E.9, S.2, C.7

Figure 157: Collage Zwolle 2075
source: collage is supported by AI Gemini

The stakeholder statements in this collage are our interpretation of their ideas about our vision and strategy.

Strategy on a national level

This map refers back to the map in the introduction, which illustrates how other Dutch regions experience similar challenges as the Hanseatic cities, such as demographic change, fragmentation, and outmigration. It shows how areas like Delta Verbonden, Rand Veluwe, and the Veenmarkten could be connected as a national network, while the Kroonpolders remain separate due to Amsterdam's central location.
By linking these regions, we can apply the principles of "The Hanseatic Pride". Each area contributes unique strengths: Delta Verbonden focuses on water and logistics, Rand Veluwe on connectivity, Veenmarkten on ecological and energy systems, and the Hanseatic cities on heritage and identity.
This networked approach shows that centrality does not have to rely on one strong city alone. Instead, a collaborative framework across the regions can strengthen the local identities and offer more effective solutions to challenges in the Netherlands.

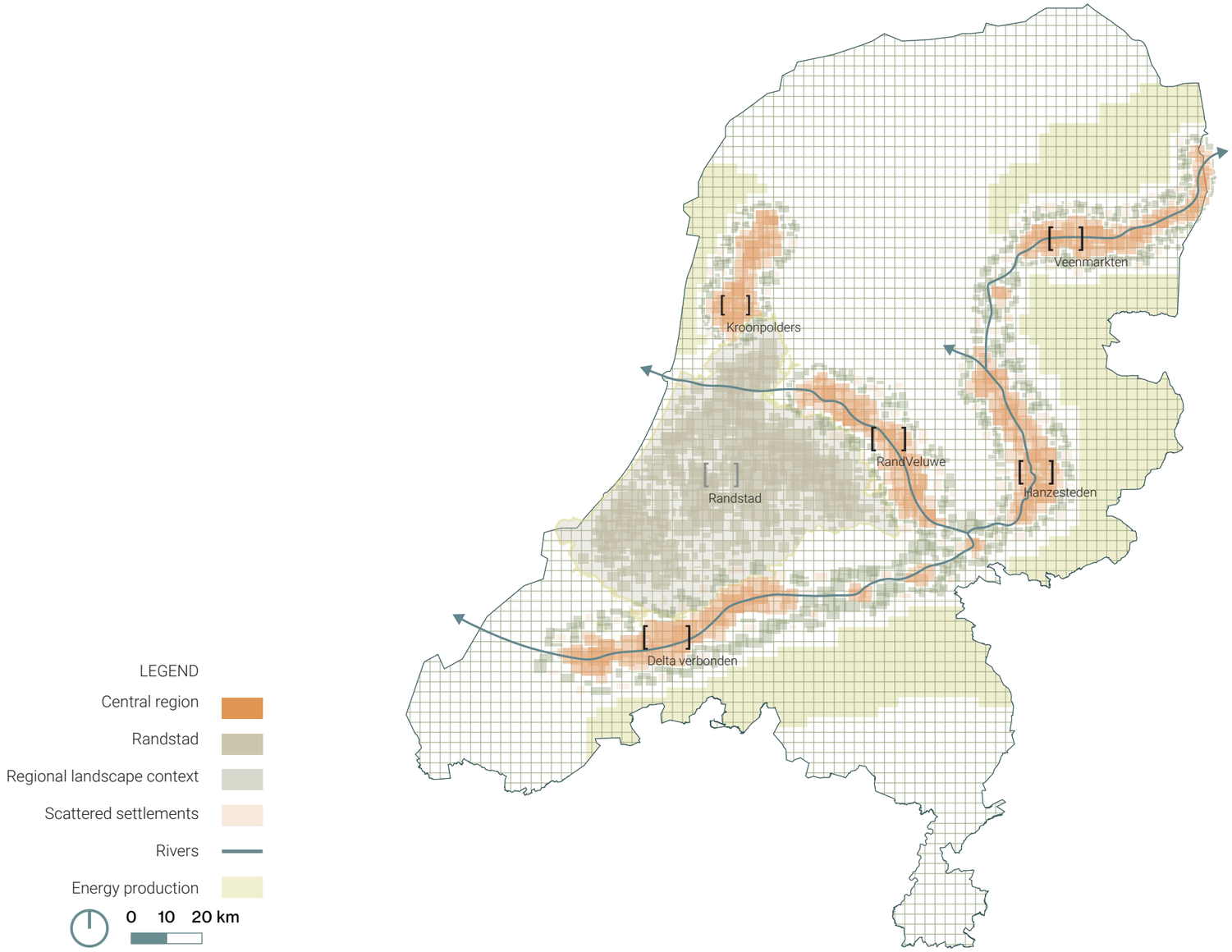


Figure 158: Map positioning the Hanseatic cities within a national framework of emerging centralities.

CONCLUSION

Concluding on the main research question and subquestions

1. How has the concept of centrality changed over time, and how can it be reinterpreted for Dutch Hanseatic cities?

The centrality of Dutch Hanseatic cities has experienced a significant transformation. In the 15th century, these cities occupied a central role due to their key positions within international trade networks. However, as economic and infrastructural priorities shifted toward the Randstad, the Hanseatic cities became increasingly peripheral within the national context.
Currently, centrality depends not only on physical connectivity and economic dominance but also on social relations, mobility patterns, and evolving lifestyles, such as hybrid work and regional migration. These developments create opportunities for areas such as the Hanseatic cities to increase their relevance, even from a peripheral position, especially as the energy transition fosters new cooperation and local production.

2. What spatial, environmental, and socio-economic factors define the current state of Dutch Hanseatic cities and their surrounding region?

The Dutch Hanseatic cities are defined by strong historical identity, layered spatial systems, and uneven socio-economic dynamics. The region is structured by the interaction between the IJssel, a blue network, and the Veluwe, an ecological core. These systems define regional identity yet also limit development due to flood risks and protected landscapes.
Infrastructure connects the region through rail, road, and water, with Zwolle as the main hub, though car dependency remains high outside urban centers. Socio-economically, growth is concentrated in cities such as Zwolle and Deventer, while smaller towns face population aging and the outmigration of young adults, weakening regional resilience.
At the same time, the region maintains a diverse economy—spanning logistics, agriculture, education, tourism, and heritage—reflecting an evolution of its Hanseatic past into a complementary regional system.

3. How is the energy transition currently integrated into the region regarding demand, infrastructure, and spatial potential?

The energy transition in the Dutch Hanseatic region is still emerging, with fossil fuels remaining dominant despite the growth of renewable energy. Demand is concentrated in cities and industrial areas, placing pressure on existing infrastructure and causing grid congestion, while a high-voltage network supports regional distribution.
Renewable energy production—mainly solar and wind—is expanding but unevenly distributed, with limited opportunities in protected areas like the Veluwe and greater potential in open northern zones. Local geothermal sources offer additional opportunities for regional heat networks.
The transition demands substantial funding for new infrastructure, including heat networks, charging systems, and energy storage such as hydrogen. Overall, integration is increasing through place-specific solutions, but it depends on synchronizing energy systems with spatial conditions and adopting a coordinated, dispersed approach.

4. How do demographic shifts and stakeholder perspectives affect spatial development and the sense of belonging in the region?

Demographic shifts in the Hanseatic region—characterized by the arrival of middle-aged households, outmigration of young adults, and an aging population—are altering spatial patterns and social relations. Newcomers increase housing demand, while the loss of young adults weakens lasting resilience. This results in a fragmented spatial structure, with different groups settling in different areas.
Stakeholder perspectives (position papers) increase the complexity of this dynamic. Existing residents emphasize. Continuity, newcomers offer new demands, and institutions focus on regulation and resilience, while limited local engagement in the energy transition reduces accordance with community needs.
As a result, integrated and adaptive planning is essential. The region's feeling of belonging and resilience depends on how effectively spatial development connects diverse groups and balances their interests.

5. Which spatial vision most effectively addresses the region's identified challenges and opportunities, and why?

Each scenario alone proved inadequate. The regenerative approach prioritized ecology but lacked socio-economic depth. The heritage scenario preserved identity but overlooked future needs. The energy-based strategy offered technical strength but risked fragmentation. The metropolitan model promoted growth but endangered landscapes and local character. No single vision fully addressed the region's complexity.
The 'New Hanseatic Pride' vision deals with these shortcomings through integrating ecological, economic, and social priorities. It positions ecological systems as a basic strength of regional connections through a polycentric network, and balances new housing development with respect for heritage and landscape. This vision fosters inclusive communities, connects newcomers with long-term residents, and redefines the region as a resilient network of centers. Additionally, it spatially integrates the energy transition by aligning production, distribution, and consumption, while leveraging the region's historic identity and landscape assets to guide future development.

6. What spatial interventions and design strategies are needed to implement this vision across themes such as ecology, infrastructure, housing, economy, and energy?

Implementing this vision demands focused interventions across ecology, infrastructure, housing, economy, and energy within an integrated regional framework. Key spatial zones, or 'tiles,' serve specific functions: city centers focus on livability and heritage; water-urbanization areas accommodate growth; eco-villages promote community and ecological values; energy and agricultural grids support renewable energy and food production; and a business district stimulates innovation. Green corridors and transition zones preserve connectivity and ecological coherence.
City centers should prioritize adaptive reuse, public space improvements, energy retrofits, and reduced car traffic to boost livability. New growth zones must be dense, sustainable, and well-connected. Edge eco-villages should emphasize community participation and ecological stewardship. Energy-agricultural grids integrate renewable energy with food production to enhance regional resilience. Cycling and water-based mobility should be favored to reduce car dependency. Economic development and innovation should be concentrated within the business district to reduce pressure on city centers.
Effective implementation depends on transparent governance, adequate funding, robust regulation, and active stakeholder participation to align interests and stimulate investment.

7.How can these interventions be implemented over time and at different scales through governance, phasing, and stakeholder engagement?

Carrying out the interventions requires a phased, flexible approach coordinating spatial, societal, and energy changes over time and scale. The transition has three stages: up to 2040, pilot projects and incremental changes lay the foundation; then a phase of disruption occurs as legacy and new systems interact, causing temporary challenges; by 2075, new systems stabilize, creating a resilient, climate-neutral, and integrative region. This follows the X-curve model, where old systems decline as new ones grow. Technological adaptation and building inclusive communities must proceed together to secure long-term viability. Success depends on multi-level governance, with national and European policies providing strategic direction translated into coordinated local action. Further integration across sectors and scales is essential.
Stakeholder engagement is critical throughout the process. While institutions establish the framework, municipalities, organizations, and communities are responsible for implementation. Involving both newcomers and established residents ensures that spatial changes address multiple needs and promote social cohesion.
To summarize, phased implementation, integrated governance, and robust stakeholder involvement are key to developing a resilient and inclusive Hanseatic region over time.

Main question: How can the energy transition re-imagine the centrality of historic Hanseatic cities for future communities that consist of newcomers and existing residents?

In conclusion, the energy transition presents Dutch Hanseatic cities with a unique opportunity to redefine centrality, emphasizing networked resilience, inclusion, and local identity rather than geographic or economic dominance. By adopting integrated, adaptive strategies and promoting collaboration between newcomers and established residents, these cities can position themselves as vital, future-oriented communities.

CONTRIBUTION & REFLECTION

Defining the contribution of the project and reflecting on the process

Discussion and acknowledged limitations

This project advances both scientific and social discourse by presenting an integrated spatial vision for the Hanseatic region. By emphasising centrality, the project conceptualises the Hanseatic cities as a unified, interconnected region rather than as a peripheral transit corridor. The proposed vision examines how spatial, ecological, infrastructural, and economic interventions can collectively improve liveability, sustainability, and regional identity. In this way, the project addresses wider societal challenges, including housing shortages, climate adaptation, and the energy transition.

The project adopts a design-driven approach, prioritising the exploration of desirable future scenarios over the provision of fully validated or immediately implementable solutions. This orientation is evident in the proposal's ambitious projections, particularly regarding urban growth. The vision anticipates that most Hanseatic cities will expand by approximately 150%, surpassing current regional planning frameworks. Such growth is deemed necessary to re-establish centrality and foster a more vibrant, self-sustaining region. However, these interventions would significantly affect existing communities, raising critical ethical issues related to inclusivity, spatial justice, and the equitable distribution of benefits and burdens.

With respect to values and ethics, the project emphasises enhancing quality of life, fostering inclusive living environments, and respecting ecological systems, particularly the Veluwe. The proposal seeks to reduce the predominance of car-based mobility and transit traffic within the region, thereby favouring local liveability and environmental protection. Nevertheless, this transition may impact accessibility and traffic patterns, especially for users dependent on these routes, including those utilising international connections to Germany. Although the vision accommodates increased north–south movement, compromises between regional accessibility and local quality of life persist as significant ethical considerations.

The project prioritised certain stakeholder groups, particularly newcomers, as the initial focus for the design process. While this emphasis addressed urgent housing needs and anticipated population growth, it may have led to a lack of representation for other communities, including long-term residents and vulnerable groups. Adopting a more inclusive stakeholder engagement strategy could enhance the proposal's social robustness.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the project was conducted over a relatively short 9-week timeframe. This limited the extent of research and required quick decision-making, likely affecting the robustness of certain choices. Additionally, only one field visit was conducted (to Zwolle and Kampen), meaning that other Hanseatic cities were not experienced firsthand.

Second, data and literature expressly addressing the Hanseatic region as a whole were limited. Consequently, the analysis relied in part on sources from intersecting regions, particularly the provinces of Overijssel and Gelderland. Although these sources offered useful insights, this reliance may have reduced the specificity of the findings.

Finally, the economic and technical feasibility of the proposals remains untested, particularly with respect to the energy system and the envisioned large-scale urban growth. The timeline for interventions is similarly based on informed yet self-defined assumptions. More research is required to assess feasibility, refine phasing strategies, and identify appropriate stakeholders for each implementation stage. Greater stakeholder involvement may affect the timeline, potentially causing delays but ultimately enhancing the plan's quality and support.

Collective reflection

Our project addressed the research question: "How can the energy transition re-imagine the centrality of historic Hanseatic cities for future communities that consist of newcomers and existing residents?" We selected this region because it is relatively under-researched. We also shared an interest in social themes. The objective of restoring the centrality of Hanseatic cities in the future guided each stage of our design process.

We initiated the project by analyzing the current situation. Each team member had a specific role: spatial design, energy, history, or community. This process helped us identify key challenges and priorities. We combined these insights into vision maps. These became the foundation for our strategic development. Throughout the strategy design process, we evaluated the impacts on stakeholders. We integrated social, economic, and ecological considerations at each step.

Our structured approach included intermediate goals and regular presentations. This helped organize individual contributions into a coherent narrative. The structure enhanced clarity and made tracking progress easier. Our enthusiasm for the region kept us engaged. The nine-week project was intensive but educational. We achieved personal goals, like learning Illustrator, and group goals, such as creating a power-interest diagram. Collaborative sketching and discussion let each of us contribute unique skills and perspectives. This enriched the creative process.

Working in a larger group allowed us to address the project's complexity. We considered multiple dimensions of the region. We analyzed the impact of newcomers and the effects on existing residents, municipalities, and policymakers.

We assigned roles based on individual skills, preferences, and availability. These responsibilities evolved during the project. Task division was efficient, and frequent meetings enabled effective collaboration.

The course encouraged us to explore extreme scenarios. This enhanced our decision-making, critical thinking, and ability to envision more possible futures. The methodology fostered creativity and helped us develop innovative solutions for Hanseatic cities.

Overall, the project offered valuable insights into this unique region in the eastern Netherlands. We hope our work will inspire future collaborations in similar regions. We also hope it will help restore the Hanseatic cities' central role and recognition.

Individual reflection Chinouk

My approach to this project integrates an exploratory, conceptual mindset shaped by my background in art education with the technical discipline acquired during my Bachelor's in architecture. This dual perspective enables me to navigate between abstract thinking and practical spatial considerations. Throughout the project, I was particularly engaged with the social dimension, focusing on themes such as community, belonging, and cohesion.

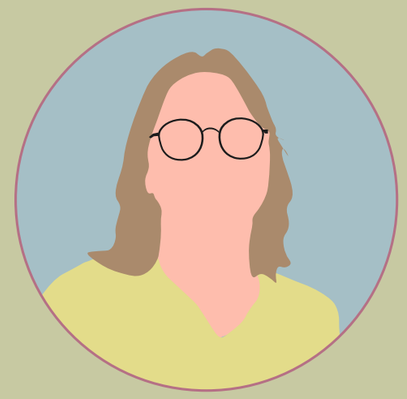
Growing up in the Hanseatic region fostered a strong personal connection to the site, which influenced my understanding of local dynamics. My experience relocating to the Randstad as a student, combined with my parents' experiences as newcomers, provided insight into multiple perspectives within the region. This background enabled me to relate to diverse communities but also revealed certain biases. At times, my familiarity with the area made it difficult to maintain objectivity. The knowledge that potential interventions could impact people close to me further complicated this process.

Urban design is inherently non-neutral; spatial decisions shape behaviour by enabling certain actions and discouraging others. It is not possible to fully anticipate how various communities, particularly underrepresented groups, will respond to a design. Space acquires meaning through its users, and when individuals feel excluded or uncomfortable, the design does not succeed. This reality introduces significant ethical considerations. Focusing on one central community, in this case newcomers, provided clarity and direction but also risked neglecting other groups. This underscored that every design operates within a defined scope. It is essential to continually reflect on who is included and who may be excluded. The process reinforced the importance of adaptability, both spatially and socially. Developing the timeline encouraged me to think in phases and to approach design as an evolving process rather than a fixed outcome. Designing at a regional scale demands flexibility, ongoing reflection, and collaboration with users to ensure lasting sustainability and relevance for a diverse population.

Collaborative work was fundamental to this learning process. I learned to allocate tasks according to individual strengths and recognised the importance of clear communication, particularly when navigating differing viewpoints. Employing visual references facilitated idea clarification. Dedicating time to collective sketching and discussion was crucial for project alignment. While collaboration was generally effective, moments of uncertainty arose when ideas did not immediately converge. These experiences fostered patience and highlighted the importance of active listening. Informal interactions also contributed significantly, strengthening both the team dynamic and the final outcome.

This quarter has significantly influenced my perspective on my future role as an urbanist. I now recognise collaboration as a central strength in the design process and have developed practical tools to facilitate it. Simultaneously, I am increasingly drawn to smaller, more tangible scales where spatial interventions can be directly experienced. I aim to further develop as a designer who integrates conceptual thinking with practical, impactful solutions. Ultimately, my objective is to create adaptive and accessible environments by working alongside users and contributing meaningfully to the built environment.

Individual reflection Kati



This quarter, my background in architecture and the built environment strongly influenced my approach to the project. I naturally leaned towards a practical and organised way of working, which led me to take on a coordinating role within the group. By using a structured Miro board and shared task lists, I maintained clarity, kept everyone aligned, and ensured steady progress. This structured approach helped us work efficiently from the beginning and showed me how important organisation and communication are in group projects, especially when managing multiple tasks and deadlines from both courses.

At the same time, I became more aware of my own limitations. In my earlier studies, I focused on technical and sustainability topics, so I felt less confident about the social side of urbanism or out-of-the-box thinking. I realised that I tend to prioritise a more spatial and measurable approach, sometimes at the expense of fully understanding people's lived experiences. Through the Methodology course and ongoing group discussions, I began to better understand both the importance and the complexity of representing communities. It also made clear how challenging it is to do this meaningfully within a limited timeframe, where interactions with communities remained brief, and we had to rely on broader research.

This project also deepened my understanding of urbanists' ethical responsibilities. I now see the role as also facilitating communication among different stakeholders and ensuring that underrepresented voices are heard. A key tension I experienced was between implementing sustainable energy systems and respecting the region's historical identity. Conversations with residents highlighted that the energy transition is often perceived as something beyond individual responsibility. This showed me that an important role for urbanists is to bridge this gap, creating strategies that connect large-scale ambitions with local engagement.

Looking ahead, this quarter has sparked my interest in combining small-scale, community-oriented approaches with large-scale urban development. I have learned that integrating my pragmatic and positivist mindset with greater empathy and openness to uncertainty can lead to more thoughtful and adaptable outcomes. In the future, I want to further develop this balance and place more emphasis on the social dimension of urbanism in my projects.

Individual reflection Jochem

This quarter made me more aware of my own positionality as an emerging urbanist. I tend to approach projects mainly through a spatial lens: I am drawn to maps, physical interventions, and the design of space itself. This means that, at the start of the project, I gave more attention to spatial solutions over the social dynamics behind them. My background and interests led me to focus more on form than on people. Over time, I became aware that this created a blind spot, as I was sometimes overlooking how different communities experience and shape urban space.

Working in a team played an important role in confronting this bias. My group members brought in perspectives that I would not naturally prioritise, especially regarding the social dimension of urbanism. I learned that their ideas were not just complementary, but essential. This challenged my understanding of what it means to be an ethical urbanist. I now see more clearly that urbanists have a responsibility to engage with questions of inclusion, inequality, and lived experience, not only with spatial quality. There were moments where I felt tension between designing clear spatial interventions and acknowledging more complex social realities that are less easy to map or visualise.

In terms of my learning process, I struggled at times with losing an overview of the project. Because we divided tasks, I became very focused on my own part, which occasionally made me feel disconnected from the bigger picture. I also found it challenging that my writing pace in English is slower than the pace from my team members, which sometimes caused frustration.

Looking forward, this quarter pushed me, in a good way, to work towards a better balance between spatial and social perspectives. I want to become an urbanist who not only designs spaces, but also understands and integrates the people who lives or will live in that space.

Individual reflection Sanika

Over the course of this project, we set out to uncover the overlooked region of the Dutch Hanseatic Cities in the north-east of the Randstad. Rather than beginning with a fixed, tangible problem, we approached the region through a socially embedded concept - “centrality.” Coming from an architectural background, I have always been drawn to working from abstract ideas toward concrete outcomes, and this process felt both intuitive and stimulating. I found myself deeply engaged in translating this intangible notion into a grounded framework, using research and literature to support and justify the project’s direction.

At the same time, I was confronted with my unfamiliarity with the region. Cities like Zwolle and Kampen were entirely new to me, and this initial distance made me question my position within the project. The field visit and analytical work gradually built my understanding, yet I remained aware of the challenge of proposing strategies for a place I had only recently encountered. This tension led me to reflect critically on how such proposals might be received at a grassroots level, and whether I was adequately addressing questions of justice.

Engaging with the project at a regional scale reshaped my understanding of urbanism as a practice embedded in multiple scales and actors. Justice, I realised, is not a fixed outcome but an ongoing negotiation - one that extends beyond visible stakeholders to include the broader social and ecological systems that bind a region together. Thinking through ideas of public goods and the commons pushed me to question what value the project truly contributes. Moving forward, I aim to make this reflection more explicit in my process, ensuring that questions of justice are not assumed but actively defined and evaluated.

This project has left me more aware of the responsibility I carry as an urbanist, with a deeper sensitivity to context, scale, and the ethical implications of intervention.

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APPENDIX

At the Roundtable...

Position Paper by Kati Brandl (5250498)

Position Paper: Rijkswaterstaat takes on The Hanseatic Pride

Introduction

The Netherlands is a delta where water defines the landscape as both risk and opportunity. Approximately 59% of the country is vulnerable to flooding (Waterveiligheid, n.d.), making water safety the foundation of all spatial planning. Rijkswaterstaat, as the national authority responsible for water management and main infrastructure, operates with the core aim of *"keeping the Netherlands the safest delta in the world"* (MIW, 2026b).

The proposed spatial vision of the Hanseatic Pride for the IJssel region aligns with national challenges such as climate change and housing demand (MVRO, 2025), yet it introduces tensions with the fundamental principles of water management. This paper critically evaluates the vision from the perspective of Rijkswaterstaat, focusing on their core values of water safety, sustainability, accessibility, and resilience (MIW, 2026b).

Rijkswaterstaats values and responsibilities

Urbanisation and water safety

The proposed expansion of cities such as Zwolle, Deventer, Zutphen, and Doesburg towards the west, across the IJssel and near existing historic centres, represents the most critical concern. These areas are part of the natural floodplains and play a vital role in accommodating peak discharge. Urbanisation here reduces water storage capacity and increases flood risk.

Although the vision promotes energy-efficient housing, Rijkswaterstaat considers development in flood-prone areas highly undesirable due to safety risks (MIW, 2026a). This creates a fundamental dilemma between national water safety and regional housing demand. Urbanisation is only justifiable outside high-risk zones or, as a secondary option, through water-robust solutions such as floating buildings, elevated construction, or secondary dike systems (Pötz & STOWA, 2014).

The proposed green transition zone between the Veluwe and the IJssel offers a more promising approach. When designed as a multifunctional landscape that integrates water storage and ecological connectivity, it can contribute to climate adaptation and biodiversity without disrupting hydrological and ecological systems. Ecovillages within this zone may function as experimental environments for innovative water and energy systems, provided that associated infrastructure does not fragment the landscape. In the vision, placing extra ecoducts is suggested but not explored enough to justify a nature inclusive approach, but if placed effectively it could be a way of *"Respecting our living environment … by sometimes taking something from nature and then giving it back."* (MIW, 2026b).

The preservation of historic city centres through internal renovation aligns with cultural values but results in lower energy efficiency (Van 't Slot et al., 2015), increasing pressure on energy production elsewhere. This highlights the need for a regional, system-wide energy strategy, supported by initiatives such as the OER programme, which promotes sustainable energy generation on state-owned land without compromising water infrastructure (Opwek van Energie op Rijksvastgoed, n.d.).

Economic development and the river system

The activation of ports in Kampen, between Zwolle and Deventer, and in Doesburg provides opportunities to strengthen regional and international economic networks. The IJssel already connects the Rhine to the IJsselmeer (Het Ontstaan van de IJssel, 2018), and increased inland shipping can contribute to more sustainable, climate-neutral transport.

However, intensifying economic activity introduces significant risks. The IJssel has a relatively narrow fairway, which limits reliability during low water levels (Roosjen et al., 2013). Expanding industrial and transport functions may require interventions such as riverbank reinforcement, disrupting natural river dynamics.

This conflicts with the ambition of a Self-Supporting River System, in which natural processes are preserved with minimal human intervention (MIW, 2025a). Increased activity may lead to ecological disruption, reduced space for water during peak discharge, and greater reliance on maintenance.

Rijkswaterstaat recognises economic growth as necessary but requires that it contributes to a climate-neutral and ecologically balanced system. Ports should therefore be developed as sustainable hubs that integrate renewable energy, circular economies, and nature-inclusive design (MIW, 2026b). The combination of economic activity with energy systems, such as aquathermal and geothermal energy, is considered a promising direction.

Infrastructure and accessibility

The proposed infrastructure changes of reducing speed on the A1 and A50 while intensifying regional roads, require careful consideration. While lower speeds reduce emissions and noise, they may negatively affect traffic flow on major national corridors, especially given recent investments in expanding the A1 (MIW, 2025b).

Shifting traffic to regional roads such as the N53, N332, and N315 introduces challenges, including increased pressure on smaller settlements, reduced safety, and negative impacts on liveability. Rijkswaterstaat prioritises a clear road hierarchy, where highways handle long-distance traffic and regional roads serve local functions; disrupting this balance may reduce overall efficiency.

The proposal could be improved by selectively reducing speed such as focusing on only one highway and combining this with investments in public transport and targeted upgrades to regional infrastructure to maintain safety and accessibility.

Energy transition and system integration

The proposed energy transition aligns well with Rijkswaterstaat's sustainability ambitions, particularly through the integration of multiple energy sources and efficient land use.

Geothermal energy in Kampen and between Zwolle and Deventer provides a stable and reliable energy source (Milieu Centraal, n.d.), but poses risks to soil and groundwater systems, requiring strict monitoring and safe distances from flood defences.

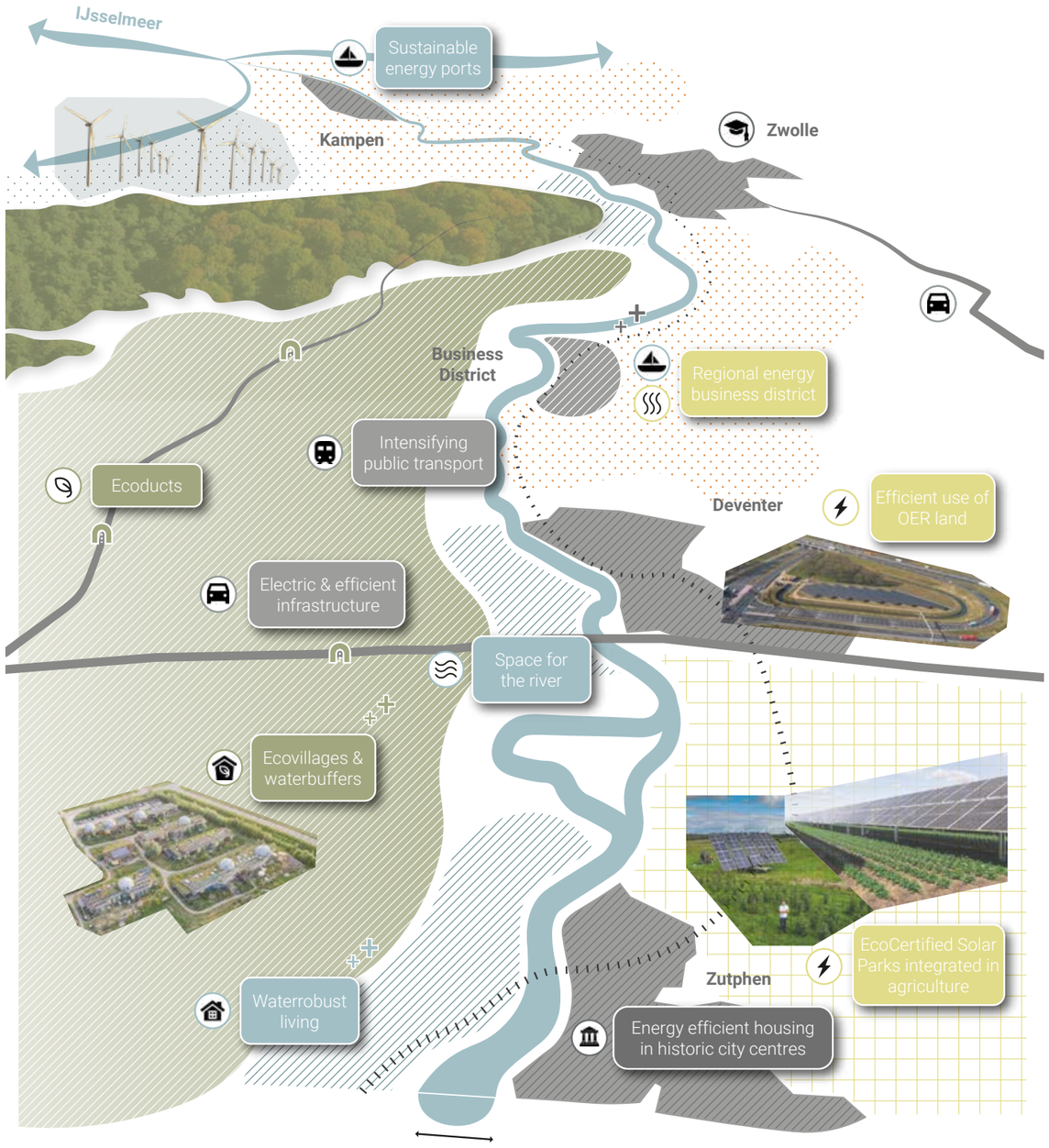
Aquathermal energy from the IJssel, particularly near Doesburg, is closely aligned with water management functions. It offers efficient energy use with limited spatial impact but may affect water temperature and ecosystems, requiring compliance with national guidelines (STOWA, n.d.).

The combination of solar parks and agriculture east of the IJssel reflects multifunctional land use, reducing spatial pressure on urban areas. However, it may affect water drainage and quality, requiring water-inclusive and ecologically certified design (The Greenlabel Institute, n.d.).

Increased economic activity will raise energy demand, creating opportunities for integrated systems in which ports and business districts function as energy hubs within a circular economy.

Conclusion

Rijkswaterstaat can only support the proposed vision if water and soil remain leading principles in all spatial decisions, ensuring that urbanisation, economic growth, and energy transition do not compromise water safety, ecological balance, or the long-term resilience of the IJssel river system.



Rijkswaterstaats vision for the hanseatic pride

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At the Roundtable...

Position Paper by Jochem de Kok (5780543)

Position Paper: The municipality of Zutphen takes on The Hanseatic Pride

Introduction

This position paper represents the position of the Municipality of Zutphen regarding the future vision 'The New Hanseatic Pride' (see Figure 1). This vision explores how the energy transition can create a new collective identity for the Dutch Hanseatic cities and their region, bringing together newcomer households moving from the Randstad to the region and existing residents through shared energy systems. The paper analyzes the extent to which this vision aligns with municipal policy and what spatial implications it has for Zutphen.

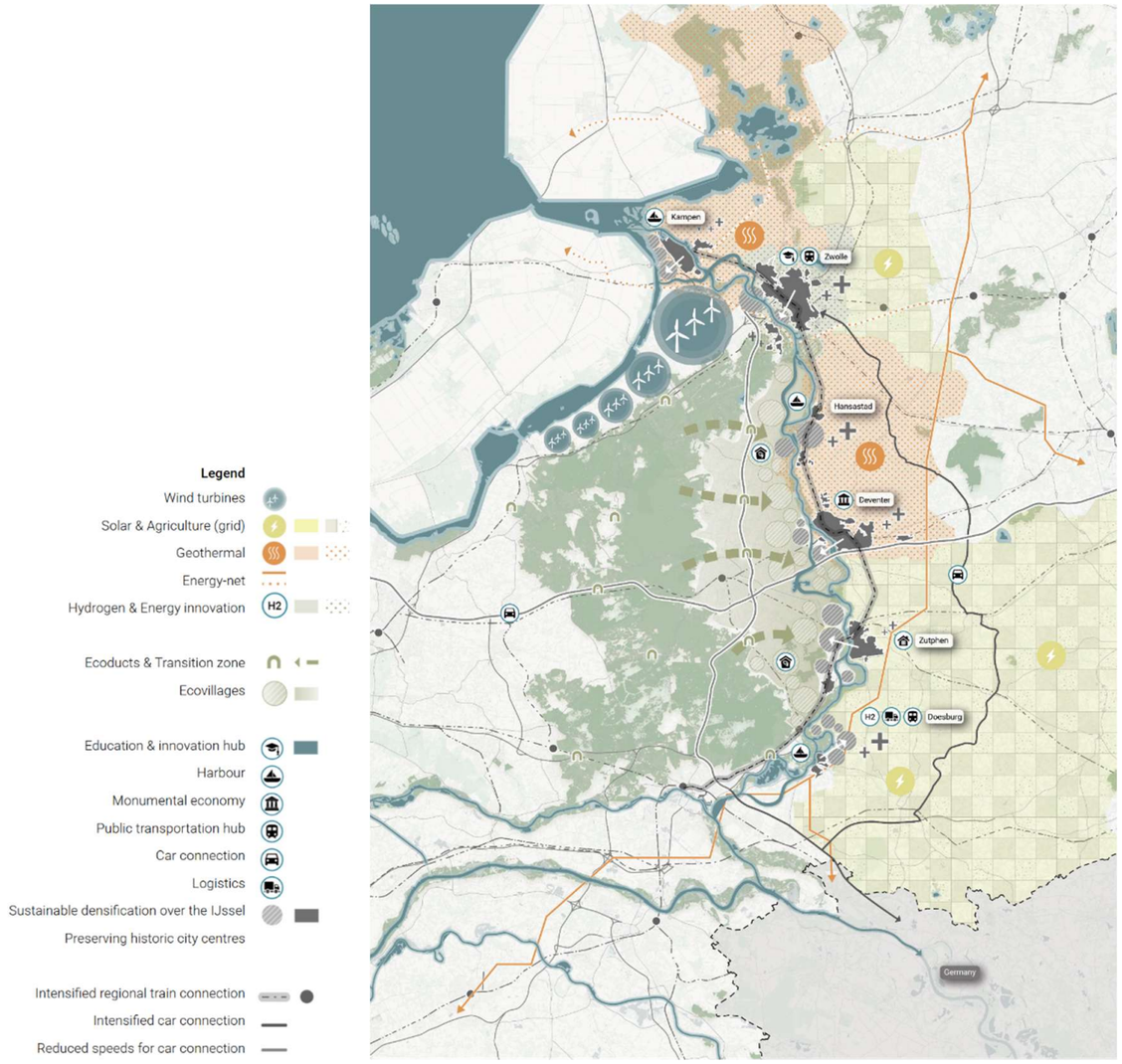


Figure 1: Vision map 'The New Hanseatic Pride', own picture

Role and interests of the Municipality of Zutphen

As a local government, the Municipality of Zutphen bears integral responsibility for the living environment: social, spatial, and economic. The Zutphen 2040 Environmental Vision (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025a) formulates three core ambitions 'Zutphen Bloeit*, 'Zutphen Onderneemt*, and 'Beleven* in Zutphen' in which the energy transition is central as one of the major societal challenges. The municipality aims to be carbon neutral by 2040, with aquathermal energy (heat from the IJssel) and collective heat networks as the core strategy (Municipality of Zutphen, 2021). The Heat Transition Vision emphasizes two crucial principles that resonate directly with the vision: the transition must remain affordable for all residents, and resident participation is an indispensable condition for public support (Municipality of Zutphen, 2021). ZutphenEnergie, the local energy cooperative that serves as a key partner in the heat transition (Municipality of Zutphen, 2021), illustrates how collective energy management in Zutphen is already deeply embedded an organization that the municipality characterizes as one of the largest cooperatives in the Netherlands (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025a).

The municipality aims for a scaling up to 55,000-60,000 inhabitants by 2040, not as an end in itself but to maintain facilities (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025a; Van den Berg, 2026). Economically, the municipal council has approved the expansion of the De Revelhorst business park by 40 hectares net (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025c), partly because more than 2,000 inhabitants work outside the municipality daily and employment has declined by an equal number of jobs over the past ten years (Van den Berg, 2026). The municipality views sustainable business activity circular and energy transition-oriented as a connecting link between its economic and sustainable objectives. At the same time, it safeguards the protected cityscape: the Framework Memorandum on High-Rise Buildings & Densification (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025b) stipulates how densification is carefully integrated, with the five historic church towers serving as inviolable anchor points of the Hanseatic urban identity.

Position regarding the vision

The Municipality of Zutphen supports 'The New Hanseatic Pride' at its core. The core idea that collaborative energy systems can regionally reconnect the Hanseatic cities and bring old and new together aligns with both the Heat Transition Vision (Municipality of Zutphen, 2021) and the broader ambitions of the Environmental Vision (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025a). However, the Municipality of Zutphen raises three critical points regarding the elaboration.

Eco-villages : opportunity for integration, risk of segregation

The municipality welcomes eco-villages as a transition zone between the Veluwe and the city: this aligns with the 'compact city' from the Environmental Vision (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025a) and the densification framework of the High-Rise & Densification Framework Note (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025b). However, eco-villages must not become isolated enclaves for newcomers. The vision must formulate socio-spatial mixing a mix of incomes, ages, and lifestyles as a strict precondition, in line with the Environmental Vision (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025a).

Heritage transition requires direction

Energy retrofitting of the medieval inner city is necessary and desirable, but requires utmost care. Zutphen has a nationally protected cityscape; the city silhouette is the primary bearer of Hanseatic urban identity (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025b). The tension regarding this extends beyond the municipal boundaries: neighboring municipality Bronckhorst has already pointed out the landscape impact of Zutphen's spatial interventions (Liebrand, 2024). The municipality advocates for heritage assessment and resident participation as explicit process requirements for every retrofit project in the historic core.

Mobility: Strengthening public transport as a condition

The vision rightly points out the intensified designates a regional train connection as a key element. Zutphen's public transport connection to the Randstad is limited, while approximately 2,000 residents work outside the municipality daily (Van den Berg, 2026). Without a better rail connection, the sustainable integration of newcomers, and thus the feasibility of the vision, remains vulnerable. The municipality advocates for the concrete elaboration of public transport measures in cooperation with the Province of Gelderland and ProRail, supplementing the 15-minute city concept and the red carpets already formulated in the Environmental Vision (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025a).

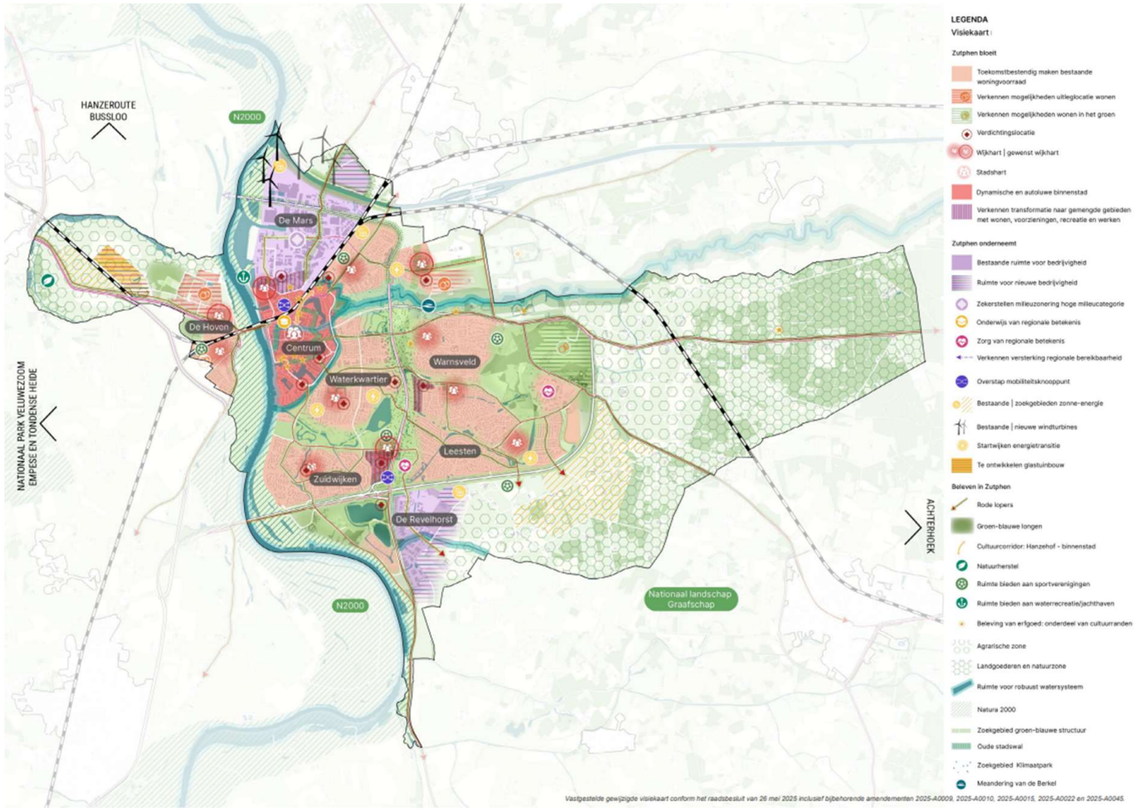
Spatial implications

The new vision impacts Zutphen on three scale levels. Regionally, the differentiated energy mix of geothermal, solar & agriculture aligns. grid, wind and hydrogen networks align with the Heat Transition Vision (Municipality of Zutphen, 2021) and the Stedendriehoek Regional Energy Strategy. The ecoducts & transition zones align with the 'green-blue lungs' of the Environmental Vision (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025a). At the urban level, the municipality identifies three priority zones: the station area (sustainable densification over the IJssel, education & innovation hub), the urban fringes of Noordveen and De Hoven (eco-villages), and the protected inner city (monumental economy, preserving historic city centres, with maximum control). At an economic level, the approved expansion of De Revelhorst (Municipality of Zutphen, 2025c) offers space for the circular and energy transition-related business activity envisaged by the vision, provided that the harbour and logistics functions are integrated with attention to environmental quality.

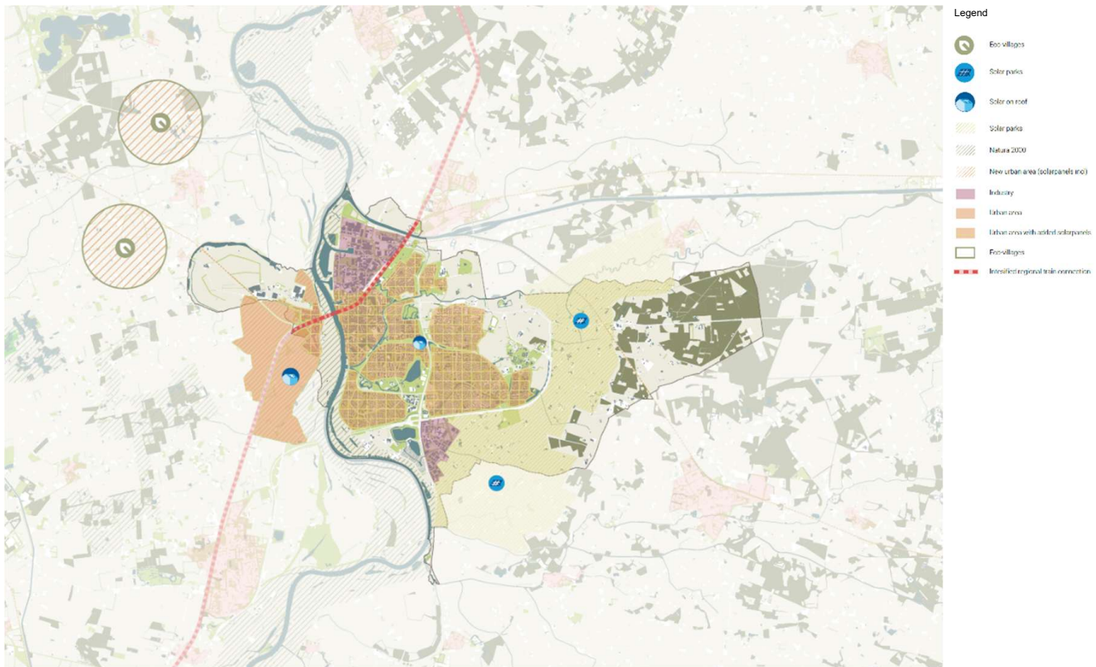
Conclusion

The Municipality of Zutphen supports 'The New Hanseatic Pride' as a coherent and ambitious spatial strategy that aligns with its own policy objectives. The connection between energy transition and collective identity formation is not only conceptually strong but also practically anchored in Zutphen reality through ZutphenEnergie and the Heat Transition Vision (Municipality of Zutphen, 2021). The municipality requests that the vision be refined on three points: social mixing as a prerequisite for eco-villages, heritage assessment in retrofit projects, and concrete public transport measures for improved regional rail connections. With these refinements, the vision forms a solid basis for further deliberation and the regional development strategy.

Vision: Municipality of Zutphen



Vision: ‘ The New Hanseatic Pride’ municipality scale



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At the Roundtable...

Position Paper by Sanika Pai (6171974)

Position Paper: An elderly resident takes on The Hanseatic Pride

Introduction

This position paper examines the future of Dutch Hanseatic cities from the perspective of elderly residents; a group closely connected to the historical and social fabric. As the ageing populations in this region continues to grow, their spatial needs and everyday experiences become increasingly relevant to planning. Using a qualitative narrative methodology that combines literature review and policy analysis, a focused stakeholder perspective is constructed. The study highlights what the elderly value, how they respond to the vision for “The New Hanseatic Pride”; as well as the factors it might overlook from their standpoint.

Who are we? The elderly residents of the Hanseatic cities

We, the elderly residents of the Dutch Hanseatic cities (comprising of Kampen, Zwolle, Deventer, Zutphen, Doesburg, etc.), represent a sizeable population whose lives are the most closely intertwined with the historical and social fabric of these cities. Many of us have families that originate from here, some migrated between 1950s-1970s during the post-war re-construction era, or were drawn by the affordable housing and strong community structure that we have in medium-sized Dutch cities((CBS), 2023). Us, elderly residents are part of the ageing population (65 and above) of the nation, which is projected to rise over 25% by 2040 (te Riele, et al., 2019). In regions such as Overijssel and Gelderland – where the Hanseatic cities are located – this ageing trend is even more pronounced due to youth outmigration and ageing-in-place dynamics. (Haartsen & Venhorst, 2010).

We predominantly live within the historic city centres and post-war neighbourhoods where services, healthcare and social networks are relatively accessible. Over the years, we have developed a stronger sense of attachment, particularly since our daily routines, social ties and familiarity are rooted in where we live. For us these cities have become layered with memory, identity and meaning (Rowles & Bernard, 2013).

How do we envision the future of our cities?

We envision a future that builds upon the Heanseatic identity rather than transforming it completely. At the neighbourhood scale, we have simple concerns. How close is the general practitioner? How fast can the emergency services reach me? How far is the grocery store? Can I find good produce near me? Where can I spend my mornings/evenings with the neighbours? The World Health Organisation's (WHO) for "Age-friendly Cities" emphasizes these factors ((WHO Global Network, 2007)

At regional scale, we do appreciate connectivity but not at the expense of local character or environmental quality. While enhanced public transport network are beneficial, large-scale interventions must be balanced with what needs to be preserved. We do prioritise local mobility systems rather than high-speed, long-distance travel but are not completely opposed to the idea, if it brings our family closer. (van den Berg, Arentze, & Timmermans, 2011) (Bartolini & Rubin, 2016)

We do understand that tasks like housing construction and energy transition take priority over heritage, but is there a way to do so by being inclusive toward the current built typology (van Dijk, 2024)? The Dutch government itself recognises the importance of "langer zelfstandig wonen" (living independently for longer), which requires retrofitting of homes, so that the elderly and continue living in their family homes (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Support, 2018). We do not mind being displaced if it is to an incremental, care oriented development and more apt for senior citizens (Floor, ven Kempen, & de Vocht, 1996). Our future should be that of growing character, not disruption.

What do we appreciate in the 2075 vision for "The New Hanseatic Pride"?

We acknowledge that the New Hanseatic Pride vision contains several promising elements. The strong emphasis on reviving cultural heritage and identity aligns closely with our sentiments (van der Kooij, 2015). Elements such as historic gates and merchant buildings are often relational to landmarks and wayfinding (van Dijk, 2024), hence we do like how the vision does not want to convert our medieval cores into modern urban districts.

We also appreciate the vision's attention to climate adaptation and water management. Given the riverine context of these cities, flooding is a critical concern with living near the Ijssel. Long-term adaptive strategies give us a sense of security and allow us to remain in place (Dutch Delta Programme, 2023).

Additionally, the vision's regional collaboration approach emphasizes polycentric development and cooperation between otherwise medium-size cities. If implemented, this regional collaboration could enhance service provision and bring back the relevance of the Hanseatic cities nationally. We particularly see potential in this method of growth to a city because it goes beyond the "cold-city" approach through the means of tourism and instead explores the "warm-city" approach which allows the local community and economy to be enhanced (van der Kooij, 2015).

Fig 1: Collage for what the elderly look for as factors that make up a more liveable environment

Where does the vision fall short for us?

Despite its strengths, we find that the vision understates the risk associated with large-scale transformation. We are afraid that it could lead to increased tourism/visitors, unhealthy economic competitiveness and/or too many newcomers. While it has monetary benefits, it can also lead to us the erosion of our everyday urban life. Will it defeat the reason and the peace and quiet that we moved here for in the first place? (Floor, ven Kempen, & de Vocht, 1996)

We find environmental disruptions, rapid spatial and social changes particularly challenging (Wiles, Leibing, Guberman, Reeve, & Allen, 2011). Since we are at the end of our housing career and have found our desired place to live, many of us are not likely to relocate and we do depend heavily on stable, familiar environments (Floor, ven Kempen, & de Vocht, 1996). Which is why we would detest too many changes in our core area, you may make changes elsewhere.

Moreover, we fear that the idea of attracting younger populations risks marginalising our needs. Would this vision for "The New Hanseatic Pride", like every other metropolitan prioritize economic growth and demographic renewal overlooking the importance of inclusivity and intergenerational equity (te Riele, et al., 2019)? There could also be noise and congestion, and weaken our importance in society. These outcomes conflict with our interest in stability, and would be a point of contention from the rather large community group of the region.

What alternative path do we propose?

We propose a re-orientation of the vision towards a more age-friendly and inclusive urbanism. This involves the city embedding public spaces, transportation, housing, services that are designed with ageing population in mind (WHO Global Network, 2007). We believe this suggestion is crucial because if one is designing for future residents, they shall also consider the future beyond it all, where they are enabled to comfortably grow old in the region.

Spatially, this means identifying and protecting "everyday spaces" that our essential for our livelihood. These may be in the form of local markets, parks, healthcare facilities and community hubs. These spaces should be prioritised in planning decision, as they form the backbone of our daily routines and social interaction. We would like to see some of these assets mapped and retained in future developments.

We also suggest a shift from growth0driven planning to care-driven planning. Maybe planning a city that identifies as a "care-city", which emphasizes well-being, social infrastructure and inclusivity over the economic metrics (Power & Mee, 2019).

Finally, we call for greater participation of elderly residents in decision-making process. Including us in planning could help deliver more sustainable and accepted outcomes, particularly in ageing societies (van der Kooij, 2015). By integrating our voices, the new Hanseatic Pride vision can evolve into a framework that not only preserves heritage but also help shape cities where the residents can continue to live till end-of-life with dignity and security.

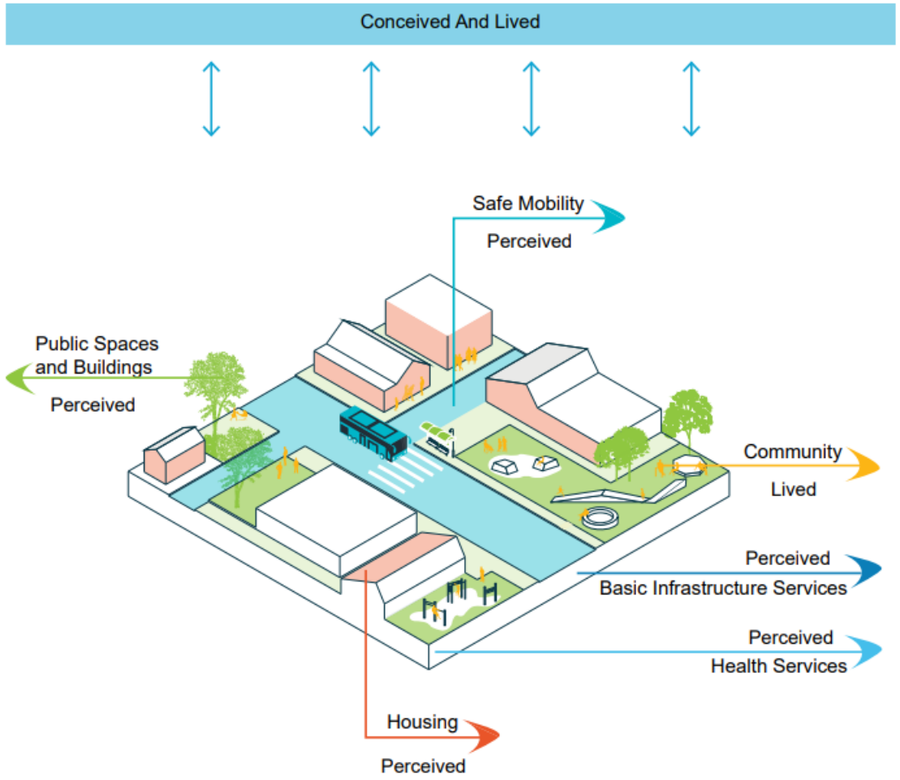

Fig 2: Design requirements for care-oriented neighbourhoods

Source:
https://events.development.asia/sites/default/files/materials/2021/06/202106-healthy-and-age-friendly-cities-best-practices-around-world-internship-report_1.pdf

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At the Roundtable...

Position Paper by Chinouk van den Berg (5531675)

Position Paper: A student takes on The Hanseatic Pride

Introduction

In this paper, I present my perspective as a prospective student within the deliberative arena on the future of the Hanseatic Cities along the IJssel River. The central research question is: to what extent does the Hanseatic Cities region along the IJssel provide sufficient educational, employment, and living opportunities to prevent young people like me from moving to the Randstad? I will outline my personal situation, analyze the vision of group 4.1, and systematically present my position as a student.

The student as a stakeholder

Many rural regions in Northwestern Europe, including the Hanseatic Cities, are facing a continuous outflow of young people and highly educated individuals. This challenge, often referred to as "brain drain" (Thissen et al., 2010), is driven by limited educational and career opportunities, a shortage of affordable housing, and a socio-cultural offer that does not always meet the needs of young people (Floor et al., 1996; Rondhuis, 2021).

The shift from agricultural and industrial economies to service-based sectors has further reduced employment opportunities in peripheral areas, while urban centers offer a broader range of educational, career, and social opportunities. This process reinforces a downward spiral: population decline leads to fewer amenities and a weakened community life, making the region less attractive for students and increasing the proportion of elderly residents (Thissen et al., 2010).

My personal experience illustrates the broader challenges in the Hanseatic Cities: the limited availability of educational programs, the lack of relevant job opportunities, and the shortage of affordable housing make my future prospects in this region uncertain. This individual uncertainty reflects and reinforces the broader patterns identified in research. Despite my connection to the region, I find that the absence of an active social network and insufficient study facilities limits my ability to develop locally. This results in a sense of missed opportunities, which is characteristic of many young people in similar situations. As a result, my desire to stay is under pressure. My personal situation confirms that the extent to which a region meets conditions for living, learning, working, and social participation directly determines its livability (Kapelle & Kramsch, 2023). When these elements are insufficient, I—like many of my peers—am compelled to seriously consider building my future elsewhere (Van Der Kooij, 2015).

Current situation: factors influencing my decision

Access to education and career opportunities

One of the main reasons why many students consider leaving the Hanseatic Cities is the limited access to higher education in peripheral regions. The small number of available programs makes cities with universities and vibrant student life more attractive (Thissen et al., 2010).

The availability of relevant jobs is also crucial. For highly educated young people, suitable career opportunities in the Hanseatic Cities are often scarce (Thissen et al., 2010). This makes it difficult to gain professional experience and further develop within the region.

Housing and accessibility in the region

There is a shortage of suitable and affordable housing for young people in the region, exacerbated by the high number of older residents remaining in larger homes (Van Der Kooij, 2015; Rondhuis, 2021). This limits my ability to stay and develop independence.

Population decline leads to the disappearance of local amenities such as schools, shops, and cafés. As a result, everyday activities become more difficult, and social life remains limited. Poor accessibility further intensifies this challenge: weak public transport connections and long travel times restrict access to education and employment (Van Der Kooij, 2015).

Social and cultural connectedness

The sense of belonging to the Hanseatic Cities is strongly influenced by local social and cultural conditions. In cities such as Zwolle and Hattem, entrepreneurs often feel little connection to the Hanseatic identity, which limits the development of broader social networks (Van Der Kooij, 2015; Vardopoulos et al., 2023). As a result, students miss out on a vibrant urban experience and opportunities to build networks or participate in local activities.

The absence of an active socio-cultural network reduces my engagement with the region and increases the attractiveness of cities with a richer cultural and dynamic social life. For me, connection and participation in social and cultural activities are crucial factors; without these opportunities, staying in the Hanseatic Cities becomes less appealing.

Evaluation of the vision: opportunities and shortcomings for students

The vision of group 4.1 outlines an ambitious future for the Hanseatic Cities as a sustainable, connected, and culturally rich network. While social cohesion, heritage preservation, energy transition, and infrastructure form its foundation, my evaluation as a student focuses on its practical impact: does this vision actually improve my opportunities for studying, working, living, and building social connections in the region? The extent to which this vision concretely enhances my daily life is decisive.

Investments in infrastructure and mobility are highly important, as they directly affect daily opportunities. Improved public transport connections between cities such as Zwolle and Kampen, as well as faster cycling routes, make it possible to live in the Hanseatic Cities while studying or working elsewhere. This reduces the need to relocate and aligns with student interests (Floor et al., 1996).

Social cohesion and participation can strengthen regional attachment, but only if students are genuinely involved. Without participation in urban development or cultural initiatives, these remain abstract goals with little influence on students' decisions to stay.

The preservation of heritage and urban identity contributes to an attractive living environment. Historic city centers improve quality of life but are less decisive for students (Dorenbos, 2024). Without connections to housing, education, and employment, these aspects are insufficient to encourage students to stay.

Sustainability and the energy transition are certainly important, but for many students they are not top priorities. Unless they offer direct benefits—such as lower living costs or new job opportunities—they do not motivate us to remain in the region.

My central critique is that the vision does not clearly explain how study opportunities, employment, housing, and social connections will be concretely realized for students. For example, it remains unclear how more educational programs and relevant internships will be created or how affordable housing for young people will be provided. Despite general ambitions such as improving infrastructure and strengthening social cohesion, there is a lack of concrete measures addressing student needs. Without clear and detailed proposals, young people like myself are more likely to leave the region than to stay.

Within the deliberative arena, this gap forms the core of our negotiation position. We aim to align with other stakeholders by seeking win-win solutions, such as combining student housing with inner-city development or investing in mobility that benefits all parties.

We are willing to make concessions, such as accepting shared housing arrangements or phased growth of educational facilities, as long as core interests—education, employment, housing, and mobility—are safeguarded.

Conclusion

The persistent outflow of students from the Hanseatic Cities is chiefly attributable to insufficient educational and career opportunities, inadequate housing availability, poor regional accessibility, and a lack of sustained socio-cultural engagement. Unless the ideas proposed in the vision of group 4.1 are implemented through concrete, student-focused measures, the region will continue to experience student exodus. Therefore, it is imperative that these proposals move beyond conceptual ambitions and yield actionable strategies that directly address students' needs to prevent further decline in the region's vitality.

I recommend that local governments and educational institutions jointly develop at least two new bachelor's programs aligned with regional labor market needs, such as sustainable logistics or regional water management innovation. This recommendation is supported by research indicating that expanding relevant higher education offerings in peripheral regions not only addresses the lack of specialized programs but also serves to retain young people and highly educated individuals in these areas (Thissen et al., 2010). In addition, I propose that housing associations and municipalities collaborate to create new student housing in the short term, as limited affordable accommodation has been identified as a significant factor driving student outmigration (Van Der Kooij, 2015; Rondhuis, 2021).

Public transport can be improved by introducing evening and weekend services between the Hanseatic Cities and implementing discounted student fares for regional routes. Furthermore, cultural institutions, in collaboration with student organizations, could organize an annual recurring festival or networking event specifically aimed at young residents.

By implementing these targeted measures, the region can become more attractive to young people and strengthen the long-term vitality and resilience of the Hanseatic Cities.

Student vision and spatial priorities

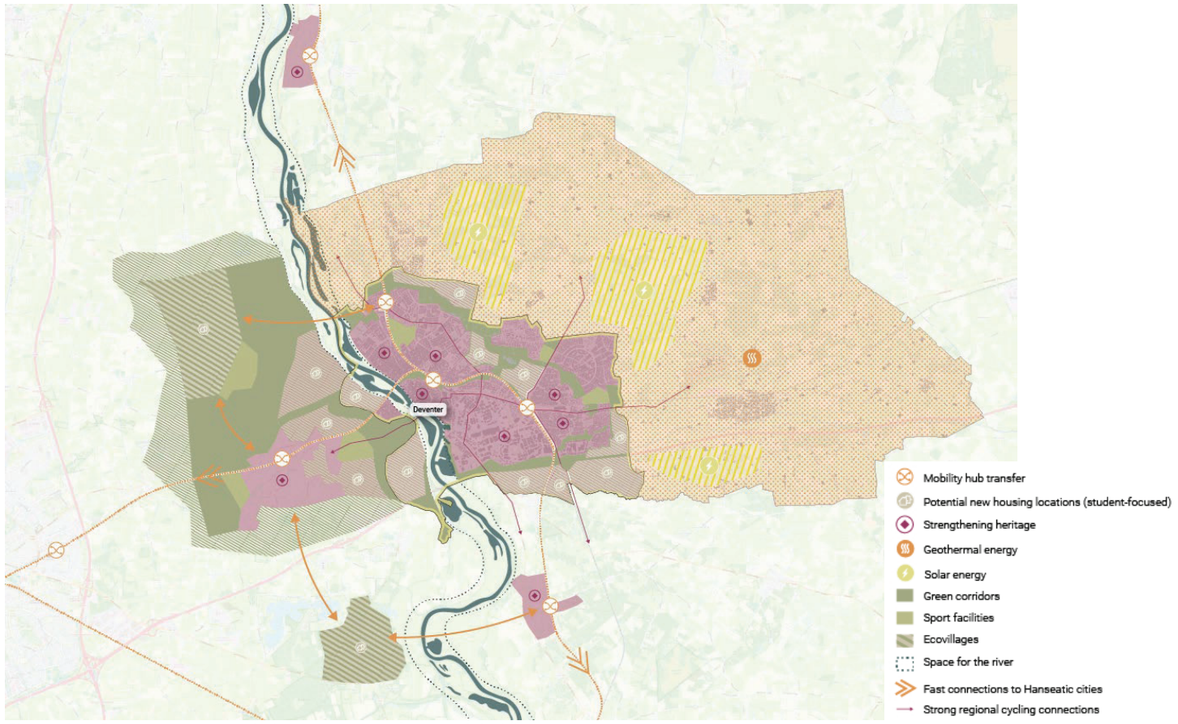

Figure 1 – Core values and existing strengths of group 4.1 vision.

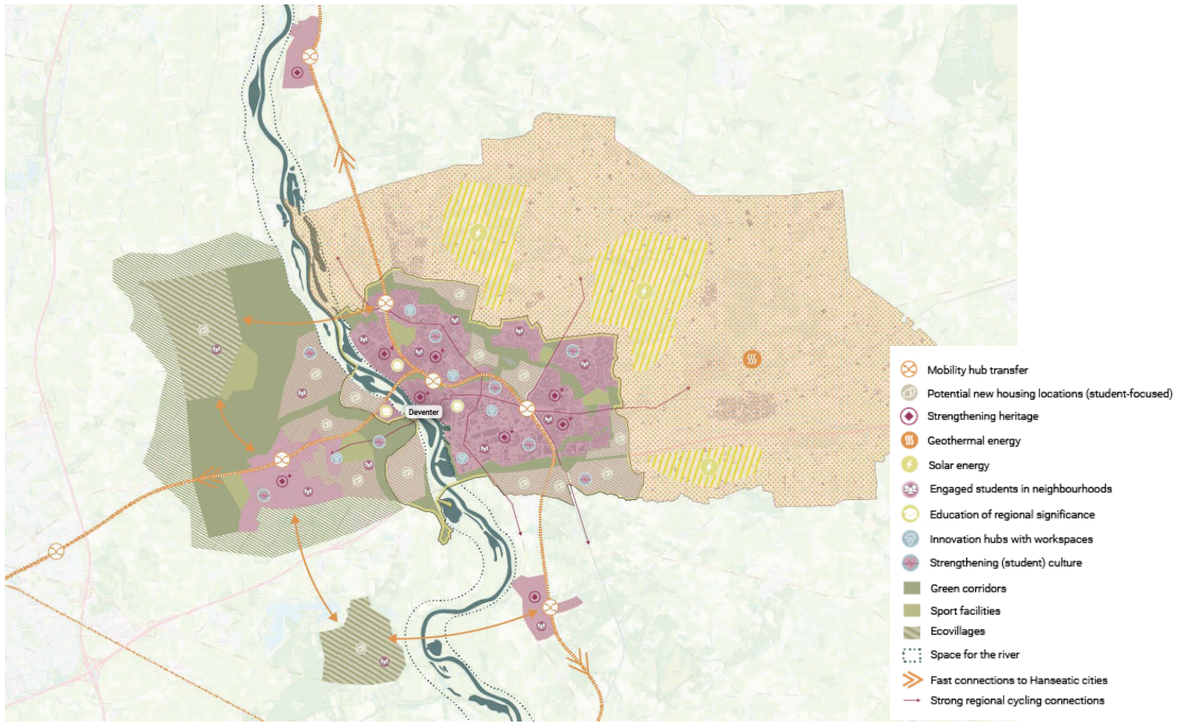

Figure 2 - Future needs and opportunities for students

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