# Politics on the Move: The Influence of Political Parties on Mobility in Dutch Cities
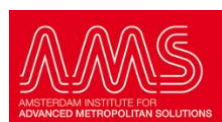
Thesis MSc Metropolitan Analysis, Design & Engineering by M.C.J. Dijkstra

# PREFACE

Over the past five months I have truly enjoyed working on this thesis on the influence of political parties on mobility policy in Dutch municipalities. I chose this topic because of the intersection of two great interests of mine: politics and urban development. I wrote this thesis as the final assignment of the MSc Metropolitan Analysis, Design and Engineering, but mostly as the end to my six and a half years as a student.

I decided to write this thesis as a graduate intern at Sweco Nederland, a large architectural and engineering firm. Besides my personal and academic growth during this past semester, this decision also helped me grow more into my professional identity. I would like to thank my Sweco supervisors Robert Coffeng and Willem Scheper for their guidance and valuable insight into the field of mobility policy during this project. As I briefly mentioned, I experienced a lot of personal and academic growth over the course of this thesis. I gained more and broader experience with conducting qualitative research, but above all I learned how to truly submerge myself into a topic that is very much underexplored. This resulted in me having to make more conscious decisions, be critical of those decisions, but also to stay positive and trust the process. I would like to thank my supervisors from both Wageningen University and TU Delft, Karin Peters and Jan Anne Annema, for their guidance throughout this process. During these five months they provided valuable and structured feedback, answered any questions I had and showed real interest in my work.

I am very pleased to present to you my final work and thereby completing my academic career. After this, I will enter the next exciting stage in my life, in which I hope to deliver meaningful work as a strategic urban planner and advisor.

# ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how political parties influence mobility policy at the municipal level in the Netherlands. While existing literature has primarily focused on national politics, this study investigates how party ideology, political strategies and external factors interact in the local policy-making process. Drawing on partisan theory from a party family approach and the Multiple Streams Framework, the research aims at understanding how mobility challenges are defined, framed, prioritized, responded to and translated into policy. A qualitative comparative case study design was adopted in this study and focused on the municipalities of Leiden and Zoetermeer. These municipalities differ in their political composition and mobility policy approaches. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with local council members, aldermen and civil servants, supported by a review of policy documents and municipal plans. Findings indicate that there is a relationship between the political party composition of a coalition and the direction of mobility policy that is pursued. However, this relationship is influenced by a broader political context. By demonstrating the interplay between party preferences, political strategies and structures and local institutional contexts, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of urban mobility policymaking and the role that local politics play in shaping this.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY [Dutch]

Deze scriptie onderzoekt de invloed van politieke partijen op mobiliteitsbeleid binnen Nederlandse gemeenten. Hoewel eerder onderzoek naar politieke invloed op beleid zich vooral richt op de nationale context, toont deze studie aan dat ook gemeentelijke partijpolitiek een belangrijke rol speelt in hoe mobiliteitsuitdagingen worden gedefinieerd, geprioriteerd en vertaald naar concrete beleidsmaatregelen en plannen. In deze management samenvatting zal eerst de doelstelling, onderzoeksvraag en methodologische keuzes besproken worden, waarna de belangrijkste bevindingen op een rij worden gezet. Dit wordt gevolgd door de belangrijkste praktische implicaties van de studie waarna de conclusie kort zal worden gepresenteerd.

*Doelstelling & Onderzoeksvraag*

Het doel van dit onderzoek is om beter te begrijpen hoe politieke partijen op gemeentelijk niveau, samen met andere politieke en ambtelijke actoren, invloed uitoefenen op het mobiliteitsbeleid van Nederlandse gemeenten. Om dit doel te bereiken luidt de centrale onderzoeksvraag als volgt:

*Hoe beïnvloeden politieke partijen op lokaal niveau het mobiliteitsbeleid in Nederlandse gemeenten?*

Deze vraag is onderzocht aan de hand van een kwalitatieve casestudie van twee gemeenten met uiteenlopende coalities en mobiliteitsaanpakken: Zoetermeer, met een meer pragmatische en auto vriendelijke aanpak en Leiden, met een meer progressieve en autoluwe aanpak. Allereerst is er een literatuurstudie en beleidsanalyse uitgevoerd om de context van het mobiliteitsbeleid binnen Nederlandse gemeenten te verhelderen. De voornaamste methode van analyse was echter het afnemen en analyseren van semigestructureerde interviews met raadsleden, wethouders en ambtenaren.

*Belangrijkste Bevindingen*

1. Partijen definiëren en framen problemen op verschillende manieren

In beide gemeenten worden mobiliteitsproblemen, zoals ruimtegebrek en de strijd om die kostbare ruimte, door politieke partijen verschillend benaderd. Groene partijen, zoals GroenLinks, koppelen deze uitdagingen aan duurzaamheid en de noodzaak van het beperken van autogebruik. Grijze partijen, zoals VVD en lokale partijen, benadrukken bereikbaarheid en economische haalbaarheid. Deze verschillen in framing bepalen welk problemen politieke urgentie krijgen, welke oplossingen worden voorgedragen en de mate van steun onder bewoners. Deze tegenstelling loopt dus lang partij-ideologische lijnen en komt op vergelijkbare wijze terug in zowel Leiden als Zoetermeer.

2. Coalitiesamenstelling beïnvloedt beleidsrichting

Hoewel Leiden en Zoetermeer met vergelijkbare mobiliteitsuitdagingen te maken hebben, verschilt de beleidsrichting duidelijk. In Leiden, waar een groene coalitie

bestuurt, ligt de nadruk op het sterk terugdringen van autogebruiken, het stimuleren van actief en openbaar vervoer en het vergroenen van de openbare ruimte. In Zoetermeer, met een meer grijze coalitie, wordt gekozen voor evenwicht tussen verschillende modaliteiten, waarbij de auto een belangrijke positie behoudt. Dit suggereert dat het karakter van een coalitie, in dit geval groen of grijs, van invloed is op de beleidskoers. Het is belangrijk om te benoemen dat deze invloed niet direct is, maar afhankelijk van bredere politieke en institutionele verhoudingen binnen de gemeenten.

3. Coalitiedominantie bepaalt beleidsruimte en duidelijkheid

De samenstelling en onderlinge afstemming van coalitiepartijen blijkt van invloed op de richting van het mobiliteitsbeleid. In Leiden bestaat de coalitie uit vier partijen die ideologisch relatief vergelijkbaar zijn op het gebied van mobiliteit en duurzaamheid. Dit heeft geresulteerd in een concreet, sturend en breed gesteund coalitieakkoord, waarmee oppositie invloed en onderhandeling relatief beperkt blijft. In Zoetermeer bestaat de coalitie uit zes partijen met meer uiteenlopend ideologische achtergronden. Het coalitieakkoord is daarnaast minder sturend, wat zorgt voor meer onderhandelingsruimte, bredere raadsdynamiek en dus minder beleidscohesie.

4. De dynamiek tussen politiek en ambtenarij verschilt sterk per gemeente

De samenwerking tussen de ambtelijke organisatie en politieke actoren verschilt aanzienlijk. In Leiden is er sprake van duidelijke afstemmingen binnen de ambtenarij en een gedeelde visie tussen ambtenaren en de coalitie. Hierdoor kunnen ambtenaren beleidsmatig actief zijn binnen en stabiele politieke context. In Zoetermeer ervaren ambtenaren meer ruis: politieke signalen zijn niet altijd helder, het coalitieakkoord biedt minder houvast voor ambtenaren en er is vaker sprake van politieke heronderhandeling. Hierdoor nemen ambtenaren een meer pragmatische en afwachtende rol aan.

*Praktische Implicaties*

Voor politieke actoren:
- Framing is een krachtig politiek instrument. Door slim te framen kunnen partijen bredere steun voor beleidsvoorstellen krijgen.
- Timing en een accurate politieke antenne zijn cruciaal, vooral voor wethouders die constant moeten schakelen tussen coalitieafspraken, de ambtenarij en de raadsdynamiek.

Voor ambtenaren en consultants:
- Begrip van het lokale politieke speelveld, zoals de dominantie van de coalitie, ideologische samenhang en partijprioriteiten, vergroot de slagingskans van beleidsvoorstellen.
- Strategisch procesmanagement is minstens net zo belangrijk als inhoudelijke kwaliteit van mobiliteitsplannen.

*Conclusie*

Dit onderzoek toont aan dat politieke partijen invloed hebben op mobiliteitsbeleid binnen Nederlandse gemeenten, maar dat deze invloed wordt gefilterd door institutionele context, ambtelijke dynamiek en strategische gedragingen. Ideologie speelt zeker een rol, maar lijkt niet leidend. Succesvol mobiliteitsbeleid vraagt om begrip van de lokale politieke realiteit, coalitiestructuur en het juiste gebruik van framing en timing. Dit onderzoek draagt bij aan het inzicht in hoe politiek, beleid en administratie samenkomen op gemeentelijk niveau, en biedt concrete handvaten voor beleidsmakers, adviseurs en lokale bestuurders.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Mobility is a central domain of policymaking at the municipal level in the Netherlands. Dutch municipalities are responsible for a wide range of tasks related to traffic and transport, including striving for sustainability, management and maintenance of local roads, regulating traffic, parking and transport of school children and disabled individuals (VNG, n.d.). Although mobility policy can be linked to larger sustainability goals such as the large-scale goal to reduce traffic and transport greenhouse gas emissions by 55% before 2030 (European Commission, n.d.), it is not limited to these goals. It also involves challenges such as safety, accessibility, traffic flow and economic development.

What mobility policies and strategies are pursued differs significantly between municipalities. While some municipalities actively pursue car-reduction strategies and invest in alternative modes of transport, others prioritize car accessibility. For example, Amsterdam, a municipality led by more progressive parties, is actively striving for an increasingly car-free city (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2019). In contrast, a municipality with a more mixed composition of political parties like Capelle aan den IJssel, highlights the importance of accessibility for all modes of transport, including the car (Gemeente Capelle aan den IJssel, 2021). These examples suggest that mobility at the municipal level is not just an environmental issue but also a political one.

This variation in mobility policy amongst municipalities raises important questions about the role that political parties play in local policy- and decision-making. Over the last decades, this question of whether governing political parties influence policy outputs has become one of the classics in comparative policy research (Knill et al., 2010; Wenzelburger & Zohlnhöfer, 2021). Classical partisan theory is built on the assumption that political parties represent distinct groups of voters and develop policies that benefit constituencies in exchange for votes (Hibbs, 1977 & 1992). Following this line of reasoning, differences in political parties are a consequence of segmentation in a society where voters have very clear and varying preferences (Wenzelburger & Zohlnhöfer, 2021). More recent literature on partisan politics has adapted these classical theories to account for changing voter-party dynamics. To illustrate, Evans & Tilley (2012), have found that clearly distinguishable voter groups have weakened, resulting in political parties changing their strategies to secure votes. While this body of theoretical insights was originally developed for policy at the national level, it offers a strong framework for examining how party preferences might translate into local policy- and decision-making. Moreover, these newer perspectives are especially relevant at the municipal level, where individual council members and aldermen can exert influence over policy- and decision-making.
Although most research has focused on national-level policies, more recent work has emphasized the growing importance of local governments in developing and implementing policy, especially when it comes to sustainability and infrastructure (Wallsten et al., 2022; Irish, 2017; Cevheribucak, 2024). However, the question of how political parties influence mobility policy at the municipal level remains underexplored.

Given the important role of municipalities in shaping mobility policy and the evolving understanding of partisan influence, it is important to better understand the interaction of municipal party politics and mobility policymaking. This study aims to address this gap by exploring how local political parties and other municipal actors influence mobility-related policy and decision-making in two Dutch municipalities with contrasting political compositions and policy approaches. These two municipalities are Zoetermeer and Leiden. Zoetermeer is governed by a coalition that is made up of VVD, CDA, ChristenUnie-SGPand several local political parties. In Zoetermeer, the coalition seeks to balance sustainability with accessibility and liveability by emphasizing the continued role for the car as well as alternative modes of transport (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2014; 2017; 2019b; 2024). Leiden, on the other hand, is governed by a different set of parties, including GroenLinks, D66, PvdA and CDA. This coalition takes a more assertive approach by actively discouraging the use of the car and prioritizing alternative modes (Gemeente Leiden, 2020a; 2020c; 2021; 2023).

## 1.2 Problem Definition

### *Problem Statement*

Dutch municipalities vary significantly in the mobility policies and strategies they pursue, with some prioritizing car accessibility while others pursue a transition to active and public transport. Municipalities are responsible for policy- and decision-making that directly affects citizen's mobility and contribute to broader goals such as sustainability and urban development. Understanding how party politics interact with other local political, administrative and external actors is key to understanding the local governance of mobility and improving policy outcomes. Most research has analysed partisan influences at the national level. The dynamics of how local political parties influence the development and implementation of mobility policy remains highly underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining the role of political parties and other municipal actors in shaping policy- and decision-making around mobility in two Dutch municipalities with contrasting political compositions and policy approaches.

### *Scientific and Societal Relevance*

There has been extensive research on the influence of political parties on policy outcomes, though much of this work has concentrated on the national government level (Knill et al., 2010; Wenzelburger & Zohlnhöfer, 2021; Hibbs, 1977; Schmidt, 1996). Studies exploring the local governmental context often emphasize its crucial role in achieving sustainable mobility goals (Wallsten et al., 2022; Irish, 2017; Cevheribucak, 2024). However, to my knowledge, no research exists on this relationship between political parties and policy development within the mobility domain of Dutch municipalities. Therefore, the scientific relevance of this research lies in contributing to filling the research gap on the relationship between local political parties and the policy- and decision-making process on mobility policy in the Dutch context.

Understanding how political parties and their actors influence the development of mobility policies at the municipal level is essential for creating targeted policies and measures for local contexts. This can ultimately increase policy effectiveness. Local politics shape the development of mobility initiatives, with research highlighting the importance of context-sensitive approaches for successful implementation (Wallsten et al., 2022; Cevheribucak, 2024). Insights gathered during this research can support policymakers, urban planners and municipal governments to design policies and decision-making processes that are more politically feasible by understanding what influences their approval. By comparing two municipalities with contrasting political compositions and policy directions, this study provides insights that can help other Dutch municipalities navigate political diversity to achieve effective mobility policies.

## 1.3 Research Aim and Questions

With this research being the first of its kind, the research aims to better understand the impact of political parties and their actors on the development of and decision-making on mobility policy within Dutch municipalities. Specifically, this research aims to explore to what extent and why mobility policies are being adopted by municipal councils with varying compositions of political parties. In line with the 'new partisan theory', this research emphasizes the role of local political actors beyond electoral mandates, including aldermen and civil servants, in shaping mobility policy. To achieve this aim, this study will answer the following research question:

*How do political parties at a local level influence mobility policy in Dutch municipalities?*

To answer this research question, the following sub-questions are posed:

- How are mobility challenges defined and framed in Leiden and Zoetermeer?

- How does party ideology shape the way mobility policy is approached in each municipality?

- How do institutional and political structures, such as coalition dynamics and coalition agreements, shape mobility policymaking in each municipality?

- How do civil servants influence mobility policymaking in the two municipalities?

# 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research applies a layered framework to explore how local political parties influence mobility policy at the municipal level. It starts with partisan theory, which is centred around the notion that governing political parties impact the policies that are being developed based on their ideology and pursuing electoral success. Building on this, the party family approach acknowledges that political parties vary on more than just the left-right dichotomy, especially when considering environmental challenges. Based on partisan theory from a party family perspective, an overview of the hypothetical positions of Dutch political parties on mobility policy is presented. Finally, the Multiple Streams Framework recognizes that beyond ideology and electoral considerations, factors such as public opinion, media narratives, economic limitations, and coalition dynamics play a crucial role in determining which policies are ultimately pursued. By combining these perspectives, the framework captures how ideology, party identity, and practical realities shape local mobility policy.

## 2.1 Partisan Theory

The central notion in partisan theory is that political parties have core constituencies and that they seek to pursue policies that benefit these constituencies in exchange for votes. In his seminal study on left- and right-wing governments and their macroeconomic policies and outcomes, Hibbs (1977) found a significant difference. The study argues that people from lower socio-economic groups prefer and benefit from a low unemployment and high inflation dynamic. Unlike those from higher socio-economic groups, who are more negatively impacted by high inflation than high unemployment. These individuals favour and benefit more from a high unemployment and low inflation dynamic. After analysing the employment and inflation rates of 12 West European and North American countries, Hibbs (1977) found a low unemployment, high inflation pattern in countries governed by left-wing parties, whereas his study revealed a high unemployment, low inflation pattern in right-wing governments. Building on the notion that constituencies of political parties vary based on socio-economic class and income, the study concludes that policies developed by left- and right-wing governments are in line with the preferences and interests of their core constituencies (Hibbs, 1977).

Times have changed since the seminal study by Hibbs (1977) and two aspects have evolved significantly: voter groups and the left-right dichotomy. As a result of globalization and change in values, the societies of the Western world have changed significantly (Inglehart, 2015). Consequently, the significance of the traditional voter groups that are the backbone of Hibbs' (1977) partisan theory have weakened (Wenzelburger & Zohlnhöfer, 2021). Based on this weakened party-voter link, more recent studies have emphasized the importance of a so-called 'electoral turn' in partisan theory (Beramendi et al, 2015). When it can no longer be assumed that voter groups naturally vote for a party, these studies find that a new party-voter link must be established empirically (Ibid.). Several studies highlight that socio-economic groups are still relevant in party-voter relationships (Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015; Häusermann, 2006). As these socio-economic groups have varying preferences, needs and interests, parties will pursue policies that are specifically targeted towards the preferences and

interests of those groups. This results in parties adopting different policies based on the changing composition of its constituencies (Wenzelburger & Zohlnhöfer, 2021). Essentially, that is what "new partisan theory" entails: the idea of parties pursuing policies that are aimed at gaining votes from (coalitions of) voter groups (Ibid.). Wenzelburger and Zohlnhöfer (2021) who critically considered partisan theory, wondered whether political parties are truly merely the agents of voter interests and preferences. A growing body of literature indicates that political actors and their preferences may not be in line with voter preferences (Ibid.). It is therefore important to not only consider political parties as instruments that turn the wishes of their constituencies into policy, but rather explore parties, their actors and possible external factors that influence policy making altogether.

In addition to these developments in partisan theory on voter groups and constituencies, there has also been a significant development on the possible classification of political parties. Traditional partisan theory takes the left-right dichotomy, in which political parties are classified as either left- or right-wing, as the starting point (Jahn, 2022). This is logical in the context of Hibbs' (1977) study, in which there is a clear distinction between left and right in the trade-off between unemployment and inflation. The exclusion of centre political parties is justified in his study, but this presents challenges in a different context (Jahn, 2022). Whilst expanding the left-right dichotomy to a left-centre-right trichotomy might seem like a good next step, this is inappropriate (Ibid.). Centre parties and the policies they pursue do not necessarily fit right in the middle of left- and right-wing parties and policies but rather create a new policy dimension. When looking at the classification of welfare states, van Kersbergen (1995) and Esping-Andersen (1990) demonstrate this when they show that central political parties don't create policies that fit between left and right, but rather they create a new type of welfare state. This indicates that political parties vary along more than one political left-right axis, and that the policy space is multidimensional (Jahn, 2022).

Following this line of reasoning, the party family approach provides an alternative to the traditional left-right classification that Hibbs' (1997) traditional partisan theory uses. Therefore, this study adopts the party family approach to better capture the diversity of ideological positions that may influence mobility policy decisions in municipalities.

## 2.2 Party Families and Mobility Policy

This section explores the influence of different party families on mobility policy; As mobility policy increasingly involves environmental concerns, a clear divide can be observed in how party families approach the topic. Some parties place more emphasis on environmental protection, while others prioritize economic growth. To shed light on these differences, this framework adopts a green-grey axis that captures the position of party families in terms of the environmental salience within their mobility policy positions. It allows for a more structured comparison of how party ideologies may shape the scope and direction of mobility-related decisions.

Through an extensive historical analysis conducted by von Beyme (1985), it has become clear that political parties emerge in response to other parties or social trends. Jahn (2022) roughly summarized the historical analysis by von Beyme. To illustrate, Liberal parties essentially emerged as a reaction against autocracy. This ultimately resulted in conservative parties emerging to defend the old regime against these liberal parties. Other examples include labour parties emerging to address challenges that arose in the bourgeois societies and regional parties developing in response to centralization and the increasingly dominant nation state. When these parties first emerge an ideology is shaped that is crucial for the position that parties take in the political system (Jahn, 2022). This raises an important question: to what extent do the party ideologies that were shaped during the formative phase still influence policy making today (Häusermann et al., 2013; Jun & Höhne, 2012)? When parties mature and become embedded in the institutional context, the formative ideology is no longer the main driver of the party. This is often replaced by the balancing act of interests within the party and survival of the party (Jahn, 2022). However, party ideology still impacts the scope for action. This suggests that there is still a causal relationship between party ideology and policy making, but the direct causality might be weakened by external factors (Ibid.). This research will focus on the ideological connections from party families to positions on mobility policy, whilst exploring the external factors that potentially influence this relationship.

Since von Beyme's (1985) seminal analysis, the notion of political parties being classified as families has been developed further. Extensive literature exists on communist, social democratic, labour, Christian democratic, agrarian, left-libertarian, conservative, liberal, regionalist, nationalist, extreme right, green and right-wing populist parties (Mair & Mudde, 1998). Parties develop over time because of socio-political developments and their electoral success. Therefore, not all these party families have survived or have become relevant in today's democracies (Jahn, 2022). This research adopts the most recent Partisan Composition of Governments Database (PACOGOV) dataset to analyse the influence of political party families on mobility policies (Schmidt et al., 2023). This dataset differentiates between ten party families: (post-)communist and left-socialist parties, social-democratic parties, green parties, Christian democratic parties, non-Christian religious parties, non-religious centre parties, liberal parties, conservative parties, right-wing populist and nationalist parties and regional parties (Ibid.). However, when considering the Dutch political system and the parties involved, not all the aforementioned party families are relevant. Therefore, this section will further explore the relationship between the following eight party families and their influence on mobility policy:

1. Green parties
2. Conservative parties
3. Right-wing populist and nationalist parties
4. Local parties
5. Liberal parties
6. Social-democratic parties
7. Socialist parties
8. Christian democratic parties

In the last fifteen years, the Netherlands has seen a large growth of local parties and their electoral success (Boogers & Voerman, 2010). Therefore, the last 'party family', although not included in the PACOGOV dataset, is highly relevant as the research focuses on municipal political dynamics.

Green parties can be considered the strongest advocates for environmental aspects within mobility policy. This is mainly because green parties emerged around the common cause of battling environmental degradation and climate change (Carter, 2013; Neumayer, 2003). The formative ideology of green parties is thus shaped around environmental issues. Furthermore, these parties have generally not fully matured, nor are they fully embedded in the institutional context. This suggests that the causal relationship between ideology and policy making is still rather direct (Jahn, 2022). Research suggests that when parties that take pro-environmental positions are part of governing coalitions, this often has a positive effect on environmental outcomes (Knill et al., 2010; Jensen & Spoon, 2011). However, even for green parties the complexity of mobility policy, which involves multiple competing interests, can present a challenge. Although their constituencies support their pro-environmental ideology, the trade-off between environmental protection and other interests may alienate some green party voters (Jahn, 2022). This conflict between environmental protection and economic growth and competitiveness affects mainstream parties more. These parties struggle to integrate pro-environmental positions into their programmes as this might result in losing support from their respective constituencies (Carter, 2013).

The leftist parties can be split up into social democratic and socialist parties. Social democratic parties, perhaps more than any other party family, face the challenge of balancing economic growth with the increasing demand for environmental sustainability within mobility policy (Kitschelt, 1994). These parties usually support sustainable mobility as part of a broader agenda, as they strive to maintain their broad appeal. To illustrate Mohseni Tabrizi (2022) showed that social democratic parties are willing to cooperate between business, academia, civil state and the state to address environmental challenges, as these are all needed to create an environmental transition. Weaker social democratic parties tend to incorporate more pro-environmental positions into their programs compared to stronger social democratic parties (Jahn, 2022). It seems that although socio democratic parties embrace environmental concerns into their programs, this is to a much lesser extent than the green parties. Socialist parties are shaped around the common cause of striving towards more social equality (Bobbio,1996). This more left-wing ideology has incorporated more pro-environmental positions after structural changes of its party constituencies from industrial workers to more white-collar workers (Jahn, 2022). Carter (2013) demonstrated that socialist parties in a variety of countries, including Denmark and Norway, can be considered as relatively green parties, compared to for example their liberal or socio democratic counterparts. These considerations lead to the hypothesis that socialist parties adopt more pro-environmental positions towards mobility policy compared to social democrats but are less radical in their approach compared to green parties.

The Christian democratic parties, generally considered more centre-right wing, often emphasize the religious aspects when determining their programs and positions (Knill et al., 2010). From this perspective, environmental protection could be considered important as this could contribute to saving the earth that God created (Ibid.). However, the balancing act between economic interests and environmental protection is one that the Christian democratic party family is also familiar with. Over time, these parties have become a stable part of governing coalitions, and this has resulted in Christian

democratic parties advocating for economic growth in order to maintain their electoral support (Jahn, 2022). The position in the political system and their close alignment with conservative parties will most likely not result in particularly strong encouragement of environmentally focused mobility policies.

Liberal parties emerged around the central focus to promote the creation of free markets that would encourage entrepreneurship. Therefore, liberal parties are often closely aligned with business-owners and self-employed individuals, which suggests that these parties are not adopting radical pro-environmental positions if that requires balancing with economic interests (Jahn, 2022). In the context of mobility policy, this trade-off between economic growth and environmental protection is a complicated one for liberal parties. To illustrate, decreasing the amount of parking space around a commercial area to promote the use of alternative modes of transport, could significantly impact the economic interest of the business-owners in the respective commercial area. Therefore, it seems likely that economic interest will be prioritized over environmental protection, especially when it is the economic interest of the core supporters of liberal parties. When considering the Netherlands there is a different type of liberal party, the socially liberal parties like D66. This party family could prioritize environmental concerns, like other socially relevant issues, over pursuing economic interests. This will therefore be considered as a separate party family within the scope of this research.

Unlike the party families discussed above, conservative parties and their traditional ideology seems less directly linked to the prioritisation of environmental issues within party programs. As briefly mentioned earlier, conservative parties emerged in response to liberal parties. These parties were shaped around the aim to preserve the traditional order and prevent radical social change, which does not seem to directly impact their standpoint on environmental issues (Jahn, 2022). However, similarly to the Christian democratic party family, conservative parties have often been part of governing coalitions and have had to account for economic interests. Considering that conservative parties and their ideology is not centred around economic growth, these parties would prioritize environmental issues more than their liberal counterparts.

A less mainstream party family is that of the right-wing populists. This party family has shaped around the idea that politics should be an extension of the will of the general population (Lockwood, 2018). These parties express that there is a distinction between 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite' (Lockwood, 2018, p.713). Generally, these parties are highly sceptical towards climate initiatives and policy. Often, the urgency of environmental issues is questioned or framed as conspiracy by the 'corrupt elite' (Lockwood, 2018). The general consensus in recent research seems to be that the right-wing populist party family does not prioritise environmental issues as much as their mainstream counterparts, if at all (Farstad, 2018; Lund, 2023). It is expected that these parties will not adopt clear pro-environmental or sustainability-focused positions within mobility policy.

The final type of party that will be discussed and considered in this research is that of the local party. Before diving into the position of local parties on environmental issues it is important to discuss to what extent local parties can be considered a family. The

Netherlands has seen a sharp increase in the number of independent local parties and their electoral success in municipal councils (Boogers & Voerman, 2010). These independent parties have no ties to national parties, can focus on local issues and thus play a crucial role in local politics (Ibid.). Local parties have not emerged around a central issue, but rather around local issues that are context and place specific. Therefore, one can argue that they should not be classified under one family. However, Fagerholm (2016) argues that parties that defend the interests of regions can be considered a party family, since significant common denominators can be found in similar origins, sociologies and policy orientations. Local parties, similarly, to regionalist parties, defend the interests of their respective cities or regions. Local parties are therefore considered a party family in this research. Independent local parties in the Netherlands are often focused on local needs and issues. In fact, their independent character often allows them to be more responsive to local issues that matter to inhabitants, which could potentially explain their electoral success (Boogers & Voerman, 2010). In terms of their stance on environmental issues, and specifically environmental or sustainability-related aspects of mobility policy, it seems plausible that local needs will always be prioritized. These parties could support local initiatives for cycling infrastructure or pedestrian zones. However, they might be less inclined to support large investments into developing regional or national networks. Furthermore, as local parties primarily protect local interest, these parties are highly context dependent. So, where some of the constituencies of local parties might favour pro-environmental standpoints, others might not. This makes it difficult to formulate expectations on the influence of local parties on mobility policy, including environmental dimensions.

These families can be placed on a continuum that demonstrates the hypothetical positions of these parties on the salience of environmental issues within mobility policy. A classification like this is not the first of its kind. Jahn (2022) and Lund (2023) have created a similar continuum, based on an analysis by Farstad (2018). Figure 1 presents the green/grey axis that demonstrates the hypothetical position of the eight party families discussed in this framework on sustainable mobility policy. On this axis, parties on the green end demonstrate a higher chance of prioritizing sustainable mobility, compared to their counterparts on the grey end. Additionally, figure 1 indicates which Dutch political parties belong to which party family.

| ←Green / Grey Axis→ | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Green parties | Socialist parties | Social democratic parties | Socially liberal parties | Christian democratic parties | Conservative parties | Liberal parties | Right-wing populist parties |
| ← - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - *Local parties* - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - → | | | | | | | |
| GL + PVVD | SP | PvdA | D66 | CDA + CU | SGP + NSC | VVD | PVV + FvD |

Figure 1. The party families and corresponding Dutch political parties according to the Green/Grey Axis (Made by author, 2025).

## 2.3 Multiple Streams Framework

So far, the possible influence of political parties on mobility policy through partisan theory with a party family approach has been explored. From this theoretical background it becomes clear that there are several possible ways that political parties can influence policy. First and foremost, parties can pursue policy that is beneficial to their respective constituencies to secure electoral support. Secondly, parties pursue policy that is in line with their formative ideologies. Based on these factors, figure 1 presents the hypothetical position of party families and their corresponding Dutch political parties on a green-grey mobility axis. Although political parties and their positions and ideologies are important, they do not operate in a vacuum.A theoretical lens that is used to explain this is the Multiple Streams Framework, initially developed by John Kingdon (1984). Kingdon (1984) argues that three categories of variables interact and create opportunities for policy agenda setting. He refers to these categories of variables as the problem, policy and political stream.

The problem stream consists of debates and definitions on situations that are considered problematic for the public. This essentially entails that these problems are situations that require government action (Béland & Howlett, 2016; Hoefer, 2022; Kingdon, 1984). Policy makers often become aware of these problems through crises or other focusing events that draw attention to the situation (Béland & Howlett, 2016; Hoefer, 2022). Within the field of mobility, this could include complaints from residents on the limited availability of parking. Research on the problem definition within this stream is extensive, yet Knaggård (2015) argues for a better understanding of the problem stream to truly understand policy agenda setting. Specifically, Knaggård (2015) introduces a clearer understanding of the agency in the problem stream, which is referred to as the problem broker. Within the role of problem broker, actors frame situations as public problems and try to make policymakers accept these frames. This is an active process of problem definition (Knaggård, 2015). In Dutch municipalities, local politicians, activist groups, local media outlets and residents can act as these problem brokers. The problem stream and its problem brokers are often formed by policy communities, which includes interest groups, academics and professionals working in the field (Hoefer, 2022). Additionally, this research will consider media and public opinion as a potential problem broker. In the Dutch municipal context that this research focuses on, problem brokers can highlight certain local mobility issues. These can range from urban congestion and parking policies to environmental goals like reducing emissions, depending on the interests and framing by the problem broker.

The policy stream is filled with the input of experts who examine the defined problems and design solutions for them. Within this stream policy entrepreneurs, rather than problem brokers, push for solutions and policies that they believe are useful (Béland & Howlett, 2016; Hoefer, 2022). In the case of mobility policies, these policy entrepreneurs could be interest groups or policymakers that all propose different solutions to the same problem. It is within this stream that the totality of these possibilities for policy development, action or even inaction are defined, examined and assessed based on their feasibility (Béland & Howlett, 2016). To illustrate, this process often takes place before political decision-making by the municipal council. At the municipal level in the

Netherlands, the assessment of policies, for example parking policy, may involve balancing local economic interests, like accessibility for businesses, with a variety of mobility goals, including sustainability, safety and traffic flow. Municipal councils often rely on experts, but also local stakeholder input, to determine what solutions are realistic given local infrastructure and financial resources.

The final stream as proposed by Kingdon (1984) is the political stream. This stream is the most complex, as it consists of national mood and political climate, the elected officials that are involved in the decision-making and the interest groups on all sides of the identified problem (Béland & Howlett, 2016; Hoefer, 2022). When a defined problem exists, such as too much greenhouse gas emission, as well as a feasible solution, such as reducing car use through less parking, an opportunity for action emerges. Kingdom (1984) refers to this as a policy window. At that point in time, policy entrepreneurs match a problem to a policy solution and work to gather support from most decision-makers with their votes (Hoefer, 2022). In the case of Dutch municipalities, this would mean that civil servants and policymakers create a proposal and the aldermen and their parties that are responsible attempt to gather support within the municipal council. When this happens, policies, plans and proposals can be approved and executed. However, policy windows often close before any decision making has taken place (Ibid.), possibly because of coalition negotiations, financial constraints or internal party dynamics. In Dutch municipalities, coalition agreements and power dynamics between local parties, particularly given the rise of independent local parties, can possibly influence the timing of a policy window.

In this study, these three streams as proposed in the MSF, offers a critical addition to partisan theory. While the party family approach helps to anticipate ideological positions, MSF helps to explain why certain challenges, agenda points and policies emerge, stagnate or succeed. The MSF does this through explaining the process from problem to approved solution through the three streams. This demonstrates that party influence is not just determined by ideology and electoral considerations but is influenced by a process that involves many more actors and institutional settings.

## 2.4 Conceptual Framework

This research combines partisan theory, the party family approach, and the Multiple Streams Framework to explore how political parties influence mobility policy (fig. 2). While party ideology and political strategies like vote-seeking strategies help define challenges and shape party positions, these do not operate in a vacuum. The MSF adds a critical layer by explaining, through the three streams, how party influence is mitigated through a process of problem definition, policy development and political decision making. The conceptual framework in figure 2 incorporates all three theoretical lenses from this theoretical framework.

A mobility challenge in a municipality can be defined from various angles such as liveability, accessibility or sustainability. The conceptual framework (fig. 2) shows how political parties respond to such challenges through the interaction of party ideology,

political strategies and external factors. The bottom section reflects the influence of party ideology, drawing from partisan theory and the party family approach, which demonstrates how different ideological positions can influence the parties position on mobility policy. The left section reflects political strategies, such as coalition dynamics, individual agency, and party survival. This draws from both partisan theory and MSF, as it includes actors and dynamics relevant to the policy and political streams. These strategies influence not only a party's response to a challenge, but also the identification of the challenge itself. The right section includes external factors such as public opinion, media and residents, closely linked to the MSF's problem stream. Like political strategies, these factors influence how challenges are framed and which responses are considered legitimate. Whether or not a party's position becomes actual policy depends on how it aligns with both strategies and external pressures, as well as the broader political opportunity structure. This framework will form the basis for the methodology, guiding the data collection to better understand the various factors that influence how political parties shape local mobility policy.
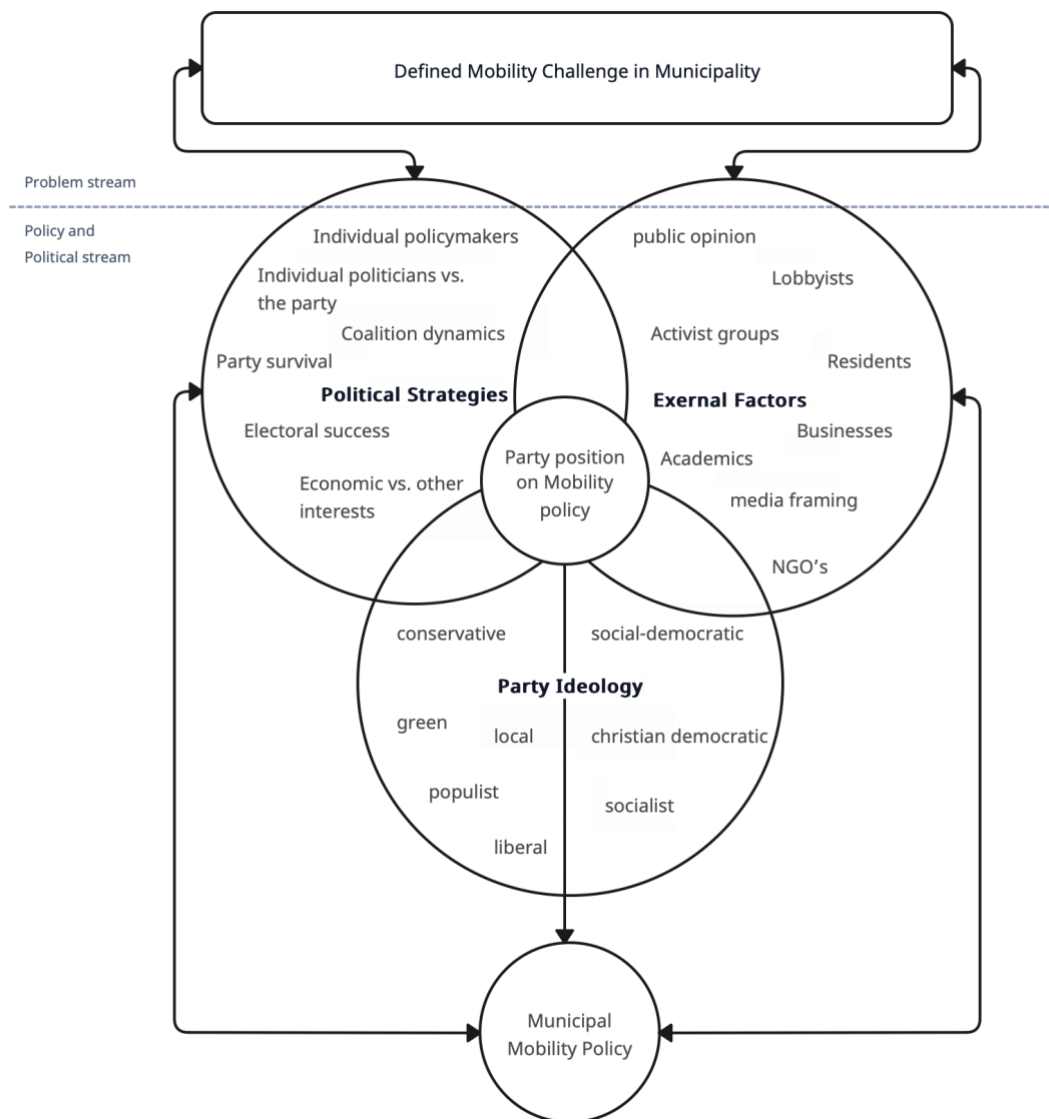
*Figure 2. Conceptual Framework (made by author, 2025).*

# 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To answer the central research question, this research has adopted a qualitative comparative case study design to investigate the influence of local political parties on municipal mobility policy in two Dutch municipalities. A comparative case study approach can be considered as process oriented and is well-suited when trying to understand how X plays a role in causing Y and what the process between X and Y looks like (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). This process-oriented comparison fits well within qualitative research like this one, in which the policy- and political decision-making process is central. In qualitative research, it can be beneficial to start from ideas or hypotheses grounded in theory, but exploring new leads as the research develops (Becker, 2009). This research fits well within this qualitative character as it takes the theoretical background and corresponding conceptual framework (fig. 2) as a starting point for its methodology, whilst remaining open to new perspective and leads as the research progresses. A qualitative comparative case study design was thus very suitable for a first exploration of the complex and highly context-dependent nature of policy- and decision-making at the municipal level.

## 3.1 Case Description

The municipalities of Zoetermeer and Leiden have been selected for this study, as they share several key characteristics, including geographical location, population size, urban composition, mobility infrastructure, and stable municipal council coalitions. Yet Zoetermeer and Leiden are two municipalities with varying political orientations. This made the comparative design particularly useful as it allowed for the exploration of how political party dynamics and negotiations shape mobility policy in two municipalities with contrasting political orientations. Zoetermeer is governed by a "grey" coalition consisting of VVD, CDA, ChristenUnie-SGP, and several local parties (LHN, PDvZ, and Zó Zoetermeer), whereas Leiden's coalition can be considered more "green" and includes GroenLinks, D66, PvdA, and CDA. These differences in political ideologies provide a unique opportunity to compare how political parties with different policy priorities influence mobility policies.

Both municipalities are located within the Dutch province of Zuid-Holland (fig. 3), with populations of approximately 130,000 people. They each consist of a clear urban core and roughly 10 neighbourhoods. They have similar transportation networks, with three train stations in each municipality and an extensive network of bike roads and bus lines. It is interesting, however, that Zoetermeer also has its own tram network. This number of similarities make them ideal candidates for a comparative study, as they offer a consistent basis for evaluating how political factors influence mobility policies.

In terms of mobility policy direction, both Zoetermeer and Leiden focus on sustainability, accessibility and liveability, but differ in approach. Zoetermeer promotes multimodality, where the car remains an important but increasingly regulated mode. Cycling and public transport are stimulated, but without heavily restricting car use. Parking policy plays a key role in steering behaviour (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2014; 2017; 2019b; 2024). Leiden

takes a more assertive approach, actively discouraging car use, especially in the city centre, and prioritizing active and shared mobility. Cycling is the dominant mode, supported by extensive infrastructure and parking regulation. Public space is reallocated from cars to green and active use (Gemeente Leiden, 2020a; 2020c; 2021; 2023). In short, Zoetermeer seeks balance with a continued role for the car, while Leiden pushes for a modal shift away from it. The full policy synthesis can be found in appendix B.
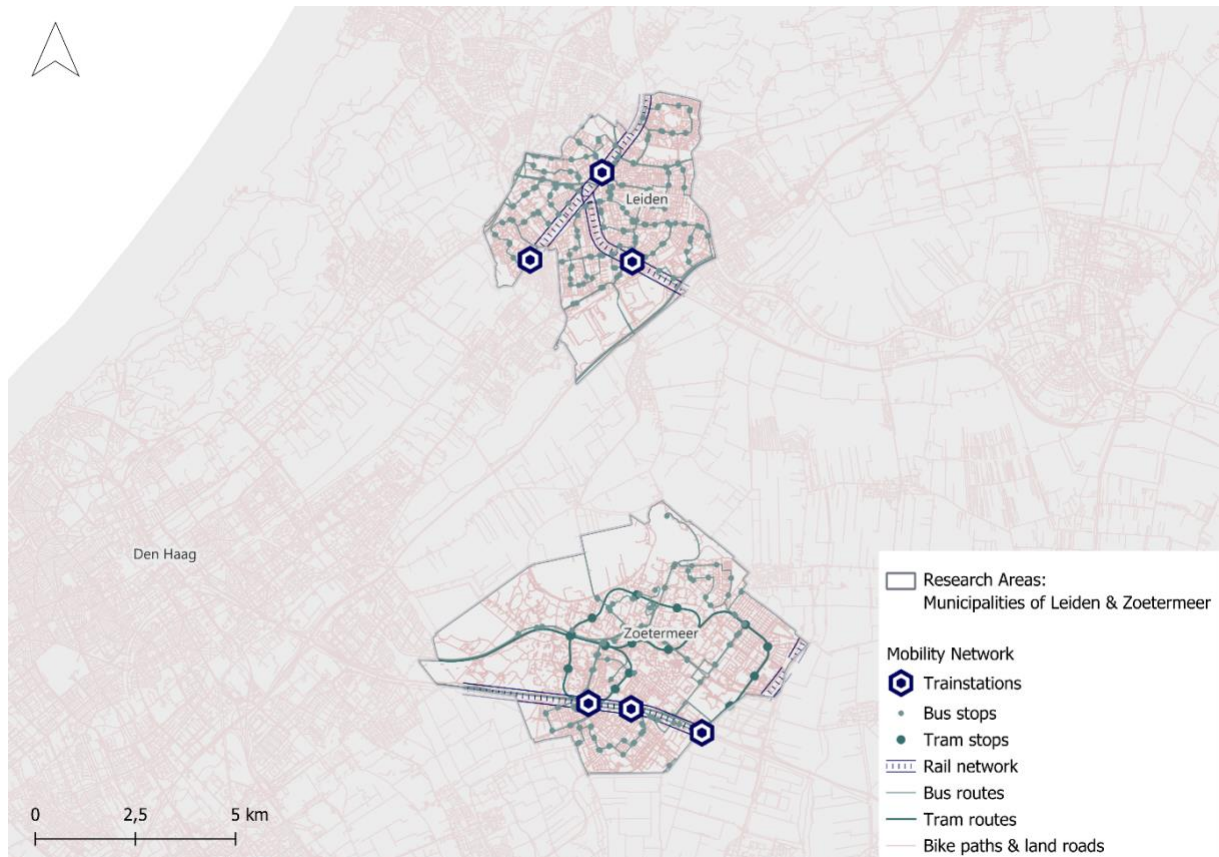


*Figure 3. Research areas and their mobility networks (made by author, 2025).*

## 3.2 Data Collection

### *Initial data collection*

The initial data collection for this study consisted of a literature and policy review. These insights were used to establish a contextual understanding of mobility policy and municipal governance in the Netherlands. This contextualization, presented in Chapter 4, formed an important foundation for the interpretation of the interview data. It also provided necessary background for understanding how local political dynamics interact with mobility challenges and policies in Leiden and Zoetermeer.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

The main method of data collection was semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted with key figures involved in the mobility policymaking process at the municipal level. The goal was to understand how political parties and other political,

administrative and external actors influence mobility policies in Zoetermeer and Leiden. First the sampling strategy is explained, after which the contents of the interview guides is discussed.

*Sampling Strategy*

To select interviewees, this research adopted a purposeful sampling strategy (Palinkas et al., 2015), specifically criterion and snowball sampling. Purposeful sampling ensured that interviewees are selected based on their expertise, involvement in mobility policy, and role within the municipality, ensuring a rich and diverse set of perspectives. Criterion Sampling was used to select interviewees based on the following criteria:
- Role within the municipality. Interviewees include three different roles: municipal council members, aldermen responsible for mobility, and civil servants who work on translating political decisions into policy measures. This allowed for a broad understanding of the political decision-making processes within the municipal government.
- Party family affiliation. It was important to include individuals from both the green and the grey end of the political party family spectrum. This allowed for exploring different perspectives and possibly uncovering more about coalition-opposition dynamics as the coalition composition is different in both cases.
- Level of involvement in mobility policymaking. Interviewees were selected based on their direct engagement with mobility policy. This includes political figures who influence policy decisions, as well as civil servants and other stakeholders involved in mobility policy design and implementation.
- Expertise. Individuals with extensive experience in mobility policy or related fields were prioritized, as they are likely to provide informed and relevant insights into the policymaking process.

Snowball Sampling was used once the initial interviews have been completed. After speaking with key interviewees, they were asked to recommend other individuals with relevant expertise and experience. This approach helped ensure that potentially relevant interviewees who may not be easily identifiable in the early stages of the research were included. This method was particularly useful for identifying influential individuals who may not be readily accessible, such as aldermen (Naderifar, 2017). Initially aiming for 6-8 semi-structured interviews per case, this sampling strategy aimed to ensure that a wide variety of political perspectives, roles, and levels of influence are represented in the data.

*Interview guides*

This research explored how local political parties influence mobility policies at the municipal level. It was recognized that different actors within municipalities that were included in this research, council members, aldermen, and civil servants, approach these issues from distinct perspectives. To account for these differences, tailored interview guides were used for each group, which can be found in appendix A.1, A.2 and A.3. The conceptual framework that concludes the theoretical background of this research, formed the starting point for the design of these interview guides. These interview guides aimed to better understand the interviewee's insight and experience

with the identification, definition and framing of mobility challenges, the shaping of the stance of political parties on these issues and the decision-making process on the final policy.

For interviews with council members, the focus was on what shapes their understanding of mobility challenges and the solutions they pursue. The interview aimed to explore their insights and experiences with the definition and framing of mobility issues and how internal influences, such as party members, and external influences, such as media or public opinion, affected this. It also explored how the party's position on these issues was formed and what role political strategies and external factors played in this. Finally, this guide aimed to explore the council member's insight and experiences with why certain policies are supported, which options were considered and why these options did or did not receive support.

Compared to council members, aldermen often have a more complex role. As members of the municipal executive power, they must balance party ideology with coalition agreements and their broader responsibility to the public. The interview guide explored their insights and experiences with the problem definition and framing, how they view the policy development process, and how they balance their administrative role, party membership, feasibility of policy, political commitments and the influence of external factors.

The last type of interviewee, civil servants, operate primarily on a technical and administrative level. Their work focuses on translating political decisions into practical policies and is less concerned with party-political considerations. The guide investigated how they handle technical constraints, budgetary limitations, and whether they perceive political influence on their work. It also explored their collaboration with political leadership and whether they experienced friction between political ambition and practical implementation.

## 3.3 Overview of Interviewees

A total of eleven interviews were conducted, as outlined in table 1. This group of interviewees represents a balanced distribution in terms of both municipality and function. Six council members, three from each municipality, were interviewed. Additionally, three civil servants were interviewed, two from Leiden and one from Zoetermeer. The aldermen that are responsible for mobility in Zoetermeer and one management advisor to the aldermen of Leiden were also interviewed. The interview process was smooth and yielded valuable insights with interviewees openly sharing their perspectives, experiences and reflections.

*Table 1. Overview of interviewees (made by author, 2025).*

| Interviewee | Role within municipality | Municipality | Political party | Interview length | Interview form (online or physical) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Civil servant | Leiden | n.a. | 50 mins | physical |
| 2 | Municipal management advisor to Aldermen | Leiden | n.a. | 41 mins | online |
| 3 | Council member | Leiden | GroenLinks | 41 mins | Online |
| 4 | Council member | Leiden | VVD | 45 mins | online |
| 5 | Council member | Leiden | Partij Sleutelstad | 1 uur & 9 mins | online |
| 6 | Civil servant | Leiden | n.a. | 47 mins | Online |
| 7 | council member | Zoetermeer | GroenLinks | 1 uur | physical |
| 8 | council member | Zoetermeer | VVD | 1 uur & 37 mins | physical |
| 9 | Civil servant | Zoetermeer | n.a. | 36 mins | online |
| 10 | Council member | Zoetermeer | LHN | 1 uur | online |
| 11 | Aldermen | Zoetermeer | CDA | 30 mins | online |

## 3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected through conducting the semi-structured interview was recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions were analysed through a process of coding with the use of ATLAS.ti software. This process of coding consisted of a thematic analysis, in which the data was analysed in three phases: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Sybing, n.d.).

The first phase of coding consisted of open coding in which the transcriptions were be broken down into smaller, manageable segments that will each include short descriptions. Essentially, these open codes are key descriptions that summarized and organized the data for the next phase of examination. These codes were descriptive and reflected themes related to political influence on mobility policy. To illustrate, these

codes included "coalition agreement is leading", "Opinion: college should not always get their way" or "unity in voting within faction". In total 461 unique codes were created. Next, the analysis went into the second phase which is axial coding. In this phase, connections between the open codes were explored through grouping the codes into broader categories. This allowed for uncovering underlying themes and patterns within the data. This process of categorizing codes helped to place the individual codes and segments into a wider context, which provided a more holistic understanding of the key elements of the results. This process of axial coding was guided by the theoretical insights of partisan theory and the multiple streams framework. In total seven code groups were created. The coding tree that demonstrates how these code groups arose can be found in appendix B.

In the third and final phase, selective coding, the core categories that were most crucial to the research question were selected and examined in detail. This process also involved comparing the findings across the two case study municipalities, which allowed for the identification of broader patterns and differences in how political factors influence mobility policy. The coding process enabled the identification of key themes that emerged from the interviews, which helped to explain the influence of political parties and coalitions on mobility policy in Dutch municipalities (Sybing, n.d.). These results and their connections to the broader theoretical background of this research were then examined further in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

## 3.5 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

As this research aims to explore the influence of political dynamics on policy development, there is a possibility of asking controversial questions that may have provoked feelings like discomfort or misunderstanding, or any other feelings, with the interviewees. The researcher was committed to creating a safe and respectful environment where interviewees felt secure to express their views.

Prior to the interviews, the interviewees were fully informed about their rights, including the voluntary nature of the participation and the right to stop the interview at any time. Furthermore, interviewees were assured that their identities will be anonymized in the final research report if they prefer. Because municipalities and certain characteristics are currently named, the anonymity of the interviewees cannot fully be guaranteed. However, if the interviewees indicated that they would have preferred to be fully anonymized, the municipalities and characteristics could have been removed, as they are not essential for the reader's understanding. They primarily provide context. Interviewees received this and additional information on the use of their data through an information form. After discussing any concerns and answering any questions, the interviewees were asked to sign a consent form to confirm their voluntary participation. Data collected from the interviews, including recordings and transcriptions, were stored securely in a locked folder during the research process. Upon completion of the thesis grading, all data will be permanently deleted to ensure data protection.

While this research design seeks to provide an improved understanding of political parties and their influence on policy- and decision-making on mobility policy, several limitations should be acknowledged upfront.

The study is highly explorative in nature, focusing on a limited number of political actors, such as aldermen and council members and administrative actors such as civil servants. This scope does not include a full range of perspectives that are involved in mobility policies, such as residents, private sector stakeholders and other interest groups.

Interviewees, their perspectives and their answers might be subject to personal or political bias. Their answers could revolve around strategic positioning or individual views, rather than objective observations. Besides, the data will fully rely on secondary documents and self-collected data from interviews, which may not fully represent all informal processes or recent changes.

The dynamic environment of political decision-making, with terms of only 4 years, means that research findings merely capture a snapshot and may not reflect past or future developments and dynamics.

Finally, the choice to potentially anonymize municipalities could limit the contextual strength of the research. Especially for readers that are interested in context-specific nuances.

# 4 CONTEXTUALIZING MOBILITY IN DUTCH MUNICIPALITIES

Before diving into the results section, this chapter will provide context, specifically on mobility policy and what that entails, as well as more context on Dutch municipalities. The chapter will start by introducing Dutch municipalities as institutions, what their organization looks like and how they operate. Next mobility policy, and what that looks like in Dutch municipalities will be discussed. This context is relevant to be able to understand the dynamics within and working of Dutch municipalities and utilize that to perform a thematic analysis and interpret the results.

## 4.1 Dutch Municipalities

The Netherlands is a parliamentary democracy that consists of a central government, twelve provincial governments and 342 municipal governments. On a national level, the parliament is responsible for representation of the people, on the provincial level this is the provincial states and on a municipal level this is the municipal council (Overheid.nl, n.d.). The municipal council is elected by residents every four years during the municipal council elections, with the next elections scheduled for March 2026. The number of council members depends on the population size of the municipality and ranges from 9 members in the smallest municipalities to 45 members in the largest (ProDemos, n.d.). Most council members belong to a political party, which can be a local branch of a national party or an independent local group. Members of the same party in the council form a faction, led by a faction chair, who serves as the main spokesperson. After the elections, these factions enter a negotiation process in which ultimately a coalition will be developed. Usually, the coalition is composed of factions that together hold a majority of seats within the council. The mayor chairs the municipal council but does not have voting rights. The mayor can participate in discussions. The council is supported in its work by the 'griffie', who provides administrative and legislative assistance. Municipal council meetings are held monthly, and these are open to the public (Ibid.). The council has three main responsibilities:
1. Setting the overall policy direction for the municipality, which includes long-term goals such infrastructural needs like bike lanes.
2. Overseeing the execution of municipal policies by the college of mayor and aldermen, who form the executive branch of the municipal governments.
3. Representing the interests of residents.

The council can establish committees to prepare decisions, consult with the mayor and aldermen, or appoint advisory bodies to provide policy recommendations (Ibid.).

Before diving further into mobility policy and what this entails in the context of Dutch municipalities, it is important to understand the political decision-making process in Dutch municipalities. This process often begins with identifying a problem or challenge, such as traffic congestion. Once an issue is recognized by the municipal council or an alderman, the municipal council or the college may decide to develop a policy proposal to address it. The proposal is often prepared by the college, in collaboration with the relevant municipal departments. It generally includes an analysis of the problem, potential solutions, and an assessment of the costs and benefits. Next, this proposal is

presented to the municipal council, where it is discussed to ensure it is in line with the broader policy goals of the municipality and the needs of the residents. After the discussion, the proposal is put to a vote in the council. If approved by majority vote, the policy is implemented by the college and relevant municipal departments. This could involve the introduction of a new traffic plan, adjustments to cycling infrastructure, or the implementation of new environmental regulations to solve the problem of traffic congestion.

## 4.2 Mobility Policy in Dutch Municipalities

As touched upon in the introduction Dutch municipalities have a broad range of tasks when it comes to mobility. These tasks include pursuing sustainable mobility, management and maintenance of local roads and regulating traffic and parking (VNG, n.d.). Generally, municipalities have a responsibility to keep destinations within their municipality accessible in a sustainable way. Municipalities collaborate with other local, regional and national stakeholders, such as transport providers and businesses, to achieve these tasks (Ibid.). Mobility policy in Dutch municipalities is a multifaceted policy domain that plays a role in accessibility, economic activity, liveability and spatial development (van Wee & Handy, 2016). To achieve an approved policy goal, local governments can make use of different types of policy instruments. These instruments are communicative, financial, legal, organisational, regulatory or supporting in nature (KCBR, 2023). Before selecting a specific policy instrument, the different types are considered and the most suitable one is selected based on the consequences, efficiency, effectiveness, proportionality and the protection of public values (Ibid.).

There are a variety of themes within the mobility domain, including accessibility, traffic safety, infrastructure efficiency, and sustainability. However, these themes do not always form a single, coherent vision. As a result, municipalities often prioritize one over another, depending on political, financial, and practical considerations. Municipalities often develop their policy on mobility through a mobility plan. Municipal mobility plans often include guidelines on optimizing the use of bike infrastructure, accessibility and inclusivity of public transport, location for connecting roads and parking (Goudappel, n.d.). These plans are created based on a vision, after which an inventory is made, followed by an execution plan (Ibid.). The municipal council ultimately votes on this vision, mobility plan and execution plans. The remainder of this section will introduce several relevant themes that play a role in how municipalities shape their mobility networks, as well as which policy instruments could be used to do so.

Parking is and has always been an important part of municipal mobility policy. It is a task that falls under municipal responsibility but that is coordinated with regional institutions. With parking policy there are various instruments that can be considered (VNG, n.d. - b). Instruments include increased prices for parking, a financial policy instrument, or only parking for those in possession of a specific permit, a legal policy instrument. Instruments like this can be used to influence the price and availability of parking in all areas of a municipality, which will ultimately impact travel by car.

Another theme within municipal mobility policy is traffic safety (VNG, n.d.- b). This includes creating strategies to increase safety in general, as well as identifying and improving local traffic situations that are unsafe. To that end, municipalities can develop a risk analysis or communicate with residents about the safety aspect of new infrastructure (Ibid.). The latter being a clear example of a communicative policy instrument.

Sustainable mobility is another relevant theme within municipal mobility policy. It extends beyond reducing emissions to include economic efficiency, equitable access, and reducing environmental impact (Budnitz, 2019). Municipalities can support these aims through a mix of legal and financial instruments, such as zoning plans, integrated land-use planning, or parking policies, as well as by encouraging public transport, walking, and cycling (Budnitz, 2019; UNHLAGST, 2016). However, promoting sustainable choices often goes hand in hand with discouraging less sustainable ones, for instance through limiting parking availability (Melia, 2015).

Thus, there are a variety of approaches to mobility that municipalities can pursue. This overview provides a valuable starting point for understanding how municipal mobility policy is formulated and implemented, and how political parties help shape choices about priorities, plans, and instruments.

## 4.3 Mobility Policy in Leiden & Zoetermeer

### *Zoetermeer*

The municipality of Zoetermeer has developed its mobility policy over the last decade in a wide variety of strategic and executive policy documents. The city aims to be a sustainable, accessible and healthy city in which mobility does not only fulfil a transport and traffic function but also a social, economic and spatial one. In this section a selection of important policy documents. from the municipality of Zoetermeer will be synthesized to provide a holistic insight into the approach the municipality takes towards mobility. The Mobility Vision Zoetermeer 2030 (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2017). is the overarching strategic vision. Other policy documents such as the Cycling Action Plan 2014-2030 and the parking policy and standards, shape this vision more specifically (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2014; 2019a; 2019b; 2019c). It is important to note that these policy documents are developed in close coordination with other policy frameworks such as urban development agenda's, coalition agreements and regional, provincial and national policy frameworks.

*Mobility Ambitions*

Generally speaking, Zoetermeer positions itself as a city in which multimodality is the norm, in which the car, bike, walking and public transport should form a strong network. The city aspires to be the 'most accessible and traffic safe city in the Netherlands' (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2017). In the Mobility vision Zoetermeer 2030 (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2017) two central goals are established: maintaining a liveable and vital city

and strengthening the central and regional position of Zoetermeer in the Randstad and the Metropole Area Rotterdam the Hague (MRDH). In doing so, the municipality wants to pursue innovative mobility alternatives such as shared mobility and flexible public transport. This can be done through for instance facilitating a smooth transfer between different modalities (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2014; 2017).

The Cycling Action Plan 2014-2030 specifically focuses on encouraging the use of bicycles, with the aim of bringing about a 50% increase in the number of bicycle trips per person per day compared to 2012. Cycling must become a full-fledged alternative for the car, especially when it comes to short- and medium-length distances within the city (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2014). The existing parking policy also contributes to these ambitions. The municipality uses parking regulation as an instrument to influence travel behaviour. For instance, by maintaining lower car parking standards and higher bike park standards in the city centre (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2019b).

*Sustainability & Spatial Quality*

Sustainability is a central focus point in Zoetermeer's mobility policy. In line with the coalition agreement, the municipality wants to adopt climate adaptive measures and accelerate the mobility transition (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2019a). Forms of sustainable mobility such as cycling, walking and public transport are prioritised in policy decisions. The Cycling Action Plan 2014-2030 includes specific quality measures for the cycling infrastructure: recognition, safety, directness, comfort and attractiveness. The plan emphasizes the importance of social safety and integrating the cycling routes into the landscape (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2014). The parking standards contribute to sustainable use of space by discouraging the use of the car in the city center whilst facilitating high cycling parking standards (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2019c). Finally, electric vehicles are being supported by charging infrastructure in new parking developments (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2019b).

*The car*

The car remains an important part of Zoetermeer's mobility policy, although in some cases it might get a more regulated and specific role in the city's mobility network. Instead of expanding road capacity, the focus is on the smart use of space, improving the flow of traffic and redesigning important roads (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2017). Car parking is regulated strictly by zoning regulations that differentiate between the center, the transitional area and the periphery. Each of these cones have different parking standards depending on their function, location and users (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2019b). Additionally, shared mobility is encouraged by correcting parking standards related to parking shared vehicles (Ibid.). In the recent design of the spatial strategy of Zoetermeer for 2040 a much more modest role of the car was introduced. In this strategy, for instance, the allowed speed was reduced significantly (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2024). In a recent municipal council meeting, an amendment to remove these speed reductions was approved. This indicates that the municipal council is not in favour of these measures that impact the role of the car significantly.

*Timeline & execution*

Most of the aforementioned documents are long-term oriented, up to 2030 or even 2040. They focus on growth, transformation and sustainable development. At the same time, they also contain short- and medium-term measures in the form of implementation programs. For instance, the annual implementation programmes of the Cycling Action Plan. The Mobility Vision and the Cycling Action Plan are strategic and guiding, with concrete goals and indicators, but without legally enforceable obligations.

The parking standards and parking policies, however, are policy-related and legally enforceable. They contain hard standards and rules that are applied when granting permits for area development and spatial planning. These documents form executive instruments that translate the ambitions from the strategic and visionary policy documents into practice.

Zoetermeer's mobility policy is future-oriented and integrated in nature, with a strong emphasis on its multimodal character and stimulating accessibility and liveability. Cycling and public transport receive considerable attention, but the car remains a relevant, yet regulated, modality as well.

## ***Leiden***

Similarly to the municipality of Zoetermeer, the municipality of Leiden has developed its mobility policy into a coherent collection of strategic and executive policy documents. The city aims to be a sustainable, accessible and liveable place in which mobility is not just functional but also contributes to social and spatial quality. In this synthesis, a selection of key mobility policy documents will be synthesized to present a holistic overview of the course that Leiden is taking when it comes to mobility. The documents that are included are the "Leiden sustainable accessibility" plan, the Parking Standards Regulations Leiden 2020, the Parking Vision for car and bicycle parking 2020-2030 and the Environmental Vision Leiden 2040 and the Car-Free City Centre Agenda (Gemeente Leiden, 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2021; 2023).

*Mobility ambitions*

Leiden explicitly positions itself as a city in which sustainable, active and collective mobility becomes the norm. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, Leiden's mobility ambitions are built on the three central pillars of sustainability, accessibility and liveability. The goal is to use space that is used for mobility more efficiently and to shape mobility in such a way that it contributes to a healthier and more attractive city (Gemeente Leiden, 2020a; 2020c).

From the strategic policy documents, it becomes clear that the goal is to achieve a substantial modal shift: decreased use of the car and increased use of active modalities, with a central role for cycling, walking, public transport and shared mobility. Strong emphasis is placed on the concept of multimodality, which entails a smooth and logical transition between modalities through, among other things, mobility hubs (Gemeente

Leiden, 2020a; 2020c; 2021). The bicycle is considered ideal for short to medium distance trips. Leiden is working on a recognizable bicycle network that guarantees safety, directness and comfort (Gemeente Leiden, 2020a; 2020c). Leiden wants to make structural investments into its bicycle parking facilities at train stations, mobility hubs and in the city center (Gemeente Leiden, 2020c). In addition to cycling, walking is also considered highly relevant. Pedestrian routes need to be improved and prioritised in car-free zones. Finally, the public transport network will be strengthened by developing mobility nodes such as Leiden Centraal and Lammenschans unto multimodal transfer points (Gemeente Leiden, 2020a; 2020c; 2023).

These mobility ambitions are strongly interrelated with other spatial and societal challenges, such as the realisation of new housing, climate adaptation and health (Gemeente Leiden, 2023). Leiden collaborates closely with regional partners such as the Leiden Region and the Mobility Region Rotterdam the Hague (MRDH; Gemeente Leiden, 2020a).

*Sustainability & Spatial Quality*

Sustainability is a common thread in the mobility policy that Leiden is pursuing. The city wants to contribute to improved air quality, decreased energy consumption and a liveable city. Mobility is considered a tool for the energy transition and climate adaptation (Gemeente Leiden, 2020a; 2023). Therefore, active mobility and public transport are actively encouraged, whilst parking standards and the use of space will be adapted based on these ambitions (Gemeente Leiden 2020b; 2020c). The redistribution of public space plays a crucial role in these ambitions as well, as space for green, water, pedestrians and cyclists will replace parking space and traffic infrastructure. Leiden's mobility policy pays special attention to spatial quality, for instance by considering greenery and social safety, amongst other things, as integral parts of its mobility policy (Gemeente Leiden, 2021; 2023). Additionally, new parking developments and infrastructure will be provided with charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, which Leiden is using to stimulate zero emission mobility (Gemeente Leiden, 2020c).

*The car*

The car is not absent from Leiden's mobility policy, but it is getting a regulated role. In the city centre, car traffic is strongly discouraged to improve the quality of the living environment and to create space for active forms of mobility (Gemeente Leiden; 2021). Outside the city centre the use of the car will remain possible under conditions, such as smart parking solutions, differentiated parking standards and traffic management (Gemeente Leiden, 2020b; 2020c). Leiden's Parking vision introduced the principle of "parking differently", which translates to less parking on the streets and more underground parking or parking on the edges of neighbourhoods, as well as an active pursuit of shared mobility. The parking pressure is regulated through permit systems and area-specific custom measures that will also include differentiated parking fees (Gemeente Leiden; 2020c).

The Parking Standards Regulations are legally binding and provide for low parking standards in public-transport dense areas, such as the city centre, and for targeted groups such as students, elderly and young adults. Shared mobility and mobility hubs are considered full-fledged alternatives for the car (Gemeente Leiden, 2020b). These policy decisions align seamlessly with Leiden's ambition to reduced car ownership and use, without losing sight of the central pillar of accessibility (Gemeente Leiden, 2020c).

*Execution*

Leiden's "sustainable accessibility" plan (Gemeente Leiden, 2020a) and environmental vision (Gemeente Leiden, 2023) provide direction until around 2040 and include ambitions and main points, without any legal obligations. These documents are translated to more specific executive programs. The parking vision, parking standards regulations and the car-free city agenda (Gemeente Leiden, 2020c; 2020b; 2021) are important examples of policy documents that are more executive in nature, which often include specific measures, plans and legal frameworks. Especially the parking standards form hard assessment criteria with licensing and area development.

Leiden presents a future-oriented approach to mobility in which sustainability, accessibility and liveability are central. The city pursues active and collective modalities, with space for innovative mobility concepts such as shared mobility. Car use is heavily regulated and limited in the city centre, to create space for a more attractive living environment.

To summarize, both municipalities prioritize sustainability, accessibility, and liveability in their mobility policies, but they differ in approach. Zoetermeer maintains the car as an important mode of transport, with growing regulation but continued allowance for car use. The city promotes cycling growth, though less aggressively than Leiden, enforces strict parking standards while still providing space for cars, and focuses on preserving accessibility and economic vitality with cautious car restrictions. In contrast, Leiden actively discourages car use, especially in the city centre, aiming to reduce car ownership. Cycling is considered the dominant mode, supported by extensive bike parking and route development. Parking is actively limited to reduce pressure, supported by mobility hubs and shared transport options, with a stronger emphasis on liveability, sustainability, and redesigning public spaces. The following chapter will present the results from the central analysis of this study.

# 5 RESULTS

After collecting the data through literature and policy review and semi-structured interviews and subsequently conducting a thematic analysis, this chapter presents the research findings. The comprehensive synthesis of relevant policy documents from both municipalities can was presented in the previous section. This synthesis provides a basic understanding of the mobility policies and plans of both municipalities. This chapter comprises the results of the semi-structured interviews, structured around six key themes identified through thematic analysis (appendix B). These themes are categorized based on whether they represent a similar or a different situation between Leiden and Zoetermeer.

## 5.1 Common Themes Between Leiden and Zoetermeer

Several themes emerged from the analysis that represent similarities between Zoetermeer and Leiden. These themes are the mobility challenges that are faced, how these challenges and their solutions are framed, what role ideology plays in how political parties approach mobility and the electoral considerations that interfere with political decision making on mobility. It is important to note that these four themes represent similarities between the municipalities in broad terms. This entails that in both municipalities, similar differences and similarities between parties, frames, ideologies and other factors can be observed. However, this does not entail that there are no nuances or differences in each municipality.

### *Mobility Challenges*

During the interviews a wide variety of challenges were identified by the interviewees. Despite this variety, several issues were brought up by most respondents from both municipalities. The most frequently mentioned challenge was having limited space within the city boundaries (interviewee 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8). According to the interviewees, this scarcity of space is a direct consequence of urban growth and the accompanying mobility needs. This urban growth, particularly the high demand for housing and its impact on mobility, was often described as a challenge in itself (interviewee 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,8 & 9). This limited availability of space results in what interviewee 6 referred to as "battle" for space. This battle typically plays out between different municipal departments (interviewee 1, 6 & 9) or between political party factions within the municipal councils (Interviewee 3, 4, 5, 7 & 8). Different departments such as parking, urban green, mobility and city centre have conflicting ideas on how the limited space should be allocated (interviewee 1, 6 & 9). Similarly, political party factions within the municipal council hold differing views. While interviewees 4, 5 and 8 argue that parking and space for cars should be given priority, interviewees 3 and 7 advocate for reallocating that space to other uses. This clear "battle" on spatial priorities is a citywide challenge that affects not only the mobility departments but the broader governance of both Zoetermeer and Leiden.

In addition to the challenges of limited space, high demands in urban housing and mobility and competing spatial claims, several other issues were brought up. Ensuring

general road safety and safety for cyclists is an issue that was raised by multiple interviewees in both municipalities (Interviewee 2, 3, 6, 7 & 9). There was a broad consensus on the importance of traffic safety and ensuring safety for the users of car and cycling infrastructure. Specifically in Zoetermeer, interviewees discussed the challenge of having to invest a significant sum into public transport infrastructure that is not profitable and how to navigate that situation (Interviewee 8 & 11). A final, more specific, issue was raised by interviewee 3 and 8 who highlighted the need for more charging infrastructure for electric vehicles (EV's).

## *Framing of Challenges and Solutions: Grey versus Green*

Although there seemed to be a general consensus on the challenges across the different parties and municipalities, the way those challenges were framed differed significantly, between different groups of political party factions. In both Leiden and Zoetermeer, the interviewees from the VVD factions and local parties hold opposing views on which challenges are most pressing, compared to their counterparts from GroenLinks. These framing differences reveal not only a sharp contrast between different groups of parties, but also strategic attempts to shape public and political discourse and support.

### *Grey on Green*

The notion of "wishful thinking" by opposing parties and the importance of "realism" is a frame that is often adopted by interviewees from political party factions that can be considered more "grey", in this case VVD and local parties. Interviewees 4 and 10 express how actively limiting parking and car accessibility, amongst other things, is unrealistic and a case of "wishful thinking" as it is not grounded in the everyday realities of living in these cities. Interviewees 4 and 5 explain how "realistic" policy should take into consideration the current mobility demands within the respective municipalities and meet them. Interviewee 4 shares her perspective on reality when it comes to car use in Leiden:

> *"This is wishful thinking. It's not the reality. I need my car to get to work. Or take the other way around: people who don't live in the city, like babysitters, or grandparents who come to look after their grandchildren, suddenly have to pay a lot of money [for parking]. Elderly people living in retirement homes, for example, get fewer visitors because their guests now have to pay for parking. And of course, not everyone can easily afford that."*

This perception of unrealistic views, often attributed to parties like GroenLinks, which are generally considered more "green", is frequently accompanied by the belief that the transition to more sustainable modes of transport as dominant forms of mobility will require more time. Interviewee 4,5 and 10 express how they are not against, and some even in favour of, promoting public and active modes of transport. However, discouraging the use of the car and implementing measures such as zero emission zones is considered too soon and therefore unrealistic by these interviewees.

Interviewees from the more "grey" party factions also share several sentiments on how their standpoints and views are framed by other parties. Holding strong anti-sustainability views is a frame that interviewee 8 often receives from more "green" party factions:

*"Not wanting to discourage car use doesn't mean you're against sustainability plans. But that's what makes it politically challenging, it often gets framed in terms of sustainability. For example: 'Oh, so you don't want to close the parking garage? Then you must be fine with people suffering from pollution.' That's the kind of framing that tends to happen."* – Interviewee 8

This sentiment is shared by interviewee 10, who states that "klimaatdrammers", loosely translated as climate crusaders, push for the need to reduce car use in favour of promoting greenery and less pollution, which he considers unrealistic. Finally, interviewee 8 shares that a fellow council member accused him of not caring about a fatal car accident, involving a young boy, on a road that interviewee 8 refused to reduce the speed limit on. Interviewee 8 feels this is an example of political framing taken too far. The feeling of being unfairly caricatured reveals that political framing is not just ideological, it can be instrumental.

*Green on Grey*

A contrasting perspective is observed in the interviews with council members from the GroenLinks party factions in both Leiden and Zoetermeer. Their approach to the identified challenges differs, particularly in how they frame the issue of limited urban space and the competing spatial demands. Interviewees 3 and 7 emphasize that the space currently allocated to car use could and should be more effectively repurposed for objectives such as new housing developments and the integration of greenery. Within this perspective, the fulfilment of all spatial demands, such as housing, liveability, high-quality public transport, and parking, is considered unrealistic. Interviewees 3 and 7 argue that clear priorities must be set, and that parking should not be among the top priorities. Interviewee 3 describes this balancing act of spatial demands as follows:

*"So you can't expect to build more housing without also being willing to create more space in the public domain to accommodate it. You can't keep issuing an unlimited number of parking permits and guarantee everyone a spot on the street, while at the same time refusing to green any parking spaces, even as the city grows with more homes and more people. Everyone wants clean air, and everyone wants to be able to spend time outside, or have their children play outside. So at some point, we need to create a sense of balance."*

Adding onto this, interviewee 3 expresses how often a debate arises of "cars versus green", which is fuelled by the idea that supporting car use and realizing more greenery within a city cannot co-exist. In contrast to this, interviewee 3 states that these two goals can co-exist within a city, for instance by creating more greenery around parking facilities, without completely removing the facility.

The council members from the GroenLinks party factions were also aware of how opposing parties frame their views and standpoints on the mobility challenges and corresponding solutions that Leiden and Zoetermeer face. In their experience, the more "grey" oriented parties, bring up scenarios in which parking has been an issue, and their notions on the need for realistic parking and mobility policy. Interviewee 3 states that these scenarios and situations are not always factual, yet they often tend to start to live their own lives.

*Strategic Use of Framing*

From these interviews it also becomes apparent that framing serves a strategic function. Politicians from both grey and green factions describe how emotionally salient or symbolically charged narratives are used to impact debates. For instance, interviewee 8 being accused of not caring about a fatal car accident because he opposed reducing a speed limit. Though he felt the accusation was unfair and politically motivated, it illustrates how tragedy can be strategically used to amplify or discredit policy positions.

Similarly, interviewee 10 pointed to the rhetorical power of invoking children's health, climate urgency, or public safety in council debates, not always as neutral concerns, but as tools to frame opponents as irresponsible or indifferent. These examples show that political framing operates not only on ideological grounds but also via calculated messaging and emotional leverage.

The interviews reveal a clear difference in how mobility challenges and proposed solutions are framed by more "green" and "grey" party factions. GroenLinks council members frame mobility within a broader spatial and environmental context, emphasizing the need to reduce car use to create space for housing, greenery and liveability. In contrast, the council members from the VVD and local party factions often frame such standpoints and views as unrealistic or too ambitious. Through these frames, parties can influence how mobility challenges and their solutions are understood, as well as which policy directions will be considered as viable or necessary. These frames are not merely reflections of ideological positions, which will be explored further in the following section, they are also used strategically. Council members reinforce their views, standpoints and proposed motions and amendments through symbolic language, examples from local life, and public narratives. In doing so, they not only influence what is seen as a mobility challenge, but also which solutions gain traction among voters and within the municipal council. This dynamic use of framing shows how parties at the local level actively shape both the content and boundaries of mobility policy discussions.

## ***Role of Ideology***

The role of ideology emerged as another clear theme from the interviews, specifically from the interviews with the six council members. While there was a considerable range of ideological views and values among interviewees, these differences appeared to be similar across both municipalities. As representatives from VVD, GroenLinks and local parties there were clear distinctions between the ideological views and values that the interviewees held. Both interviewees from VVD clearly identified liberalism as their core ideology (interviewee 4 & 8). To these council members, specifically interviewee 8, liberalism is an ideology in broad terms, with multiple different schools of thought being represented by the term liberalism. Interviewee 8 adds onto this by explaining that a wide variety of themes, including mobility, that require decision-making in the council do not relate to the liberal ideology:

*"There are plenty of issues we deal with in the city, when it comes to things like playgrounds or green spaces, liberalism doesn't really say anything about those." –*
Interviewee 8

With regards to party ideology, both council members from the VVD party factions conclude that ideology mainly serves as a backbone and tool for testing views and standpoints against a broader ideological framework (interviewee 4 & 8).

In contrast to the role that ideology plays for the VVD council members, the GroenLinks representatives explain how their ideology does strongly relate to urban development themes. Interviewees 3 and 7 explain how sustainability is a core part of the party ideology, and how a strong link between mobility and these sustainability values follows from that ideology. Besides sustainability, social values and a sense of freedom are also described as core parts of the GroenLinks party ideology (Interviewees 3 & 7). Similarly to interviewees 4 and 8, the GroenLinks council members underscore how the party ideology serves as a backbone for developing views and standpoints on their work within the municipal council (Interviewees 3 & 7).

In addition to the role that ideology plays for established parties, such as VVD and GroenLinks, representatives of a third category of parties were interviewed. These were representatives from local parties, where ideology appears to play a much less explicit role. According to both the representatives of these local parties, as well as those from the more established parties, local parties do not operate from a clearly defined ideological framework (Interviewees 5, 7 & 10). While they do rely on certain values and norms, such as civic participation and social values, these are not necessarily grounded in a coherent ideology (Interviewee 5). Interviewee 5 explains that positions often develop over time through earlier decisions, which can lead to the gradual formation of an implicit ideology:

*"Yes, so it does seem that the longer a party has existed, the more it gradually builds a certain set of ideas or principles, because it has taken positions on issues in the past, and those positions don't just change overnight."*

Representatives of the local parties consider this lack of fixed ideology as a strength, as it allows for more flexibility and responsiveness in taking standpoints within the municipal council (interviewee 5 & 10). However, this flexibility and high level of responsiveness to local needs is sometimes perceived as a form of populism by all interviewees from the established parties (Interviewee 3,4,7 & 8).

To summarize, the role of ideology in shaping mobility policy differs across different parties. For GroenLinks, a typical "green" party, ideology has a clear and direct influence with sustainability and social justice guiding their approach to mobility policy. VVD council members also draw on ideology, but liberalism has a less direct influence on mobility policy, as it offers limited direction on spatial and mobility issues. Local parties, by contrast, operate largely without an ideology, which gives them flexibility but also makes their influence on mobility policy more reactive and less structured. These

differences indicate how varying ideologies impact the way parties influence mobility policy in these two Dutch municipalities.

## *Electoral Considerations*

Across both Zoetermeer and Leiden, electoral considerations emerged as an important influence on how parties frame, prioritize and approach mobility challenges and policy. Council members, especially from coalition parties, highlighted the need to for communication with residents, voters and potential voters throughout the term. Not only to create an understanding of what challenges and issues are being picked up by residents, but also to gain insight into what solutions would receive support (Interviewee 4,5,7,8 & 10). In both municipalities these considerations shaped the way mobility challenges and policies were framed and prioritized. Interviewees from coalition parties highlighted the importance of pursuing policies that they could justify to their supporters and voters (Interviewee 3, 8 & 10).

Council members that are in the factions of local parties emphasized this even more strongly. Interviewee 5 and 10 highlighted that they believe in the wishes and challenges that are relevant to the residents, businessowners and other stakeholders that are involved with their respective municipalities.  Interviewee 5 describes their parties' strong emphasis on local needs and priorities as:

*"It certainly plays a major role, but not so much out of opportunism, but mainly because we believe that as a party you should be there for the citizens, and that residents should have a strong voice."*

The interviews with representatives from local parties in both municipalities share that their lack of ideological framework allows them to take standpoints in a more flexible manner, as they do not have to justify their political choices within that framework. They explain that this, at times, allows them to please their constituencies (Interviewee 5 & 10). Interviewees from more established parties describe this flexibility as "political clientism", suggesting that local parties will consistently pursue what their constituencies prefer (Interviewee 8).

Although the interviewees from more ideologically grounded parties share negative perceptions of the electoral considerations of local factions, they do acknowledge the relevance of these considerations for their own factions. The support from voters is important for the survival and influence of political parties (Interviewee 4, 7 & 8). However, according to interviewee 4, a balance between electoral considerations and ideology should be maintained.

Altogether, electoral considerations and accountability play a role for coalition, opposition, ideologically grounded and local parties in both Zoetermeer and Leiden. The extent to which these considerations are considered leading differs per party, with local parties valuing local input the most. Electoral considerations are an important shaping force when it comes to mobility policy and how it is approached within the municipal council.

## 5.2 Contrasting Themes Between Leiden and Zoetermeer

In addition to the common patterns observed across both Zoetermeer and Leiden, there are also clear differences in how political parties influence mobility policy in both municipalities. These contrasting themes revolve around the composition of coalitions, the function of the coalition agreement and the dynamics between coalition and opposition, as well as the role of civil servants play in the development of mobility policy. This section will explore both themes and demonstrate how these relate to the influence that political parties have on mobility policy in Dutch municipalities.

### *Coalition, Opposition and Their Collaboration*

This theme explores how coalition and opposition parties interact in shaping mobility policy. It focuses on coalition composition, policy directions, the role of coalition agreements as an instrument of influence and the dynamics between coalition and opposition in terms of influence.

#### *Coalitions and Their Policy Directions*

The most apparent difference between Leiden and Zoetermeer revolves around the composition and orientation of their coalitions. The composition of the coalition plays a highly important role in determining the general direction, scope and ambition of mobility policy.
As explained, Leiden is currently governed by a more "green" coalition, including GroenLinks, D66, PvdA and CDA. Although there are differences and nuances between these parties, the coalition actively promotes sustainability, spatial redevelopment and stricter parking- and car-restrictive measures in their coalition agreement, plans and policies (Gemeente Leiden, 2022). The coalition agreement is heavily influenced by the election platforms of the four coalition parties, as these generally reflect what the individual parties aim to achieve in this term. The election platform as a framework for operating within the council is also relevant for opposition parties (Interviewee 3,4, 7 & 8).
In Zoetermeer, by contrast, the coalition consists of parties that can be considered more "grey" including VVD, CDA, ChristenUnie-SGP and several local parties. The election platforms of these parties include a different set of priorities, such as maintaining car accessibility and supporting economic activity (Interviewee 8 & 10). Therefore, the general mobility policy direction in Zoetermeer is more focussed on balancing sustainability with other needs, including practical feasibility (Gemeente Zoetermeer, 2022).

Thus, the influence of political parties becomes visible through the coalition formation process. Election programs shape the initial negotiation positions (Interviewee 3,4,7 & 8), but the final coalition agreement often includes the elements that hold up in the coalition negotiations. In Leiden the coalition party platforms, especially that of the larger factions, and the coalition agreement are closely aligned. All platforms and the coalition agreement includes promoting sustainability, higher levels of restriction in car and pursuing the current strict parking policy. In Zoetermeer, the broader nature of the

agreement provides more room for party influence after the coalition formation. The role of the coalition agreement as an instrument of party influence will be explored in the next section.

*Coalition Agreements*

In the interviews with council members, civil servants and other interviewees, the coalition agreement (gemeente Leiden, 2022; gemeente Zoetermeer; 2022) emerged as an important means of political party influence on mobility policy. As briefly outlined in the previous section, these agreements represent the outcome of negotiations between coalition parties after the elections and often serve as a framework for policymaking over the council term. Several interviewees explained that coalitions are directly negotiated between the parties that are involved (Interviewee 2 & 3):

*"But it is mainly the negotiating parties that try to come to an agreement, to create a coalition program that they can all work with." – Interviewee 2*

These negotiations are not symbolic in nature, but rather they determine the degree to which each party's election platform, on mobility in this case, is represented. The agreement reflects the compromises and concessions that parties have made. The coalition agreement could therefore be considered as a direct reflection of the political priorities, but also the size of factions, as larger factions generally have a stronger position in negotiations due to their influence over coalition stability and agenda-setting (Interviewee 2). For instance, in Leiden the largest faction GroenLinks, played an important role in determining the strict parking-policy direction in the coalition agreement.

Once the agreement is adopted, these documents are considered the leading framework in policymaking (interviewee 1,2,3,4,5,8,9 &10). They are meant to offer a clear direction and are used by both aldermen and policy offers to guide action and planning. The agreements thus shapes not only the political priorities but also the administrative action. As Interviewee 9 explains:

*"Well, for example, we receive the assignment to develop new traffic safety policy. That is stated in the coalition agreement. So, that's what we're working on."*

The interviews also reveal that coalition agreements can vary in scope and level of detail. After the coalition negotiations some are rather general in nature, whereas others offer a clear direction. In Leiden the agreement is considered strong and directive, and it receives consistent support from the coalition parties (Interviewee 4). In Zoetermeer the agreement is described by interviewee 9 as general, leaving room for interpretation and change over the council term.
This variability in coalition agreement strength and direction shapes how much space there is for opposition influence or policy amendments. A less structured agreement allows for more collaboration between coalition and opposition parties, which is what will be explored in the following section.

*Mechanisms of Influence*

While coalitions determine the policy direction, both coalition and opposition parties influence the mobility policy. This can be done through formal mechanisms such as motions, amendments and voting. These tools allow parties to shape details of plans and policy and take a stance on different mobility related topics. Informal tools, such as personal relationships and behind-the-scenes discussions can also play a role in shaping policy.

In the case of Leiden, the unity within the coalition limits the opportunities for the opposition to shape mobility policy. Interviewees noted that proposals from outside the coalition are not likely to be adopted, unless they align with coalition policy (Interviewee 4). The coalition's voting majority often results in motions and amendments from opposition parties being blocked or watered down and coalition plans are always consistently supported (Interviewee 3). This results in an environment where the coalition, and its vision on mobility, has high control over mobility policy in Leiden. Interviewee 4, an opposition party council member, describes this as:

*"Because we then submit motions and amendments, hoping that they will vote in favour. But in practice, that usually doesn't happen. So, our proposals almost always get voted down."*

Contrasting to Leiden, the interviews held with representatives from Zoetermeer demonstrate a more fluid dynamic and collaboration. The general coalition agreement and internal diversity, on for instance the balance between car accessibility and the prioritisation with other means, create openings for collaboration between opposition and coalition. Interviewees 8 and 10 note that the coalition parties hardly vote consistently, and even sometimes vote against coalition plans. Informal negotiations and personal interactions between parties are more common, allowing opposition members to influence policy outside of formal debate (Interviewee 8). Furthermore, interviewee 7, from an opposition party, states that amendments and motions they introduce are sometimes accepted, especially when they concern technical improvements, such as a more efficient division of the budget for a mobility study. This council dynamic can support a more open policymaking process.
The interviews reveal that while formal tools, such as motions, amendments and voting are available in both municipal contexts, their effectiveness depends on the coalition. In a context where coalitions are cohesive and dominant, such as in Leiden, these tools are mainly used to reinforce the course that the coalition determines. In coalitions that are less dominant, formal and informal tools work together to enable more input and negotiation.

To summarize, the analysis of coalitions, their agreements, the dynamic between coalition and opposition and the mechanisms for influence, reveal that there are two distinct models of party influence on mobility policy in Leiden and Zoetermeer. In Leiden, party influence is more centralized. The more "green" coalition, led by GroenLinks, has negotiated a robust coalition agreement. The policy that follows from that agreement is supported consistently by the coalition within the council. Party influence is therefore

primarily exerted from within the coalition, with limited input from the opposition. In Zoetermeer, party influence is more distributed throughout the council. The broader coalition agreement allows for more collaboration between opposition and coalition. Thus, policy details are more often shaped together through amendments and informal tools. Together, these findings demonstrate that the influence of political parties in Zoetermeer and Leiden does not only rely on formal power and standpoints on mobility, but also on the structure of coalition governance, the contents of leading agreements and the space for negotiation.

### *Role of civil servants*

The second contrasting theme that emerged from the interviews is the role and position of civil servants in relation to the council in shaping mobility policy. While in both municipalities civil servants are central to policy formulation, the extent of their influence and their administrative flexibility within political constraints differ significantly. These differences between Zoetermeer and Leiden are mainly shaped by coalition strength, agreement clarity and administrative-political relationships.

*Leiden: a stable environment*

In Leiden, civil servants operate within a political context that often aligns with their policy advice. Interviewee 1, who specialises in sustainable transport with a focus on public and active modes of transport, expresses that his policy domain is popular with the aldermen. Furthermore, the coalition agreement provides clear direction, for example on continuing the parking policy as it was developed in the previous council term (interviewee 4 & 5). This allows civil servants to develop plans, on parking in this case, with confidence and without constant political pressure.

Civil servants express that they are professionals that are hired for their expertise on mobility and to shape mobility policy with this insight and expertise (interviewee 6). In Leiden the communication lines between civil servants themselves and the aldermen are described as short and stable. This can result in premature plans and policies leaking (interviewee 1). However, this can also result in more personal communication with the aldermen, which fosters more direct discussion of plans and policy and understanding between the different parties involved. Interviewee 1 describes this as:

> *"Well, also on a personal level, because you're in the project team and you can personally explain your piece or hear the alderman's arguments. It's a bit of hearing both sides. And even if he disagrees with something, you can understand: okay, so this is the reasoning behind it. Whereas if it comes back through, say, the MRDA, via a department head, then you're left thinking: yeah, but why?"*

Interviewee 1 also shares that there is thorough collaboration with other departments, mainly to create solid and comprehensive policy that will receive broad administrative, as well as political support. The working atmosphere, communication with different departments, short lines with the college, strong alignment with coalition and therefore little surprises from the council results in a stable policymaking environment (Interviewee 1 & 6). This stable environment for civil servants allows them to develop

more extensive mobility policy, that has a strong focus on long-term sustainability and therefore influence the course of mobility policy.

## Zoetermeer: a fragmented environment

In contrast to Leiden, civil servants in Zoetermeer operate in a more fragmented political context, that requires them to anticipate resistance and political sensitivities within their advice (Interviewee 9). The coalition agreement is perceived as general, which indicates that a clear policy framework is lacking. Interviewee 9 underscores this by explaining that the full contents and prioritisation of mobility policy in Zoetermeer is unclear:

*"Because right now, we have a lot of policy. But if you don't know it, it won't be applied. And I really think that's a difficult issue. Especially with high turnover, limited capacity, and many external people. You can't know all the policies by heart. Or well, you can— but at the very least, you need to know that it exists, what it says, and where to find it. And then you need to discuss with your colleagues: what carries more weight?" -*
Interviewee 9

This fragmented policy environment can result in civil servants having to develop a kind of informal "political antenna" in order to navigate between policy proposals and the expected political response (Interviewee 9). Although the college is often expected to act as this political antenna for civil servants, this does not always happen. When the vision on mobility differs strongly between the college and the civil servants and the college fails to disclose the political sensitivity of proposals, friction can arise. Interviewee 9 explains that other civil servants have struggled with this friction, especially when it involves a complex challenge. This often results in civil servants having to adjust or start over on plans. However, both interviewee 9 and 11 express that it is part of the civil servant's job to balance their professional expertise with political realism, as they both state that the college and council ultimately make the decisions. Finally, the coalition council members express clearly that they feel that the civil servants have a clear political and green agenda (Interviewee 8 & 10). In their opinion the aldermen go along with the "wishful thinking" of the civil servants. The council member wants to make it clear that they are not going along with those plans and will therefore serve motions and amendments:

*"And then if there are a few green civil servants... who are engaging in wishful thinking, and they start pushing that forward, and the alderman just adopts it without question... yeah, then he really will find himself opposed to us." -* Interviewee 10

In turn, these surprise motions and last-minute amendments from the council were mentioned as disruptive to planning and another cause for friction for civil servants (Interviewee 9). Altogether, it seems that civil servants in Zoetermeer are less able to act on strategic ambitions; even when they express strong professional views. Their expertise must be balanced with political acceptability, which can sometimes result in disappointment among civil servants (Interviewee 9).

To summarize, across both municipalities civil servants are influential actors who interact with the political actors when it comes to mobility policy. Yet there is a clear

difference between Zoetermeer and Leiden in terms of the noise in the interaction between the civil service and the political sphere. In Leiden alignment and clarity between civil servants, the college and the council enable civil servants to work within a stable policy environment and develop progressive policy. In Zoetermeer the more fragmented political context and noise between the civil servants and political sphere requires a more reactive and pragmatic attitude from the civil servants. Ultimately, the role of civil servants in shaping mobility policy is not just technical, it is political, strategic, and always mediated by their institutional and political surroundings.

The findings presented in this chapter provide a first understanding of the key patterns, themes and outcomes that can be derived from the analysis of the data. The discussion chapter will offer a critical interpretation of these results and will position them within the broader theoretical and practical context of this research.

# 6 DISCUSSION

This research aimed at gaining a better understanding of the influence of political parties at the municipal level on mobility policy in the Dutch municipalities of Zoetermeer and Leiden. To this end, the following central research question was proposed: *How do political parties at a local level influence mobility policy in Dutch municipalities?* While the results indicate that parties do shape the mobility policy direction and approach, their influence is nuanced and impacted by institutional and political dynamics and the agency of civil servants. This chapter starts with presenting a summary and interpretation of the key findings for each sub-question as well as a short discussion on the direct relationship between the coalition composition and the policies that that coalition pursues. Next the theoretical reflection will discuss whether and how the results of this research confirm, challenge or expand on existing theory on partisan politics and political party influence. Furthermore, this discussion includes a section on practical implications of the research results, which will be followed by the final sections on research limitations and the recommendations for future research.

## 6.1 Summary and Interpretation of Results

This section presents a summary and interpretation of the key findings for each sub-question. Hereafter  the potential relation between coalition composition, more "green" in Leiden and more "grey" in Zoetermeer, and the policy direction will be explored aimed at discussing the influence of coalition composition on the type of mobility policy that is pursued.

### *How are mobility challenges defined and framed?*

Both Leiden and Zoetermeer, face the challenge of urban growth, including but not limited to housing and mobility, and the competing spatial claims that result from this. These challenges are framed differently by different political parties. Representatives from parties that can be considered "green" often links these challenges to liveability and sustainability. Thereby emphasizing the need to reduce car usage, increase green infrastructure and prioritize active modes of transport. In contrast, representatives from more "grey" parties such as VVD and local party factions, frame these same challenges through the lens of economic feasibility, the importance of accessibility and practical realities. These contrasting frames are not merely rhetorical. They shape what is perceived as a legitimate policy problem in both Zoetermeer and Leiden. Through strategic framing, parties can thus influence which challenges are picked up and placed on the municipal agenda, and how these challenges are subsequently prioritized.

### *How does party ideology influence mobility policy?*

Party ideology plays a varied role in shaping mobility policy, depending on how closely mobility is linked to the core values of said ideology. In both Zoetermeer and Leiden, members of the respective GroenLinks factions clearly link mobility policy to sustainability and liveability, which are concepts that are central to their ideological

perspective. Their policy stances on mobility are therefore often assertive and vision driven. VVD council members approach mobility policy as a more pragmatic and technical issue that is not central to their liberal ideology. For local party factions, ideology is generally absent. Instead, they focus on responsiveness from the local population and practical approaches that are tailored to the local needs and preferences. In terms of mobility policy this means that they often prioritise issues that directly impact local life, such as parking. Ideology thus acts more as a guideline than a strict blueprint. When there is a strong link with the party ideology, in the case of sustainability for GroenLinks, standpoints are more coherent and assertive. When such a link is a missing, party positions tend to be adaptive and more driven by local or electoral considerations.

## *How do institutional and political structures influence mobility policy?*

Institutional arrangements and political structures, especially coalition dynamics and the coalition agreement, strongly mediate the influence of political parties on mobility policy. In Leiden, the coalition can be considered strong and cohesive, and its agreement provides clear guidance for civil servants. This, in combination with consistent support from the council members in the municipal council, results in a high degree of policy cohesion and rather limited room for influence from the opposition. In Zoetermeer, the broader coalition is based on a more general coalition agreement. This allows for more flexibility and negotiation between coalition and opposition parties within the council. In turn, this creates more opportunity for alternative proposals and cross-party collaboration on different mobility issues. When coalition agreements are directive and the coalition parties dominant, only the coalition will have influence. In more flexible or fragmented coalitions, the policy-making space becomes more dynamic.

A possible explanation for coalitions being dominant or more fragmented is its seat distribution and commonalities between the coalition parties. This is in line with findings of Rasch and Tsebelis (2013) who showed that dominant coalitions with a clear majority and more ideologically aligned parties tend to produce more cohesive policy and limit opposition influence. In Leiden the coalition holds 22 out of 39 seats and consists of four relatively aligned parties. This in combination with the strong coalition agreement could be the reason for the dominance of the coalition. In Zoetermeer, the broader coalition of six more ideologically divers parties holds 25 out of 39 seats. This in combination with a more general coalition agreement potentially allows for more negotiation and cross-party collaboration within the municipal council.

## *How do civil servants influence mobility policy?*

Civil servants in both Zoetermeer and Leiden play an important role in translating political ambitions into implementable policy. Council members expressed that, in their opinion, civil servants do not act as neutral entities but rather advise based on their expertise in the field of mobility. Particularly representatives from more "grey" parties indicated that civil servants tend to pursue mobility policies that focus on sustainability. In Leiden, there is a strong alignment between civil servants and their advice and the coalition parties that allow for a stable policy environment that supports sustainable

mobility policies and initiatives. Results show that the political context in Zoetermeer is more fragmented. This requires civil servants to adopt a more pragmatic and adaptive approach in their advice, proposals and plans. These results show that civil servants indeed do not operate as neutral actors. They have strategic agency and exercise based on their insights and expertise. The political context, however, determines the policy space they operate in.

### *Coalition Composition and Policy Direction*

A key pattern that has emerged from this comparative analysis is the relationship between the coalition composition of Leiden and Zoetermeer and the direction of their respective mobility policies. While both Leiden and Zoetermeer face similar challenges, such as the limited availability of space, the policy responses differ in emphasis and ambition. The green coalition in Leiden demonstrates a stronger focus on decreasing car use, promoting active and public transport and prioritizing greenery in public space. This sentiment was shared by the GroenLinks council member, as well as in Leiden's policy documents. In contrast, the grey coalition in Zoetermeer tends to pursue an approach that balances different modes, with the car still being a priority. Both representatives from these parties, as well as the Zoetermeer policy documents, highlight the need for a balance between sustainability and accessibility and emphasize the importance of facilitating car use in addition to other modes of transport. This pattern suggests that the "green" or "grey" character of a governing coalition may shape the direction of the policy direction for mobility policy. However, this relationship is not necessarily straightforward as it is influenced by other matters, such as coalition dynamics and political structures. This finding points to a broader dynamic that will be explored further in the next section: the influence of political parties on policy outcomes is not direct, underscoring the idea that party influence is filtered through broader political dynamics.

## 6.2 Theoretical Reflection

In this section, the conceptual framework and the theories that it is grounded in will be critically evaluated based on the insights from the results chapter. Partisan theory, the party family approach and the Multiple Streams Framework, are reflected upon in light of the findings.

Partisan theory assumes that political parties influence policy outcomes based on the needs and preferences of their core voter groups (Hibbs, 1977). More recent work argues that the traditional voter groups that are the backbone of Hibbs' (1977) partisan theory have weakened (Wenzelburger & Zohlnhöfer, 2021). Partisan theory in its original form can partially explain the results of this study. Political parties in Zoetermeer and Leiden pursue a mobility policy that is in line with voter needs and preferences but to a certain extent. Ideologically anchored parties, such as VVD and GroenLinks, tend to balance the wishes of their constituencies with party ideology. Local parties in Zoetermeer and Leiden displayed more flexibility and responsiveness to local needs. This flexibility in local parties supports the idea that party strategies are increasingly shaped by electoral competition and changing constituencies, as described by Beramendi et al. (2015). The

findings uncover that, although to a different extent, both ideologically driven and local parties balance values with strategic choices. This shows that long-standing assumptions about parties being driven by strong voter blocks no longer hold as firmly. Scholars like Evans and Tilley (2012) have demonstrated that this party-voter links have weakened over time. The findings in this study reflect this change too, especially in local politics, where clear divides between parties now seem less predictable than they once were (Hibbs, 1977).

The party family approach as conceptualized by Jahn (2022) and applied in this research holds up after reflection in light of the research results. Green parties, such as GroenLinks demonstrate a rather strong alignment with environmental concerns and sustainability. This confirms Carter (2013) and Neumayer (2003), who explained that green parties are ideologically anchored in battling environmental degradation and climate change. Representatives from a grey party like VVD often highlighted the importance of prioritizing economic feasibility and urban accessibility, which reflects their traditional liberal ideology (Jahn, 2022). The representatives from these grey parties often clarified that they are not "against" sustainability, but rather they choose to balance it with other practical considerations. This nuanced positioning of grey parties confirms that ideological viewpoints do influence mobility policy, but only when they are aligned with strategic and electoral considerations. The position of local parties in both municipalities further confirms the party family approach. The representatives from these parties do not identify with any ideology but rather behave as pragmatic actors that are highly responsive to local preferences. This behaviour supports the categorization of local parties as proposed by Boogers & Voerman (2010) and Fagerholm (2016), who describe local parties as place-based actors rather than ideologically bound entities.

The Multiple Streams Framework, developed by Kingdon (1984) and later expanded by Béland & Howlett (2016), helped understand the findings. In both Zoetermeer and Leiden it became clear that framing battles, problem brokers, policy entrepreneurs and coalition dynamics play a central role in shaping whether and how a window of opportunity opens for mobility policy. To illustrate, political party representatives used specific narratives such as economic realism or climate urgency, to elevate or dismiss policy proposals and plans. This aligns with the framing function of problem brokers (Knaggård, 2015). Moreover, in Leiden and Zoetermeer civil servants act as policy entrepreneurs (cf. Béland & Howlett, 2016; Hoefer, 2022). The results show that the civil servants pursue solutions and policies that they believe are useful . Finally, the influence of political alignment and coalition dynamics and negotiations is apparent in Zoetermeer and Leiden. This further supports the Multiple Streams Framework's useful insights on the multi-layered character of political influence on policy.

The results further demonstrate that the 'political strategies', including coalition dynamics, coalition and opposition collaboration, civil servant agency and electoral success have a more substantial influence on municipal mobility policy of Zoetermeer and Leiden. In contrast to party ideology and external factors, the political strategies seem to result in more variability between the two municipalities. This highlights how political institutions filter ideological influence (cf. Schmidt, 1996) and highlights the role of strategic behaviour in local governance settings (cf. John, 2013).

To summarize, this research confirms that partisan influence is real but highly contextual. It is filtered through institutional structures such as coalition dynamics, mediated by civil servants and shaped by strategic political behaviour. The behaviour of local parties in particular, challenges the deterministic assumptions in classical partisan theory and the party family approach. This study contributes to a growing body of work that considers ideological influence as conditional and balanced with strategic considerations, rather than as a linear, top-down process. In doing so, it validates the critique on highly deterministic partisan theories and calls for more attention to the political climate of local governments.

## 6.3 Practical Implications

This research offers practical insights for two groups: political actors (including council members and aldermen), urban planning professionals (civil servants and external consultants).

### *For political actors: council members & aldermen*

For political actors such as council members and aldermen the research offers several practical insights that could improve their understanding of the complex field of mobility policy making at Dutch municipalities. Framing mobility issues is a political act but also a flexible one. Political narratives around mobility issues and their solutions can be reframed in ways that build coalition and attract broader support. To illustrate, car access can be linked to economic vibrancy and bike lanes can be linked to public health. Both are frames that can help prioritize certain issues and plans and potentially attract broader support, depending on the political context of a municipality.

Coalition dynamics, particularly the level of detail of the coalition agreement, play a significant role in determining the policymaking space. Understanding the informal "rules of the game", such as who holds influence, how agreements are negotiated, the importance of faction discipline and when to build alliances, is crucial for advancing mobility policy, plans and proposals. Depending on the dominance of the coalition and the consequential space in policymaking, mobility policymaking can be about timing and compromise. Recognizing the scarce political capital, such as windows of opportunity, can help political actors to set realistic priorities and good political timing for their respective policy ambitions.

Finally, aldermen, in particular, must maintain an accurate political antenna. Their ability to navigate political sentiment, understand the narratives that resonate and attract support, and anticipate the reactions of various municipal council factions is essential for achieving mobility policy approval and implementation, especially in more fragmented policy spaces, such as that of Zoetermeer.

# *For urban planning professionals: civil servants & external consultants*

For urban planning professionals, especially civil servants at municipalities and external n consultants that are hired by municipalities, the findings can contribute to a better understanding of the complex field of mobility policymaking at Dutch municipalities. Clarity on the political alignment within a municipality provides urban planning professionals with agency. When coalition agreements are clear and directive, civil servants, and possibly external consultants, can pursue proposals with greater confidence. On the other hand, when agreements are vague, flexibility increases but so does the level of uncertainty. An understanding of the level of dominance of coalitions can also provide valuable understanding of the political context within a municipality. This includes understanding the seat distribution but also the ideological alignment of the coalition parties. Clarity on this alignment between political ambitions, the dominance of the coalition and the role the coalition agreement provides urban planning professionals with understanding and agency on when and how to pursue mobility policy proposals and plans. In practice, this entails that civil servants or external consultants that are unfamiliar with the local political context, would be advised to familiarize themselves. This can be done through a brief analysis of the seat distribution, the ideological alignment of the coalition parties, and how the mobility ambitions are prioritized within the coalition agreement. This analysis will provide a sense of awareness on the dominance of and alignment within the coalition. In turn, this can help determine the level of necessity of collaboration with opposition parties and the timing and details of proposals and plans.

The policy process often shapes outcomes more than the contents itself. Political predispositions towards mobility and the course a coalition wants to take are relatively fixed, particularly in dominant coalitions. As a result, strategic engagement, including early communication, anticipation of resistance, and inclusive consultation, is essential. Especially when there is space for negotiation. Civil servants and external consultants can benefit from being invested in this process early on, rather than reacting to conflict when it arises. Strategic engagement can be used as a tool to build support deliberately. To illustrate, civil servants and external consultants can benefit from thorough communication with municipal department they are involved with. Additionally, thorough communication with different departments that might be involved can also contribute to the success of a project. By communicating with all involved departments, and their respective aldermen, any potential political resistance can be identified early on. As the results strongly suggest, planning is political, and success does not just depend on the technical aspects but on process management.

A final practical implication of the research results is that local parties require additional strategic engagement. The results indicate that these parties are highly responsive to the local context, rather than a central issue or ideology. For external consultants, understanding local concerns and being ready to adapt communication and planning strategies based on that, can result in gaining local party support for mobility proposals and plans. This improved understanding of local parties and collaboration between more established and local parties is especially relevant considering that local parties are gaining in popularity throughout the Netherlands (Boogers & Voerman, 2010).

## 6.4 Limitations and Recommendations

The final section of this discussion covers the research limitations that were identified upon reflection. Furthermore, based on the insights from this study, recommendations for future research will be made.

### *Limitations*

In addition to the methodological limitations as outlined in chapter 4, several additional limitations were identified upon reflection. This study was designed as an exploratory analysis and studied two-cases. While it offers valuable insights into the municipalities of Leiden and Zoetermeer, these results are not necessarily generalizable to all Dutch municipalities. Furthermore, the number of interviewees per case, six in Leiden and five in Zoetermeer, was relatively limited. Although thematic saturation was reached with these eleven interviews, a broader set of participants, including other stakeholders such as residents or private sector representatives, could have further enriched the findings of the study. The short time span of this thesis also contributed to the limited number and variety of interviewees. In hindsight, the use of self-reported data in the form of interviews introduces the risk of a bias. Interviewees may have framed their responses to align with socially desirable or politically strategic narratives. Finally, the distinct local political cultures in Dutch municipalities could mean that findings are highly-context dependent and are not easily transferable beyond the Dutch context.

### *Recommendations for future research*

Based on the insights of this study, several valuable recommendations for future research can be made. First, future research should broaden the empirical scope and include a larger number of municipalities with varied coalition compositions. This would allow for a more systematic analysis of the relationship between political parties and mobility policy in Dutch municipalities. Furthermore, longitudinal research is also recommended. Considering the political term limit of four years, tracking changes in policy priorities, policy making and party influence over multiple political terms would allow for gaining insights into the temporal aspect of partisan influence. Finally, a deeper investigation into the behaviour and growing popularity of local parties is warranted. These factions appear to operate outside traditional ideological frameworks, and their impact on mobility policymaking is both relevant and under-theorized. Understanding their strategies and influence, as well as the dynamics between these local party factions and more established party factions could offer a novel perspective on democratic accountability at the municipal level.

Political party ideology, institutional and political structures and administrative agency interact in shaping municipal mobility policies. Moreover, the influence of political parties is contextual, mediated by coalitions and their dominance, and shaped by civil service processes. In short, the process and not just the content, is where political influence shows.

# 7 CONCLUSION

This research set out to answer the following central research question: *How do political parties at a local level influence mobility policy in Dutch municipalities?* The study focussed on the municipalities of Zoetermeer and Leiden and aimed to better understand how political actors, ideological positions and broader institutional setting shape mobility policies within different local contexts. To address this research aim, a qualitative comparative case study research approach was applied, which combined literature and policy review with semi-structured interviews. This methodological approach was guided by a conceptual framework that combined partisan theory, the party family approach and the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF). This research design allowed for a multidimensional analysis of how political parties at the local level define, frame and prioritize mobility challenges, formulate policy positions and navigate political decision-making in Leiden and Zoetermeer.

The findings of this study reveal that while both municipalities face similar mobility challenges, such as competing claims for scarce urban space, the way these challenges were framed, prioritized and addressed varies between Leiden and Zoetermeer. Furthermore, the findings do suggest a link between the "grey" or "green" character of governing coalitions and the direction of mobility policy. Leiden, with a more "green" coalition has pursued more assertive policies to discourage car use and encourage active and public transport. Zoetermeer, governed by a more "grey" coalition, appears to take a more balanced approach, maintaining space for car use whilst also considering more sustainable options. These differences seem to not only stem from ideological priorities but also from the political strategies, structures and local contexts within which these coalitions operate in Zoetermeer and Leiden.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the evolving partisan theory, by applying it at the local level and demonstrating how party ideology and electoral considerations interact with external factors and political structures. The party family approach provided a helpful perspective on how ideological positions might shape mobility policy preferences, while the MSF offered insight into the highly relevant process of emergence, stagnation and acceptance of policy. From a practical perspective, this study contributes to a growing recognition of the relevance of local politics in shaping mobility policy, especially with the growing popularity of local political parties. The findings may support policymakers and urban planning professionals such as external consultants in developing politically feasible and context-sensitive strategies for urban mobility that focus not only on contents but also on the political decision-making processes.

In conclusion, this research has shown that political parties do influence local mobility policy, but that this influence is not straightforward. It is formed by a combination of ideological positions, coalition dynamics, administrative influence and local political contexts. While the differences in coalition composition appears to relate to differences in policy direction, this relationship is embedded in a broader, dynamic political context. Future research could build on the foundation that was laid in this study by examining a wider range of municipalities or exploring how political influence on mobility policy at the local level evolves across multiple administrative terms.

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# APPENDIX A.1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE COUNCIL MEMBER

**Introductie:**
Dank voor uw tijd. Dit gesprek gaat over hoe mobiliteitsbeleid in Zoetermeer/ Leiden tot stand komt. Ik ben benieuwd naar uw ervaringen en inzichten als gemeenteraadslid, vooral over hoe mobiliteitsproblemen worden gedefinieerd en partijstandpunten worden gevormd en hoe dit uiteindelijk leidt tot beleid. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden.

- Kunt u zichzelf kort voorstellen?
- Wat is uw rol binnen de gemeente?
- Op wat voor manier heeft u te maken met mobiliteitsbeleid binnen uw gemeente?

**1. Definitie en framing van een probleem**

**1.1. Kunt u een belangrijk mobiliteitsprobleem in uw gemeente beschrijven?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Hoe is dit probleem onder de aandacht gekomen?
- Hoe wordt dit probleem binnen de gemeenteraad besproken?
- Heeft u zelf een sterke mening over dit probleem? Waarom?

**1.2. Welke mobiliteits problemen worden binnen uw partij als belangrijk gezien?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Waarom deze?
- Welke mensen binnen de partij hebben hier invloed op?
- Wordt er vaak gedebatteerd over wat wél of geen probleem is binnen uw partij?
- Heeft u weleens een andere mening gehad dan de meerderheid in uw partij? Zo ja, wat gebeurde er toen?

**1.3. Spelen externe partijen (bewoners van de gemeente, lokale bedrijven, media, NGO's, etc.) een rol bij de probleemdefinitie? Welke?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Welke externe partijen hebben volgens u invloed op het identificeren en definiëren van een mobiliteitsprobleem?
- Kunt u een voorbeeld geven van een keer dat een externe partij echt iets heeft veranderd aan hoe zo'n probleem werd gezien?
- Wordt u persoonlijk vaak benaderd door externe partijen? Hoe ervaart u dat?

**1.4. Wordt er binnen uw partij veel gediscussieerd over hoe een mobiliteitsprobleem wordt geframed door uw partij?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- **Hoe wordt er gediscussieerd?**
- **Gebeurt dat vaak?**
- **Wanneer gebeurt dit?**
- Heeft u weleens meegemaakt dat u anders naar een probleem ging kijken door de discussie binnen uw partij?
- In hoeverre speelt strategisch denken (bijv. hoe kiezers het probleem zien) een rol in de framing van een mobiliteitsprobleem?

**1.5. Welke belangen spelen een rol bij het bepalen van wat als mobiliteitsprobleem wordt gezien?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Welke niet?

- Zijn deze belangen altijd hetzelfde?
- Zijn er belangen die structureel minder gehoord worden?
- Heeft u als raadslid invloed op welke belangen prioriteit krijgen? Hoe?

## 2. Vorming van het partijstandpunt over de uitdaging

### 2.1. Wat voor standpunten over mobiliteit heeft uw partij opgenomen in het meest recente verkiezingsprogramma?
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Wordt er altijd een duidelijk standpunt ingenomen?
- Op welke mobiliteitsuitdagingen worden duidelijke standpunten aangenomen?

### 2.2. Hoe komt de partij tot een standpunt omtrent mobiliteitsbeleid?
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Welke stappen worden er genomen voordat er een definitief standpunt is?
- Hoeveel ruimte is er voor verschillende meningen binnen de partij?
- Heeft u weleens geprobeerd het standpunt van uw partij actief te beïnvloeden? Hoe ging dat?

### 2.3. Wie spelen een rol bij de totstandkoming van een standpunt (individuele raadsleden, partijbestuur, wethouder, andere leden)?
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Heeft u zelf veel invloed op het uiteindelijke standpunt?
- Hoe verloopt de samenwerking tussen raadsleden en de partijtop hierover?
- Kunt u een situatie beschrijven waarin een speler binnen de partij een doorslaggevende rol had in de standpuntbepaling?

### 2.4. Welke rol speelt partijideologie bij het bepalen van dit standpunt?
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Welke ideologie vindt u het beste passen bij uw partij?
- Hoe belangrijk vindt u zelf de ideologie van uw partij?

### 2.5. In hoeverre spelen politieke strategieën (bijv. electorale overwegingen, coalitiedynamiek) een rol bij de standpuntbepaling?
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Wordt er rekening gehouden bij het bepalen van een standpunt met hoe kiezers over het onderwerp denken?
- Beïnvloeden coalitiepartners de standpuntbepaling van uw partij? Hoe?
- Heeft u weleens een situatie meegemaakt waarin strategische overwegingen, zoals het winnen van stemmen, belangrijker leken dan de inhoud?

### 2.6. Welke externe factoren (publieke opinie, media, etc.) hebben invloed op hoe uw partij haar standpunt over mobiliteitsbeleid bepaalt?
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Hoe gaat uw partij om met publieke opinie rondom een mobiliteitskwestie?
- Heeft u weleens meegemaakt dat een standpunt veranderde door externe druk?
- Zijn er externe factoren die volgens u te veel of te weinig invloed hebben hierop?

## 3. Van standpunt naar goedgekeurd beleid

**3.1. Kunt u een voorbeeld geven van een maatregel/besluit/ beleidsstuk over mobiliteit die recent is goedgekeurd of besproken ?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Bij welke mobiliteitsuitdaging paste deze maatregel?
- Hoe is deze maatregel tot stand gekomen?
- Had u een rol in dit proces?
- Hoe werd hierover gedebatteerd in de raad?
- Kunt u een belangrijk duurzaamheidsinitiatief op gebied van mobiliteit in uw gemeente beschrijven?

**3.2. Welke beleidsopties lagen op tafel en waarom is uiteindelijk voor deze optie gekozen?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Was er veel discussie over de alternatieve opties?
- Heeft u zelf weleens een voorkeur gehad voor een andere oplossing dan die uiteindelijk is gekozen?

**3.3. In hoeverre kan uw partij compromissen sluiten met andere partijen?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Zijn er voorbeelden waarin uw partij concessies moest doen op mobiliteitsbeleid?
- Hoe ervaart u het sluiten van compromissen in de gemeentelijke politiek?
- Wanneer is een compromis voor u acceptabel?

**3.4. Wat zijn de belangrijkste factoren die bepalen of een voorstel wel of geen steun krijgt in de gemeenteraad?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Is er altijd een duidelijke scheiding tussen partijen of groepen van partijen?
- Hoeveel invloed hadden publieke opinie en media op deze beslissing?
- Heeft u weleens ervaren dat een, in uw ogen, goed voorstel toch werd afgewezen? Waarom?

**3.5. Heeft u het gevoel dat het uiteindelijke beleid en maatregelen altijd recht doen aan de uitdaging die in eerste instantie wordt gedefinieerd? Waarom wel/niet?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Kunt u een voorbeeld geven van beleid dat uiteindelijk heel anders uitpakte dan bedoeld?
- Hoe kijkt u terug op dit besluitvormingsproces omtrent mobiliteitsbeleid in zijn geheel en uw eigen rol daarin als gemeenteraadslid?

**<u>Afsluiting</u>**
- Zijn er nog zaken die u belangrijk vindt om te bespreken en die we nu nog niet hebben besproken?
- Heeft u nog opmerkingen over hoe het afnemen van dit interview in de toekomst beter zou kunnen?
- Bedankt voor uw tijd en inzichten! Wilt u op de hoogte gehouden worden?

# APPENDIX A.2 – INTERVIEW GUIDE CIVIL SERVANT

**Introductie:**
Dank u voor uw tijd. Dit gesprek gaat over hoe mobiliteitsbeleid in Zoetermeer/Leiden tot stand komt. Ik ben benieuwd naar uw ervaringen en inzichten als beleidsmedewerker, vooral over hoe mobiliteitsproblemen worden gedefinieerd, welke beleidsopties worden overwogen en hoe beleid uiteindelijk wordt vastgesteld. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden.
- Kunt u zichzelf kort voorstellen?
- Wat is uw rol binnen de gemeente?
- Op welke manier heeft u te maken met mobiliteitsbeleid binnen uw gemeente?

## 1. Definitie en framing van een probleem

### 1.1. Kunt u een belangrijk mobiliteitsprobleem in uw gemeente beschrijven?
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Hoe is dit probleem op de beleidsagenda gekomen?
- Welke gegevens of analyses gebruikt u om dit probleem in kaart te brengen?
- Wat is uw kijk op dit probleem?

### 1.2. Welke rol speelt de ambtelijke organisatie bij het bepalen van wat als een mobiliteitsprobleem wordt gezien?
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Kunt u beschrijven of en hoe uw afdeling betrokken is bij het signaleren van mobiliteitsproblemen?
- Welke stappen doorloopt u voordat een probleem op de beleidsagenda komt? Onderzoek doen, advies uitbrengen?
- Hoe verloopt het overleg met wethouders en de gemeenteraad hierover?
- In hoeverre spelen ambtelijke adviezen een rol bij de definitieve probleem identificering en definitie?
- Hoe verloopt de interactie met de gemeenteraad en wethouder(s) hierbij?
- Worden er objectieve criteria gehanteerd of spelen ook politieke afwegingen mee?

### 1.3. Spelen externe partijen (bewoners van de gemeente, lokale bedrijven, media, NGO's, etc.) een rol bij de probleemdefinitie? Welke?
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Kunt u een voorbeeld geven van een keer dat een externe partij echt iets heeft veranderd aan hoe zo'n probleem werd gezien?
- Worden deze partijen betrokken bij het beleidsproces? Wellicht bij de probleemanalyse of de advisering richting de gemeenteraad?

## 2. Beleidsvorming en standpuntbepaling

### 2.1. Hoe worden beleidsopties rondom mobiliteit ontwikkeld en afgewogen?
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Wie werken mee aan het ontwikkelen van beleidsopties?
- Welke factoren spelen de grootste rol in het kiezen van beleidsopties?
- In hoeverre heeft u ruimte om eigen expertise en inzichten in te brengen?
- Welke factoren zijn doorslaggevend bij het selecteren van de opties die aan de gemeenteraad worden voorgedragen?

**2.2. Hoe verloopt de samenwerking met wethouders en raadsleden bij de beleidsvorming?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Ervaart u wel eens druk vanuit de politiek bij het ontwikkelen van adviezen of beleidsopties?
- Hoe wordt omgegaan met politieke druk binnen de ambtelijke organisatie? Zijn er wel eens spanning tussen de ambtelijke adviezen en de wensen van de politieke partijen? Hoe ziet die spanning er uit?

**2.3. Kijkt u ook naar economische en technische haalbaarheid bij haalbaarheid bij het ontwikkelen van beleid/ adviezen? Op welke manier**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Welke juridische of financiële beperkingen komt u tegen?
- Wat zijn de grootste beperkingen volgens u?
- Ervaart u deze in uw dagelijkse werkzaamheden?
- Worden deze beperkingen altijd erkend door de politiek?

**3. Van beleidsvoorstel naar uitvoering**

**3.1. Kunt u beschrijven hoe het traject van beleidsvoorstel naar goedkeuring verloopt?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Heeft u een specifiek voorbeeld van een ingevoerd beleid op het gebied van mobiliteit?
- Wat waren volgens u de belangrijkste overwegingen bij de uiteindelijke keuze voor die optie?

**3.2. Welke factoren bepalen volgens u of een voorstel wel of geen steun krijgt in de raad?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Bestaat er iets als ambtelijk draagvlak naar uw idee?
- Hoe belangrijk is ambtelijk draagvlak versus politiek draagvlak?
- Hoe wordt omgegaan met tegengestelde belangen binnen de gemeente?

**3.3. Heeft u het gevoel dat het uiteindelijke beleid altijd recht doet aan het oorspronkelijke probleem?**
Mogelijke bijbehorende vragen:
- Zijn er situaties waarin beleid anders uitpakte dan bedoeld?
- Hoe reflecteert u op het besluitvormingsproces rondom mobiliteitsbeleid? Wat zijn knelpunten in het process>

**Afsluiting**
- Zijn er nog zaken die u belangrijk vindt om te bespreken en die we nu nog niet hebben besproken?
- Heeft u nog opmerkingen over hoe het afnemen van dit interview in de toekomst beter zou kunnen?
- Bedankt voor uw tijd en inzichten! Wilt u op de hoogte gehouden worden?

# APPENDIX A.3 – INTERVIEW GUIDE ALDERMEN

**<u>Introductie:</u>**
Hartelijk dank dat u bereid bent deel te nemen aan dit schriftelijke interview. Uw ervaringen en inzichten als wethouder zijn voor mijn onderzoek van grote waarde. Dit interview richt zich op het tot stand komen van mobiliteitsbeleid binnen uw gemeente – met specifieke aandacht voor hoe mobiliteitsproblemen worden gedefinieerd, welke rol partijstandpunten en coalitiedynamiek hierin spelen, en hoe dit alles uiteindelijk leidt tot beleidskeuzes.
Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden; ik ben vooral geïnteresseerd in uw persoonlijke kijk en praktijkervaringen. U kunt de vragen puntsgewijs beantwoorden op een moment dat het u uitkomt.

- Kunt u zichzelf kort voorstellen?
- Kunt u uw rol binnen de gemeente omschrijven?
- Op welke manier bent u betrokken bij het mobiliteitsbeleid binnen uw gemeente?

## <u>1. Definitie en framing van mobiliteitsproblemen</u>

### 1.1. Kunt u een belangrijk mobiliteitsprobleem in uw gemeente beschrijven?
- Heeft dit probleem hoge prioriteit ten opzichte van andere mobiliteitsuitdagingen?
- Welke belangen spelen volgens u een rol bij de manier waarop dit probleem wordt gedefinieerd?

### 1.2. Hoe beïnvloedt uw politieke partij de manier waarop u mobiliteitsproblemen benadert?
- Hoe verenigt u het partijstandpunt met uw bestuurlijke verantwoordelijkheid?
- Heeft u in uw rol als wethouder weleens een andere visie gehad dan uw partij?

### 1.3. Spelen externe partijen (bewoners van de gemeente, lokale bedrijven, media, NGO's, etc.) een rol bij de probleemdefinitie? Welke?
- Kunt u een voorbeeld geven van een keer dat een externe partij echt iets heeft veranderd aan hoe zo'n probleem werd gezien?

### 1.4. In hoeverre wordt u in uw rol als wethouder beïnvloed door publieke opinie of belangenbehartiging? Op wat voor manier?

## <u>2. Beleidsvorming en strategische overwegingen</u>

### 2.1. Hoe wordt mobiliteitsbeleid afgestemd binnen het college?
- Wie zijn hierbij betrokken?
- Is er binnen het college wel eens sprake van tegengestelde belangen? Hoe worden deze opgelost?
- In hoeverre spelen coalitieafspraken een rol?
- Hoe werkt u samen met de beleidsmedewerkers van de mobiliteitsafdeling? Open voor advisering etc.

### 2.2. Welke rol spelen politieke strategieën in uw beleidskeuzes?
- Hoe houdt u rekening met electorale gevolgen?
- Heeft u weleens concessies moeten doen om een voorstel aangenomen te krijgen?
- Op basis van welke factoren maakt u dergelijke afwegingen?

**2.3. In hoeverre beïnvloeden juridische en financiële kaders uw keuzes?**
- Wat zijn volgens u de grootste beperkingen?
- Zijn er voorbeelden van politiek gewenste beleidsopties die uiteindelijk niet haalbaar bleken?
- Zijn er naar uw inzicht veel beperkingen vanuit de landelijke regelgeving? Hoe gaat u daarmee om?

**3. Van beleid naar uitvoering**

**3.1. Kunt u een voorbeeld geven van recent geïmplementeerd mobiliteitsbeleid in uw gemeente?**
- Welke alternatieven lagen op tafel en waarom is deze keuze gemaakt?
- Was er brede steun voor dit beleid?
- Kunt u ook een belangrijk duurzaamheidsinitiatief binnen uw gemeente op mobiliteitsgebied toelichten?

**3.2. Hoe gaat u om met politieke weerstand tegen een beleidsvoorstel?**
- Komt de weerstand doorgaans van dezelfde partijen?
- Heeft u weleens uw strategie aangepast om voldoende steun te krijgen?
- Hoe belangrijk is het sluiten van compromissen in uw rol?

**3.3. Heeft u het gevoel dat het uiteindelijke beleid recht doet aan het oorspronkelijke probleem?**
- Zijn er voorbeelden van beleid dat anders uitpakte dan bedoeld?
- Hoe kijkt u terug op het besluitvormingsproces?

**Tot slot**

- Zijn er zaken die u belangrijk vindt om nog te benoemen en die nog niet aan bod zijn gekomen?
- Heeft u suggesties voor verbetering van dit interview of de opzet ervan?
- Wilt u op de hoogte gehouden worden van de resultaten van dit onderzoek?

Nogmaals hartelijk dank voor uw tijd en waardevolle bijdrage.

# APPENDIX B – CODE TREE