



# **Improving climate policy in left-behind regions:**

## **The case of Groningen**

Bachelor thesis

Silke Anna Saffa Huizenga

BSc. Global Responsibility & Leadership

Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Caspar van den Berg and Alexandre C. Belloir

Campus Fryslân, University of Groningen

June 5th, 2023

## Abstract

This thesis addresses trust in the government in Groningen, and how to make climate policies in light of distrust. At the present moment, protests and discontent about the national government are apparent in Groningen, the Netherlands. Groningen is characterized as a “left-behind” region and is severely affected by earthquakes. While faced with a climate crisis, the question arises of how to make effective policy taking into account this distrust in government.

In this study, interviews were conducted with inhabitants of rural Groningen to incorporate a Verstehen perspective. The study found three core themes that lead to low trust in government: the government’s response to earthquakes, the allowances scandal, and the covid-19 strategy. To improve policies, the following suggestions are made: improve communication, incorporate Adaptive Policy-Making (APM), integrate measures from the Not In My Back-Yard (NIMBY) research, and principles from the Fair Energy Transition for All (FETA). The study also presents limitations and suggests avenues for further research.

*Keywords:* trust in government, regional disparities, left behind regions, climate policy, energy transition, farmers, Netherlands

Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Literature review	7
2.1 Global Phenomenon	7
2.2 The Netherlands	9
2.3 Groningen	13
3. Methodological Framework	16
4. Policy Background	19
4.1 Sector Industry	20
4.2 Regional Energy Strategy Groningen	20
4.3 Compensation for Fracking	22
5. Findings and Discussion	23
5.1 Distrust in Governance and its Roots	23
5.1.1 Overarching Themes	23
5.1.2 Earthquake Damage	24
5.1.3 Allowances Scandal	25
5.1.4 Concluding Remarks	27
5.2 Climate Governance	27
5.3 Social Welfare State	30
6. Policy implications	31
6.1 Sector Industry	31
6.2 Regional Energy Strategy Groningen	33
6.3 Compensation for Fracking	34
7. Conclusion	37
Sources	41

## 1. Introduction

Does the national Dutch government govern for the majority of the Dutch people? Are the interests of a person living in the Hague represented as equally as a person living in the province? Are certain regions disadvantaged in political decision-making? This contention is held by various groups in the Netherlands. The “blokkeer Friezen” (blocking Frisians) who occupied the highway in 2017 believe their region is stereotyped and negatively portrayed by national governance, and the inhabitants of Groningen lack trust in the government to implement their interests (Duk, 2022; RTV Noord, 2023). Distrust in governance is apparent among a significant part of the Dutch population. Figure 1 shows the answer to the question: “To what extent do you feel politicians care about people like you?”. The number 0 means “not at all”, and 10 “a lot”. The black numbers indicate the responses from the cities, and the red numbers are the provinces. Notably, the numbers given are generally low, with the highest being a 5.5 for the city of Utrecht (Trouw & Kieskompas, 2023).

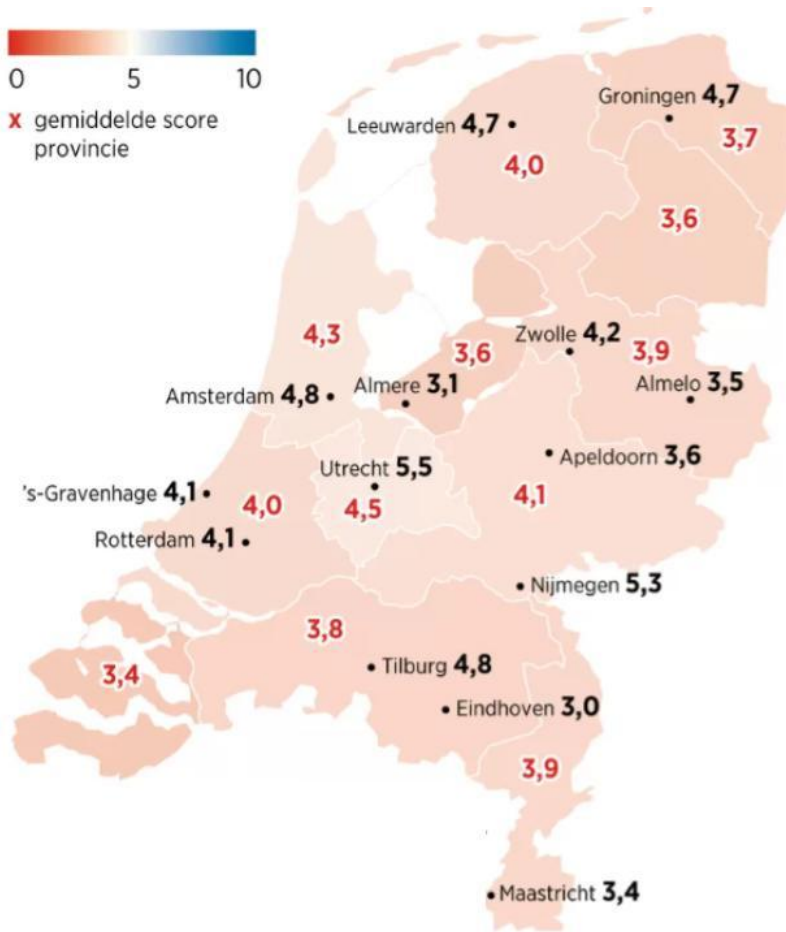


Figure 1: Trust in government (Trouw & Kieskompas, 2023).

Trust is here defined as “a person’s belief that another person or institution will act consistently with their expectations of positive behavior” (OECD, 2017). Whether trust in government is lowest in Groningen, Drenthe, Zeeland or Flevoland depends on the statistic used, however, the broad picture is clear: trust in governance is lowest outside of the core regions of the “Randstad” (Kieskompas, 2023; NOS, 2023)<sup>1</sup>. The distrust in government fits into a larger debate or “divide” between the central regions in the Netherlands and rural regions. In the center, a large part of the

<sup>1</sup> Groningen scores the highest on the statement “people in rural areas are left behind” with 77% agreement. Zeeland indicates distrust the most often, with 55% mentioning this. In Flevoland the most participants, 31%, indicated “very low trust” in the national government and 17% “very low trust” in the regional government. Drenthe scored highest in agreement on the statement “I am concerned about political culture” (NOS, 2023).

political and economic power is located, and the “left behind” regions tend to feel more discontent, have higher protest votes, and have less economic growth (MacKinnon et al., 2021).

Groningen can be considered as one of these “left-behind” regions. Trust in government amongst inhabitants of Groningen, henceforth referred to as Groningers, is a specific case within the Netherlands. This is due to the natural gas field that is located in Groningen, which was exploited for many years, even though it was leading to earthquakes in the region (Tweede Kamer, 2023). As the prime minister Mark Rutte admitted: “The national government and the oil companies have structurally ignored the interests of local residents. (...) As a result, people in the gas extraction area have suffered unnecessarily from earthquakes, the slow handling of claims, and uncertainty about their safety” (Tweede Kamer, 2023, p1). This has severely impacted trust in governance in Groningen (Driessen & Kanne, 2021).

Despite the skepticism towards the national government in Groningen, there is still an urgent need for climate action (Steffen et al., 2015). Sustainability policies will need government policies with the support of the majority of the population, in line with democracy. National climate policies tend to be made in the capital of the Netherlands and therefore are not always representative for the whole country (Driessen & Kanne, 2021). Agriculture is mostly concentrated in the “left behind” regions and is a sector that will have to reform in order to build a sustainable future (Environmental Data Compendium, n.d.). Therefore, an essential and underexplored topic is how to make climate policies in light of regional distrust in the government in Groningen.

The research question that this thesis will aim to answer is: *What factors explain the low levels of trust in government in the region of Groningen, and in light of these factors, how could climate policy be improved to address distrust and be more effective in achieving their objectives?*

In order to answer this question, I will first present a review of existing literature and existing policies around this topic, followed by the methodological framework for this study. The findings and discussion, policy implications, and conclusion will then be presented.

## 2. Literature Review

This section reviews existing literature on the geographical patterning of discontent. The first part is dedicated to the global patterning of this phenomenon, followed by the Dutch and the Groningen context.

### *2.1 Global Phenomenon*

Similar to this study's examination of societal discontent and trust in government in the NL, Florida (2021) mapped out global trends in discontent by observing both economic and social trends. The geographical differences most often discussed are general discontent and voting behavior, often related to support for far-right parties (Florida, 2021). The geographical places that tend to feel more discontent, vote for relatively far-right parties, and have less economic growth can be called the "left-behind places" (MacKinnon et al., 2021). Important to note here is that literature tends to focus on general patterns, and not everything may translate one to one to the Northern Dutch context: the region of Groningen has many of the characteristics of the left-behind regions, such as relatively low economic activity and trust in governance but does not necessarily vote relatively more far-right than the rest of the Netherlands (NOS, 2021).

Bishop (2008) prescribes that large geographical differences are due to the "big sort": a process in which people segregate and move to places that fit and reinforce their existing identities and values. This relates closely to job availability: those more highly-educated work in knowledge industries located in cities, and less educated with traditional values are concentrated in rural areas. In the past, industrial activities and working-class jobs were more evenly distributed across places, whereas the knowledge industry clusters knowledge and skill (Glaeser, 2006). The



left-behind regions are marginalized in physical, economic or political terms. Important here is that the relative economic position related to the past history of the region is an essential predictor of discontent. The worsening of the position of these regions often relates to globalization, innovation, inequality, climate change, and covid-19 (Florida, 2021). In addition to an economic focus, literature also suggests cultural backlash is an important element. Norris and Inglehart (2019) argue backlash is not against economic hardship only but also against modern values of post-industrialism. Right-wing supporters are discontented with the liberal and cosmopolitan values of the “urban elite”. Due to cultural factors, people may vote against their own economic interests, for a far-right party (Florida, 2021).

In addition to the distrust in government in “left-behind” regions, author Loic Wacquant addresses trust in government in marginalized groups more generally. Wacquant addresses how spaces in cities or regions are labeled as “problem districts” or “low-income communities”, but this does not take into account the structures that put people in these positions (2016). These structures include processes whereby people are pulled and maintained in marginal locations, and the practices and social webs that are developed in these locations. The current discourse and labels decontextualizes these spaces and miss that regulation is a collective issue, a space of interplaying social, symbolic and economic power (Slater, 2013). Wacquant emphasizes the focus should be less on “vulnerable groups” but more on the institutions that put people into these positions (Wacquant, 2016).

The response to different environmental policies is an existing theme in academic research, for instance in a paper published in 2015 by Von Essen et al., addressing how illegal hunting was

instrumentalized as a protest mechanism. This was in the context of Sweden and Finland, where groups felt unrecognized by authorities and distrusted the government, and continued the tradition of hunting on wolves as a political statement. The article interestingly highlights how important moral feelings and indignation are in the construction of the debate and hunting activism. Material substances play a role in the conflict and discourse, but more essential is creating a space where everyone can enter and be on equal terms; recognition is key. In addition, Von Essen notes it is essential to acknowledge how the word and understanding of the word “rural” are subjective and socially and discursively constructed, as well as the heterogeneity between and within “rural” regions (Von Essen, 2015; Pohja-Mykrä & Kurki, 2014).

Important to note is that the articles with an international focus are largely focused on populism support. This support often has causes in the domains of for instance political representation and participation as well as discontent with globalization, which are relevant to the research question. However, support for populism does not equal geographical patterning of discontent. The literature on populism has still been reviewed here for its extensive source of knowledge but does not exactly translate to the Dutch context.

## *2.2 The Netherlands*

The author Catherine De Vries delves deeper into geographical differences specifically in the Netherlands. She argues in her article that the Dutch political context and differences is increasingly defined by not only “classic” left-right economic divisions that focus on economics and state-intervention, but also by the cosmopolitan-parochial divide (De Vries, 2018). Parochial parties are defined by their tendency to be less in favor of European integration, migration, and

more in favor of national control in international affairs, compared to the cosmopolitan parties. The author bases her argument on the results of the Dutch elections, mainly those of the national Dutch elections in 2017, and the European Union (EU) elections of 2014. One important outcome of De Vries' research is that Dutch voters do not seem to base their voting behavior as much on cultural issues such as same-sex marriage or privacy as much as previous international literature such as by Norris and Inglehart (2011) had previously suggested. Rather, economic insecurity seems to be an important predictor of voting behavior, for instance relating to increasing international cooperation and open borders (De Vries, 2018).

In 2021, Casper van den Berg and Annemarie Kok wrote the report "Regionaal maatschappelijk onbehagen" (regional societal discomfort), as requested by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. The periphery in the Netherlands is here defined as the four provinces of Fryslan, Groningen, Drenthe, and Zeeland. This report outlines how there is a lower trust in national institutions among inhabitants of the periphery, lower turnout at elections, and a growing "protest vote". The causes for this lie in firstly, the demographics of the periphery areas, secondly the specific societal problems that arise in these areas, and thirdly the intense feelings of feeling as if "not mattering" (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021). Globalization also plays a significant role in regional differences. The disparities between countries have dropped, but the disparities within countries rose (Butkus et al.). This has to do with economic global competition happening within regions and not in entire countries. The profits of globalization hence go towards the cities (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021).

While significant differences exist between the Randstad and rural regions, it would be oversimplified to say this is an essential and binary divide. In reality, it is more of a continuum, with inhabitants of rural land supporting cosmopolitan ideas and vice versa. Many individual differences exist and overgeneralizing can lead to untrue stereotyping. Even insofar as regional differentiation can be made, many regions are also more “in-between” cosmopolitan and rural. Examples in the Netherlands mentioned are Groningen, Assen, and Leeuwarden, being capitals of provinces, with a mix of urban and rural influences, as well as villages that are focused on a nearby city for job and educational opportunities. In addition, digitalization means even more interconnectedness of regions, all leading to people not being their location, but an individual sum of activities, relocating, histories, and identities. In addition, urban lifestyles increasingly embrace “rural” activities such as gardening, baking bread, or walking in nature (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021).

The Dutch government has been focused on increasing the Netherlands’ international economic competitiveness, a strategy that included increasing the density of economic activity in the Randstad, and focusing less on “the rest” (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021). Until 2004, regional policies were still active, but these were scaled down, and ceased to exist in 2010. A new governance strategy, New Public Management (NPM) gained influence, with emphasis on citizens as consumers. Since 2017, the region seems to have re-appeared on the political agenda, with the realization that many challenges, including climate mitigation and adaptation, require the non-city areas (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021). Regional identity plays an important role in national geographical divides in politics. People living at the borders of the Netherlands feel on average a stronger identification with their regions. Figure 2 shows the population of the

Netherlands amongst two axes: “Krimpregio’s” (decreasing regions) and “Bruisregio’s” (vibrant regions), versus “Anywheres and Somewheres”. “Whilst “anywheres” often refers to the inhabitants of urban areas who are not tied to a location but are more flexible; “somewheres” refer to the inhabitants of regional areas who tend to hold more traditional beliefs based upon their anchoring within that specific area, for instance due to family ties, housing or job opportunities (Goodhart, 2017). The largest part of the population, with 21%, lives in a rising region, to which they are tied. 17% are “somewheres” in regions in between rising and decreasing regions. This is followed by 14% “anywheres” in rising regions, which is the group least affected by regional issues and societal discomfort. The 12% “somewheres” in decreasing regions are most prone to societal discomfort. The “anywheres” in “bruisregio’s” were least responsive to feelings of societal discomfort. (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021)

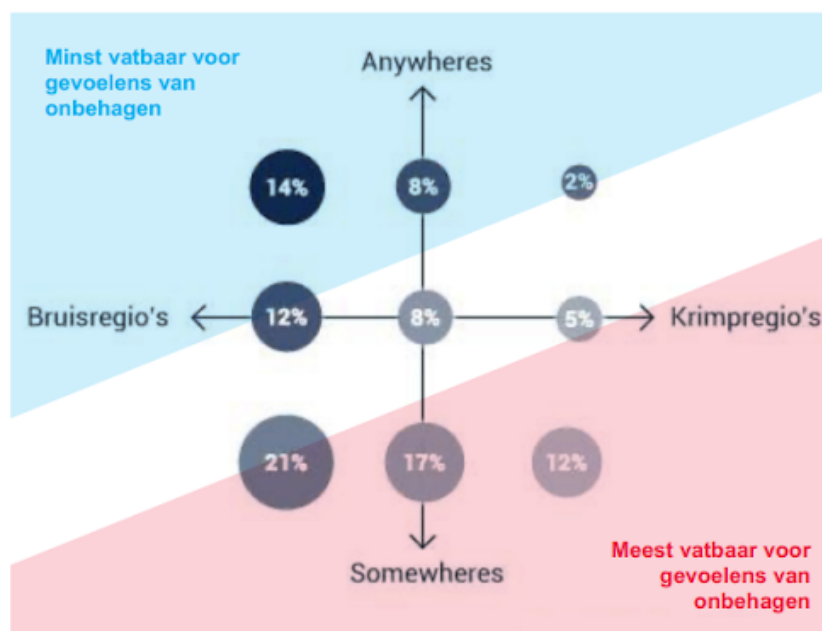


Figure 2: Anywheres and Somewheres (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021).

In addition, Van den Berg (2018) places current societal developments in the Netherlands in a historic perspective. Until the 1960s, the Netherlands was “pillarized”, meaning that different pillars, Catholics, Protestants, and Socialists, lived in their own worlds, with their own locations, newspapers, sports facilities and schools. The concept of pillarization gradually diminished following the 1960s, resulting in increased personal liberties but a decline in intergroup cohesion. Van den Berg asserts that these pillars have been substituted with "bubbles," a fresh societal division characterized by groups that thrive or struggle within the contemporary social order. These groups are referred to as the aforementioned “anywheres” and “somewheres” (Van den Berg, 2018).

### *2.3 Groningen*

Regional unrest in the Netherlands aligns with and differs from global patterns and trends in various manners. However, there are also stark differences in regional unrest between regions within the Netherlands. The context of Groningen differs from other places in the Netherlands in different domains. Firstly, an important forming event for the identity of Groningers was the natural fracking practices of the past decades (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021). Fracking has led to Groningen being subject to different earthquakes, leading to damage to many homes as well as psychological distress of inhabitants. Despite these effects, the government let the fracking continue, and Groningers felt their voice was not heard (Tweede Kamer, 2023). Groningers had no influence on the natural gas fracking practices, despite experiencing many negative effects as a result (Financieel Dagblad, n.d.). The experience of being powerless in this situation and the persistence of fracking by the national politics led to feelings of outrage and resentment (Van Der Voort & Vanclay, 2015). Fracking stopped in 2022, and a compensational fund of 1.5 billion

euros was implemented to be spent on repairs to individuals' homes and properties, broad prosperity, and job opportunities (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021). However, the feelings of distrust towards the national government persist to form a part of the Groninger identity.

Another factor influencing the unrest in Groningen is debates around agriculture. It is important to know of the farmers' protests. Following policies from the Dutch government to limit nitrogen emissions, different groups including farmers protested, arguing the proposed policies were unrealistic and unfairly targeting agriculture (NOS, 2019). Tractors blocked the highway on their way to the Hague, causing unrest and debates around the country (Klomp, 2022). One important symbol that has been used by farmers is the Dutch flag, hung upside down. This was a historic sign of sailors on the ocean in need but has since 2019 been used by farmers and supporters to protest, gaining extra attention in 2022 (Smouter, 2022). The flag expresses discontent with environmental policies severely affecting farmers.

A last significant sector influencing the identity of the rural Groningen region is economy. Previous research on the rural Groningen region has shown that a substantial part of the citizens view the location of the region as economically unfavorable, and many of the older generation worked in the industrial sector but have lost their employment due to economic downturns (Meij, Haartsen & Meijering, 2020). In general, Groningers specifically indicate feeling little appreciation for their region from outsiders (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021).

While Groningen differs from other regions and people from Groningen have certain things in common, it is important to consider that besides broad urban-rural divisions, heterogeneity exists

within different rural contexts. Essential is not to generalize different villages and therefore make their lived experience invisible (Meij, Haartsen & Meijering, 2020).

While research has been done on the Groningen rural land, the connection with climate policies is lacking, while this holds significant value for the future of Dutch climate action. Therefore, this research adds value to the existing academic information.



### 3. Methodological Framework

A qualitative research design characterized by personal interviews was chosen for this research. Qualitative research methods are useful for multi-layered topics such as trust (Marshall and Rossman 1998). Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow for unexpected responses while preserving the richness and detail of the study participants' points of view. In the interview methods, ethical concerns were taken into account by guaranteeing informed consent and anonymity. Participants were informed about the project and its objectives and verbally consented to their testimonies being used. No names were recorded, nor other personal information that could help identify personal identities.

Gaining insight into a specific region can help understand the nuances that underlie the distrust and perceptions towards climate governance. Therefore, the specific case study of Leens, Groningen is chosen. Leens is a village in the North-West of the province of Groningen with approximately 2000 inhabitants. The location of Leens in the Netherlands can be seen in Figure 3. Leens is chosen for its relatively representativeness: it is a region with earthquake damages, but not the core region. In addition, it is a village in the periphery area, not focused on a neighboring city, but still with its own facilities. Around half of the municipality's land use is for agricultural practices, which is representative of the province of Groningen (CBS, 2023). Leens used to be part of the municipality "De Marne", which had about 10.000 inhabitants, but since 2019 different smaller municipalities have been fused, making Leens part of "Het Hogeland", which has about 5 times the inhabitants of De Marne. The population of Leens has been decreasing for decades. Leens is historically a town strongly tied to the reformed church (Plaatsengids, n.d.).



Figure 3: Leens, Groningen, The Netherlands (Zoekplaats, n.d.).

This research consisted of different steps. Firstly, the literature has been reviewed, outlining key themes and gaps in the literature. Following this were the interviews. For this, I have gone to Leens, Groningen for 2 days, a weekend, allowing me to be in different settings; on Saturdays, inhabitants did groceries, on Sundays rested or went on a walk. Talking to inhabitants in their natural cultural setting has the benefit of being able to find more participants, as well as interviewing a more diverse group of people. However, I have been limited in speaking to people who were not to be found in public spaces, e.g. because they were not mobile. I have spoken to 10 people who lived in Leens or neighboring towns. I talked to people on the street, at the supermarket and in the fields. I did not record these interviews, but took notes on a notepad. I asked open questions, and summarized essential responses of participants to ensure complete understanding. For these conversations, I had some key themes, and from here followed the flow of the conversation using semi-structured interview methods. The use of themes ensured that certain subjects, like trust and climate policies, were covered. The themes are 1) trust in governance, 2) ideas on climate governance and 3) possible improvements in these two domains. The interview format was open-ended, giving participants the freedom to express their own

opinions on those subjects. Because this study's primary goal was the *Verstehen* of participants, broad questions were asked, such as: “What is your first association with the word government?”.

I have spoken to people of mixed genders, with ages 32-70, and varied occupations; from physiotherapist or housewife to entrepreneur or truck driver. I approached more people, but it is important to say that a significant part of people I approached walked away when I informed them about the topic of my research. In relation to this, it is important to keep in mind that people may not feel fully comfortable expressing political statements with a stranger, especially not in a public setting. This may have influenced the participants or withheld potential participants from joining.

Focusing on a specific region and context is a useful tool to create increased understanding of a subject. As Short et al. (2017, p1) expressed it: “A case study can be a powerful learning tool sparking empathy, providing context to situations, allowing people to connect to social phenomena intellectually and emotionally, counterbalancing efficiency-driven environments and enabling ethical practice.”

#### 4. Policy Background

Within this section, an outline is provided of the environmental policies that directly apply to the context of the case study: Leens. Two broad types of climate policies exist in the Netherlands. The first category is climate adaptation. This is to adapt to the changing climate, and in the case of the Netherlands consists of, for example, improving dikes. Climate adaptation policies in the Netherlands are mostly done on a national scale, with relatively little collaboration between countries (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2023). Climate mitigation strategies, however, involve more different scales; goals are made in tight collaboration with other countries, and practically enacted also on a regional level. Firstly, on a European level, the European Union in 2016 signed the Paris Agreement, setting the goal of staying within 2°C of global warming. For this, in 2030 EU countries should emit at least 55% less greenhouse gasses, and in 2050 be climate neutral (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2023).

To reach these goals, the Dutch government has included the European goals in their laws, the “klimaatwet” (climate law), which also outlines different procedures for reaching these goals. Firstly, there is a climate plan, which is made for a period of ten years, which sets out the main guidelines for the policy for the years to come. In a yearly “Klimaatnota” (climate note), the government reflects on the progress made in the past year. Lastly, there is a progress report every two years (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2023; *Toetsing Klimaatwet*, n.d.).

In addition, the elected coalition writes in their coalition agreement on the topic of climate change. Here, the budget for climate plans is determined, as well as (changes in) the national

institutions governing climate change. Some examples of climate policies follow, to illustrate the types of solutions (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2023).

#### *4.1 Sector Industry*

To sustainably transition the sector of the manufacturing industry, a combination of public and private strategies are combined. These are implemented on subnational, national, and regional levels. On a European level, the emission trading system is active, putting on a price on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In addition, there are European subsidies in place, for, for example, stimulating innovation. The Dutch government recognizes that more needs to be done, and is in the process of customized agreements with specific large businesses in the sector, which largely interact with regional policies (Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat, 2022a). Regional private and public organizations work together to make plans more concrete and formalize them. Moreover, national subsidies are available for specific sustainable projects. Lastly, research is continuously done, at private and public institutions, on, for example, energy carriers and sustainable production techniques (Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat, 2022a).

#### *4.2 Regional Energy Strategy Groningen*

Another example to give insight into what climate policy in the Netherlands looks like is the Regional Energy Strategy (RES). To achieve national and international goals, public institutions, grid operators, energy collectives, businesses, social organizations and citizens need each other. Therefore, they work together on a regional energy strategy. There are 30 energy regions in the Netherlands, each with their own plan. The plan looks at suitable locations for generating

sustainable energy, which energy sources are most suitable, how the grid can be used, or the financial feasibility. This started in 2020 (*Regional Energy Strategies*, n.d.).

The RES Groningen is responsible for two important dossiers: the heating of homes with sustainable energy, and the generation of sustainable energy on land. In total, Groningen needs to deliver 5.7 TWh of energy of the total 35 TWh that needs to be generated on land. Figure 4 shows how this is planned to be done (Provincie Groningen, n.d; RES Groningen, n.d.). This policy shows how European targets translate themselves into local policies.

Gemeenten	Basis in TWh		Bouwstenen in TWh		Nog in te vullen obv beleidsambitie in TWh	Totaal in TWh
	Wind	Zon	Wind	Zon		
Eemsdelta*	1,10	0,08		0,02		1,19
Groningen		0,03		0,10	0,37	0,50
Het Hogeland	1,40	0,02	0,30	0,03	0,01	1,76
Midden-Groningen	0,35	0,26			0,34	0,95
Oldambt	0,06	0,01		0,01	0,08	0,16
Pekela		0,01		0,07		0,08
Stadskanaal		0,11		0,32		0,43
Veendam	0,12	0,03				0,15
Westerkwartier		0,03		0,03	0,28	0,35
Westerwolde		0,14		0,31		0,45
Diversen klein**	0,10	0,27				0,37
<b>Totaal in TWh</b>	<b>3,13</b>	<b>0,99</b>	<b>0,30</b>	<b>0,89</b>	<b>1,08</b>	<b>6,39</b>

Figure 4: built, in the process of building, yet to build solar and wind energy, per municipality (RES Groningen, n.d.).

The second part of RES is the heating of homes. This is delegated from the RES regions towards the local municipalities, who are required to draft a “Transitievissie Warmte” (TVW) (Transition Vision Heating) (RES Groningen, n.d.). This plan has to serve as a step-by-step guide on how to make the heating systems of neighborhoods natural gas-free (Groninger Dorpen, 2022; Gemeenteraad Het Hogeland, 2021). A part of the TVW from the municipality Het Hogeland, in

which Leens is located, is a paragraph on participation: here attention is paid to participation, inclusion and support for policies (Gemeenteraad Het Hogeland, 2021).

#### *4.3 Compensation for Fracking*

A specific policy to Groningen is due to the natural fracking practices. Natural fracking practices led to earthquakes and home damage in Groningen, for which compensation was made available. One of the essential compensations was a subsidy for individuals with earthquake damage to their homes. Along with this, homeowners who have received compensation can receive up to 4000 euros to implement sustainability measures, such as energy saving isolation measures, as well as solar panels or a heat pump (Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat, 2022b; SNN, n.d.). In addition, a compensational fund, “nationaal programma groningen” of 1.5 billion euros has been implemented, to spend on e.g. repairs, broad prosperity and job opportunities (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021).

## 5. Findings and Discussion

From the interview, the following three themes have been identified: distrust in governance, climate governance, and social welfare state.

### *5.1 Distrust in Governance and its Roots*

This section discusses general distrust in governance and different causes for this. First, common elements of how respondents view the government are summarized. Following are three different domains that lead to distrust, and the section ends with concluding remarks.

#### *5.1.1 Overarching Themes*

Trust in government was generally low amongst participants. A core differentiation that surfaced from the interviews was between the trust in institutions, politicians, national and local governance. Trust in politicians was lower than trust in institutions, with many remarks about removing Prime Minister Mark Rutte from his position. One participant mentioned wishing to see all current parliament members removed and substituted with “fresh people” (Respondent 4, Interview April 2023). Participants had low trust in government as they did not feel that their voice and vote mattered in national politics, or “just a very small amount” (Respondent 9, Interview April 2023). This aligns with research on to what extent Groningers feel politicians care about people “like them”, where the average number indicated was 3.7 (Trouw & Kieskompas, 2023). Several participants indicated having more trust in local governance on the provincial and municipal level, compared to national politicians. One participant mentioned that the reason for this was that no one in parliament had felt earthquakes themselves and therefore, were trusted less to make decisions on the topic (Respondent 1, Interview April 2023).



A second core element relates to representation of citizens in the political arena. One participant also explained she felt politics might function better when it would be an accurate reflection of society: for instance more working-class people and young people. Several more individuals mentioned that the voices of young people were heard too little. Some with the motivation that this is the future of the young people we are talking about, others with the view that young people “simply have a lot of good ideas, more than our [the older] generation” (Respondent 10, Interview April 2023). This distrust due to lack of representation may have a relation to the professionalization of politics. Rather than politics being direct representatives of citizens, politicians tend to come from the same circles. Specific educational backgrounds or previous work experience seem to prepare politicians for their function; it is a career, rather than representing a group in society (Fawcett & Corbett, 2018). This can lead to less feelings of connection between citizens and politicians, leading to less trust in politicians (Allen & Cairney, 2017). This may then also be an explanation for why there is relatively more trust in local governance compared to national governance. In addition, this can contribute to explaining the popularity of the BoerBurgerBeweging (Farmer citizen movement) in the Dutch elections of 2023, with 30% of votes in the municipality of Leens going to the party (Het Hogeland, 2023). The politicians of the BoerburgerBeweging (BBB) are less “professionalized” and may therefore feel like a better representation of citizens. However, the rise of BBB may lead to less climate action, as this is a lower priority of the party (BoerBurgerBeweging, 2023).

### *5.1.2 Earthquake Damage*

Several societal causes for distrust in governance were mentioned by participants. Firstly addressed is the earthquake damage and the political reaction to the damage. Respondents explained the increasing severity of the earthquakes, around ten years ago, as marking the beginning of their decline in governance. The way the government allowed for and benefitted from the natural gas fracking practices had a severe impact on the trust in government.

Leens is located in the region in Groningen that suffered from earthquakes due to natural gas extraction. The gas field in Northern Groningen is the largest one in Europe and was discovered in 1959 by an organization developed by a collaboration from Shell and Esso (Tweede Kamer, 2023). Due to the large-scale extraction of gas that followed, there is less mass in the soil, leading to earthquakes. The first earthquake was measured in 1986, but it was denied that this was due to gas fracking (Financieel Dagblad, n.d.). Only in 1993 was the connection between fracking and earthquakes verified, but the fracking and earthquakes continued. When on August 12, 2012, a large part of the province felt an earthquake of magnitude 3,6 on the Richter scale, protests grew (Tweede Kamer, 2023). Many homes were damaged or even declared unlivable (Tweede Kamer, 2023). Still, the Dutch government had benefitted too much from the fracking to deem scaling down of the fracking necessary (Financieel Dagblad, n.d.; Kammer et al., 2023). Only in 2018 did Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy Eric Wiebes announce that fracking would fully stop in 2030. This was hoped to be even faster, however, due to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and European countries' subsequent boycott of Russian gas, it had to be slowed down again (Financieel Dagblad, n.d.).

### *5.1.3 Allowances Scandal*

In addition to this, the allowances scandal or “toeslagen-affaire” had a severe impact on the inhabitant's trust. In 2021, the cabinet of the Netherlands stepped down due to infringing fundamental rights of thousands of citizens receiving government welfare. The estimation lies around 35,000 welfare recipients. These citizens faced a range of issues, from being discriminated against to privacy not being respected, and most essentially, unlawfully having to pay back allowances, with interest (Hadwick & Lan, 2022). This significantly impacted the trust in government of the individuals affected: they no longer believed the government and its institutions existed to enforce their rights and well-being. In addition to the citizens mistreated and their entourage, the scandal also had a large influence on society as a whole. Through extensive media coverage, very large groups in society were aware of the scandal, frustrated and angry, also leading to a wide-scale drop in trust in government (Frederik, 2021). Several participants mentioned not believing the government was acting in their best interest, and being unable to resolve complex problems. How the tax authorities handled this case really decreased trust in governance overall. Participants expressed how the affair decreased their belief that the government was able to fulfill its duties in a just way. Even though participants were not personally affected, it still shocked large parts of the population. This may have to do with the familiarity of the situation; the scandal happened to normal people, people not unlike the participants in some demographic aspects.

The last incident or crisis that was mentioned several times to severely decrease trust in governance, was covid and its measures and policies. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was little trust in the measures the Dutch government put forward due to shifting policies, a lack of

transparency, and a perceived lack of honest political culture (NL Times, 2021; Keizer, 2021).

The government enforcing vaccination through a range of measures caused protests and a belief the government was overstepping its boundaries. The lack of support for policies led to protests, with thousands of people gathering to make a statement against required vaccination and other measures (Reuters, 2021). Polarization between those supporting government policy and those opposing it increased, leading to a lack of connection between different groups (Keizer, 2021). Participants spoke of the lack of support of the Dutch government in implementing the measures that they did; the measures were not seen as justified and the authority of the government and authorities was questioned.

#### *5.1.4 Concluding Remarks*

The overarching theme between different causes for distrust in governance that was mentioned was the government not keeping to its promises. One thing being mentioned and another executed, or promises being made that could not be kept. However, although expressing distrust in government, several participants did also mention the Netherlands still being a good place to live, saying “how lucky we are to live here” (Respondent 5, Interview April 2023). A possible explanation for the perception of the government not keeping to its promises could be that politics are focused on the short-term and elections. Due to the 5-year election cycle, politicians focus on policies that make them popular, rather than what is best for the common good and the long-term. Difficult dossiers such as the Groninger earthquakes and climate change are pushed further into the future, into the next election cycle (Pot et al., 2020).

## *5.2 Climate Governance*

Generally, the opinions about climate governance appeared to be less negative than about politics overall. The need to have more climate policies was mentioned several times. “Too little execution power” was something that was mentioned several times; there was enough talk of and attention regarding climate, but not enough policies following this. Other participants, however, expressed skepticism towards far-reaching climate policies, for instance mentioning that other countries and cities had severe smog in their cities. Relative to this, the Netherlands appeared clean and not to be having a “nitrogen issue”, they argued. Another participant mentioned how the Netherlands was to do a lot more than other countries, evidenced by the farmer protest in the Netherlands, and not seeing the need for the Netherlands doing this much, “pioneering” (Respondent 8, Interview April 2023). Furthermore, participants mentioned that the farmers were blamed for more than they were responsible for. They believed other industries, such as aviation, were left out of the discussion and continued to be subsidized, whereas they were heavily polluting. This relates to the literature discussing the split between the Randstad and the “periphery” (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021). Possibly interviewees could see the nitrogen measures taken while supporting the national airport in Amsterdam as an anti-periphery measure. Climate policy could be a way for the periphery-randstad divide to manifest itself.

Another element brought up was that a participant and her surroundings were heavily supportive of gas-free neighborhoods and sustainable electricity, as this decreased the demand for gas and therefore helped limit gas extraction in Groningen (Respondent 1, Interview April 2023). They did mention that in order for this to be successful, the whole country would have to collaborate, as it is not just Groningen that uses the Groninger gas. For this reason, they expressed their

support for measures such as the “waardevermeerdering” (value increasement) measure as a compensation for the earthquake damage, which compensated for the decreased value of homes by helping inhabitants use less gas by, for example, purchasing better insulation or installing a heat pump. These findings nuance the idea that “all rural areas are conservative and against climate policies” (Arndt et al., 2022), as a large variety of support for climate action was found in Groningen. In addition, support for young, progressive groups tackling climate issues was expressed.

Notably, people appeared to be more skeptical of politics as a whole than climate politics specifically. This contrasts the idea that climate politics is the most polarizing and controversial topic, which is dominant in some discourses (Van Eck, 2021; CDA, n.d.; Movisie, n.d.). The relatively positive view towards climate policies aligns with other research showing that 65% of Dutch people believe climate change is an important threat we need to act on as soon as possible (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2020). A possible explanation as to why the distrust in politics is higher than in climate politics may have to do with abstraction. The idea of politics itself may bring associations of distrusted politicians, and climate policies may bring different topics to mind. For instance, one interviewee mentioned the importance of protected bird areas in her region (Respondent 9, Interview April 2023). This could place the picture of the parliament and its members in the background, making the distrust in governance less dominant.

Moreover, participants did not seem to know of many specific policies on mitigating climate change. Some individuals mentioned the nitrogen policies, but not specifically which policies. Rather, they tended to evoke what they thought was wrong with the policies. In addition,

participants had rather extensive knowledge of the “waardevermeerdering” policy. That this policy was more well-known can be explained by the direct encounter inhabitants had with the policy: in order to receive sustainability improvement funds for their house, they had to file a request themselves. This may have been spoken about with neighbors, family or civil servants. An alternative reason for the increased awareness of this particular policy could be that it had a positive impact on people's lives instead of a negative one, as the "waardevermeerding" resulted in financial gains for individuals. Besides the undetailed idea of the nitrogen policies and the “waardevermeerdering”, there were no specific environmental policies mentioned. Participants seemed to care about climate change and have opinions on possible improvements but were not informed about many policies and their effects.

### *5.3 Social Welfare State*

Participants’ distrust in governance did not seem to correlate with their left or right-wing policies or belief that the government should be larger or smaller. Rather, participants with little faith in governance expressed that the government should be more social: care more for its citizens and more healthcare investments such as psychological care or facilities for people living with disabilities.

This contrasts to existing literature, which has characterized the “left-behinds” as a group of people unsatisfied with current policies, in favor of less money towards social welfare, and generally more supportive of right-wing policies (Florida, 2021). This may be due to the majority of existing literature describing the United States rather than Western Europe or even the Netherlands specifically. Large differences in the political systems as well as historical context

may explain the differences between the diverging patterns between the United States and the Netherlands (De Lange, 2022).



## 6. Policy implications

In the section on policy background, three different examples of climate policies were outlined. This section will first review how the different policies were received in Leens, to then provide directions for improving climate policies.

### *6.1 Sector Industry*

As outlined before, specific policies exist to sustainably transition the manufacturing industry. However, very few of these policies were known by participants. This could be due to the fact that they were less noticeable by individual citizens not personally involved in the industry. These are policies that are perhaps less controversial and more technical, and therefore also not picked up by the media as much, making them less known by the public. This unknowingness may also have its advantages, as the topic may then be less politicized and more widely accepted. However, by having more public awareness of policies in place, misconceptions could be prevented, such as participants mentioning that farmers are the ones that are punished by climate policies whereas other sectors are left unchanged (Respondent 3, Interview April 2023).

A first recommendation to improve the policies for the sector industry would be to emphasize and prioritize good communication with citizens more. To avoid misinforming citizens through circulating stories or extreme media coverage, good communication should come from the government, and the importance of this “face” of the government needs to be recognized. Hyland-Wood et al. (2021) outline that effective communication is a two-way process, using deliberately chosen platforms, recognising the diversity of the audience. According to Wilson and Sperber (2002), individuals perceive messages as relevant when they have a direct impact on

their lives and require minimal cognitive effort for comprehension. Therefore, communication should be clear on what the effect of policies are on citizen's lives, and in addition be phrased as clearly as possible (Cairney, 2015; Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). Moreover, consistency and avoiding contradictions are essential, as was also confirmed by participants of this study. This includes consistent messages over time and using the same terminology at various channels and levels of government. In addition, communicating regularly at fixed times and across many channels can help build trust (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). One instance where this was suggested and is currently being tried out is a climate press conference. This idea was taken from the covid-19 press conferences, where measures taken by the government were outlined and explained, followed by questions from the press. The Dutch minister of climate Rob Jette held the first climate press conference in April 2023, which shows effort to improve communication (Klimaatpersco, n.d.).

However, communicating consistently is challenging when policy continuously changes direction. With current "wicked" problems that are ever-changing and involving many sectors and actors operating at different scales, making consistent policy is very challenging (Coyne, 2005). A suggestion to improve policies relating to this is Adaptive Policy-Making (APM). APM refers to an approach in which policies are designed and implemented with the flexibility to respond and adapt to changing circumstances and new information, for instance through the use of evaluating consistently. Figure 5 provides a detailed overview of the APM process. The framework includes that policy should be designed to accommodate a variety of potential future scenarios, reducing the need for drastic shifts in direction should circumstances change (Walker et al., 2001). APM includes the shift in setting objectives as well as in assembling the basic

policy, identifying vulnerabilities, and specifying the remaining pieces of the policy. Depending on the scenario, different forms of citizen involvement may be appropriate, such as public forums (Haasnoot et al., 2013). The implementation phase involves monitoring signposts, triggers and taking defensive or corrective actions when necessary (Walker et al., 2001). APM could for instance have helped the current issue in the Netherlands building industry, where there is a major decrease in new building projects due to a failure of the Dutch government to meet environmental regulation (Boerop, 2019). In addition, it could help prevent situations where the government cannot keep its promises. APM emphasizes the need to anticipate and accommodate potential future scenarios, reducing the need for drastic policy shifts. From the interviews arose that distrust was caused by governments not keeping to their promises, APM could help increase trust in government, especially when combined with better communication.

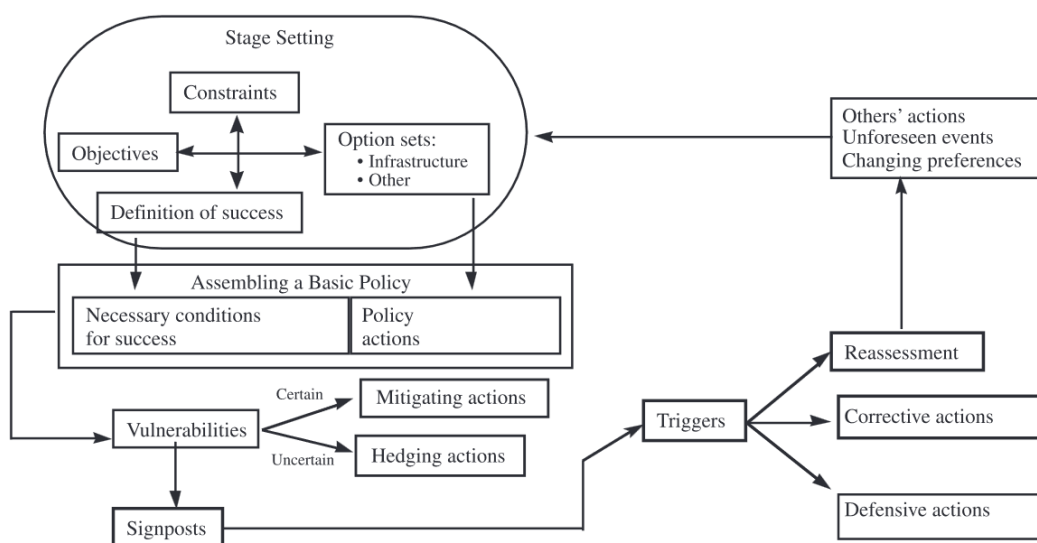


Figure 5: The adaptive policy-making process (Walker et al., 2001).

## *6.2 Regional Energy Strategy Groningen*

The Regional Energy Strategy (RES) was not very well-known by participants, at least not by name. Some participants were aware of a specific component of the RES, namely the “aardgas vrije wijken” (gas-free neighborhoods). The phrase “aardgas vrije wijken” has been mentioned rather often in the media, making this a more well-known term. One participant expressed support for gas-free neighborhoods, mentioning being pleased with the shift away from natural gas as it could faster stop gas extraction in their area (Respondent 1, Interview April 2023). At the same time, previously in the public debate, there was criticism voiced for having large amounts of windmills in Groningen (RTV Noord, 2021).

Firstly, the better communication outlined above could also help improve the RES Groningen. In addition, implementing suggestions from the “Not In My Back-Yard” (NIMBY) research may contribute to better policy. NIMBY can be understood as “the motivation of residents who want to protect their turf (...) referring to the protectionist attitudes of and oppositional tactics adopted by community groups facing an unwelcome development in their neighborhood” (Dear, 1992, p1). In the case of Leens this is relevant as concerns and disapproval were voiced concerning sustainable policy such as building windmills and policies affecting farmer practices. NIMBY research focuses on the nature of community opposition and factors determining community attitudes, to find ways to improve community communications (Dear, 1992). Important factors to consider here are the suggestion of having strong local license regulation, to ensure the local population has a say, as well as enforcing strong civil rights, such as for people living with disabilities, for a just and moral government (Burningham et al., 2015).

### *6.3 Compensation for Fracking*

The compensation for fracking was the measure most frequently mentioned by participants. The general attitude was mixed, as there was discontent with how long it took to implement, as well as general discontent with how the government handled this crisis. At the same time, the compensation itself was known and used, and it was mentioned as being “better than nothing” (Respondent 6, Interview April 2023).

How to improve the compensation for fracking and similar policies in the future? Potential answers lie within the findings from the Fair Energy Transition for All (FETA) initiative. FETA tries to help ensure vulnerable groups are heard in the transition toward sustainable energy (Fair Energy Transition for All, 2023). The core of the project was to listen to those potentially severely negatively affected by the energy, to gain more insight into the concerns, views and needs of vulnerable households with regard to the energy transition and develop policy recommendations for a fairer energy transition (Clingendael & Berenschot, 2020). An important element highlighted by FETA in the Netherlands is that current sustainable subsidy plans are targeted towards individuals with a relatively high income, rather than vulnerable groups: for instance subsidies for solar panels or heat pumps (Clingendael & Berenschot, 2020). However, since many vulnerable groups do not own a home but rent one, they are dependent on the actions of their homeowner, making such investments unlikely. In addition, many vulnerable households do not have the financial means to invest in such sustainability measures, even though they may pay back in the longer term (Clingendael & Berenschot, 2020). Attention needs to be paid to the inclusiveness of subsidy schemes, by for instance subsidizing sustainable improvements with a faster return, available for rental homes. These can for instance lay in the domains of energy

supply provider or isolation (Clingendael & Berenschot, 2020). In addition to these specific measures, it is recommended to have an interdisciplinary taskforce “Fair energy transition for all”, since there are so many different governmental departments involved in creating equitable policy (Clingendael & Berenschot, 2020). Through such measures, compensation for natural gas fracking in Groningen could be more effective in reaching vulnerable groups.

The overarching issue of regional unrest is being addressed by the national government. The government started in 2018 with Regiodeals (region deals) (RVO, 2018). These are collaborations between local parties and the national government, where local municipalities, provinces, knowledge institutes, entrepreneurs, and non-for-profit organizations can submit ideas in order to receive funding (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2022). Between 2018 and 2022, 950 million euros were spent on these deals, in different rounds and across different regions (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2022a). Examples of themes addressed in the Regiodeals include better technical training in Twente or education in low-income neighborhoods in Rotterdam, but also biodiversity in agriculture or different livestock farming in Northern Netherlands (Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit, 2019).

## 7. Conclusion

This study started with a literature review, providing insights into the geographical patterning of discontent, addressing both global trends as well as the specific context of the Netherlands, and the Groningen region. The periphery regions of the Netherlands, including Groningen, face lower trust in national institutions, lower election turnout, and growing protest votes (Van den Berg & Kok, 2021). The agricultural sector, especially farmers' protests against environmental policies, has also contributed to unrest in the region (Smouter, 2022).

In light of this unrest and distrust, and the need for climate action, this research aimed to answer the question:

*What factors explain the low levels of trust in government in the region of Groningen, and in light of these factors, how could climate policy be improved to address distrust and be more effective in achieving their objectives?*

In order to answer the research question, qualitative methods of personal interviews were used to explore trust. The case study focused on Leens, Groningen, to understand distrust and perceptions of climate governance. Different factors have been found to be essential to low trust in government in Groningen. Firstly, the damaging effects of earthquakes and the government's involvement in natural gas fracking practices decreased trust. Moreover, the allowances scandal, known as the "toeslagen-affaire," had a significant impact on the trust of the population.

Participants no longer believed that the government and its institutions were capable of serving citizen's rights and well-being. Lastly, the Covid-19 pandemic and the government's response eroded trust in governance.

The findings show that although there appears to be a common consensus that there is a need for climate action, high distrust in government leads to environmental policies being met with skepticism and protest. This is exemplified by farmer's protests against national nitrogen reduction plans. Different policies can be implemented to work on climate change in a way that takes the distrust in governance into consideration. To help the receipt of policies relating to the production industry, it is recommended to improve communication of government policies. Consistency in policy communication is essential, but becomes challenging when policies frequently change direction. Addressing complex and evolving problems involving multiple sectors and actors at various scales requires flexible approaches like Adaptive Policy-Making (APM). APM involves designing policies that can adapt to changing circumstances and new information, incorporating regular evaluation (Walker et al., 2001). This could reduce the need for policy shifts, increasing the trustworthiness of government.

Moreover, implementing suggestions from NIMBY research can contribute to better policy, particularly in the case of RES Groningen. NIMBY research focuses on understanding community opposition and factors influencing community attitudes towards unwelcome developments in their neighborhoods (Dear, 1992). Strong local license regulations and enforcement of civil rights, such as those for people with disabilities, are important considerations for ensuring community involvement and a just government. These measures can help address concerns and disapproval related to sustainable policies and their impact on local communities (Burningham et al., 2015).



To improve the compensation for fracking and similar policies in the future, the findings from the Fair Energy Transition for All (FETA) initiative offer potential solutions. FETA aims to ensure that vulnerable groups are included in the transition to sustainable energy (Fair Energy Transition for All, 2023). One key aspect highlighted by FETA is the need to address the current subsidy plans, which primarily benefit individuals with higher incomes, leaving vulnerable groups behind (Clingendael & Berenschot, 2020). Furthermore, establishing an interdisciplinary task force focused on a fair energy transition for all is recommended, as it would bring together different governmental departments to create more equitable policies (Fair Energy Transition for All, 2023). By implementing these measures, compensation for natural gas fracking in Groningen can be more effective in supporting vulnerable groups.

Limitations of this study should be acknowledged, with human interpretation playing a crucial role in the analysis and presentation of the data. Despite trying to ensure accuracy and objectivity, subjective biases may have influenced the interpretation of results and the overall analysis and discussion. Secondly, the pool of participants may not fully represent the diversity of the population's opinions and beliefs. As for instance also some potential participants walked away when informed about the objective of the study, these perspectives could not be included. Moreover, the small sample size is a limitation of this study. Although 10 participants were interviewed, this number may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives within the population. Consequently, the extent to which the findings represent a larger population may be limited.

Suggestions for further research include reviewing more climate policies and how they could be improved, as this thesis only includes a very limited amount. In addition, further research could interview more people of more mixed demographics. Alternatively, a similar research could be done either in a different “left behind” region in the Netherlands or in another country, to compare similarities and differences to rural Groningen.

## Sources

- Allen, P. J., & Cairney, P. (2017). What Do We Mean When We Talk about the ‘Political Class’? *Political Studies Review*, 15(1), 18–27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1478-9302.12092>
- Arndt, C. M., Halikiopoulou, D., & Vrakopoulos, C. (2022). The centre-periphery divide and attitudes towards climate change measures among Western Europeans. *Environmental Politics*, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2022.2075155>
- Berg, C. F., van den, & Kok, A. (2019). *Regionaal maatschappelijk onbehagen: Naar een rechtsstatelijk antwoord op perifeer ressentiment*.
- Berg, C. F., van den. (2018, November 22). *Van zuilen naar bubbels*. Montesquieu Instituut. [https://www.montesquieu-instituut.nl/id/vktoegixvex8/nieuws/van\\_zuilen\\_naar\\_bubbels?colctx=vji5dps4s4pu](https://www.montesquieu-instituut.nl/id/vktoegixvex8/nieuws/van_zuilen_naar_bubbels?colctx=vji5dps4s4pu)
- Berg, C.F. van den & Vulpen, B., van. (2019). Democratie van streek? Over regionale vertegenwoordiging. Staatscommissie Parlementair Stelsel, Den Haag: Montesquieu Instituut
- Bishop, B. (2008). *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- BoerBurgerBeweging. (2023). Verkiezingsprogramma | BBB. *BBB*. <https://boerbürgerbeweging.nl/groningen/provinciale-staten/verkiezingsprogramma/>
- Boerop, L. (2019). Waarom liggen bouwprojecten stil? 4 vragen over de stikstofcrisis. *Business Insider Nederland*. <https://www.businessinsider.nl/stikstof-uitspraak-pas-uitleg/>
- Burningham, K., Barnett, J., & Walker, G. (2015). An Array of Deficits: Unpacking NIMBY Discourses in Wind Energy Developers’ Conceptualizations of Their Local Opponents. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 28(3), 246–260.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2014.933923>

Cairney, P. (2015). How can policy theory have an impact on policymaking? The role of theory-led academic–practitioner discussions. *Teaching Public Administration*, 33(1), 22–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0144739414532284>

CBS. (2023). *CBS Statline*.

<https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/nl/dataset/70262ned/table?dl=2E511>

CDA. (n.d.). *Regeerakkoord*. <https://www.cda.nl/akkoord>

Clingendael & Berenschot. (2020). *Een eerlijke energietransitie voor iedereen: Eindaanbevelingen*.

Coyne, R. (2005). Wicked problems revisited. *Design Studies*, 26(1), 5–17.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2004.06.005>

De Lange, S. L. (2022). The Netherlands. In *Divergent Paths for the Populist Radical Right*. Routledge.

De Vries, C. E. (2018). The cosmopolitan-parochial divide: changing patterns of party and electoral competition in the Netherlands and beyond. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(11), 1541–1565. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2017.1339730>

Dear, M. (1992). Understanding and Overcoming the NIMBY Syndrome. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 58(3), 288–300.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01944369208975808>

Driessen, M., & Kanne, P. (2021). Vooral Toeslagenaffaire schaadt vertrouwen in overheid. *I&O Research*.

<https://www.ioresearch.nl/actueel/vooral-toeslagenaffaire-schaadt-vertrouwen-in-overheid/>

- Environmental Data Compendium. (n.d.). *Land use in the Netherlands, 2015* | *Environmental Data Compendium*. <https://www.clo.nl/en/indicators/en0061-land-use-in-the-netherlands>
- Fair Energy Transition for All. (2023). Fair Energy Transition for All. *IFOK/KBF*. <https://fair-energy-transition.eu/>
- Fawcett, P., & Corbett, J. (2018). Politicians, professionalization and anti-politics: why we want leaders who act like professionals but are paid like amateurs. *Policy Sciences*, 51(4), 411–432. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-018-9323-7>
- Financieel Dagblad. (n.d.). *Groninger Gasmiljarden* | *Het Financieele Dagblad*. Groninger Gasmiljarden | Het Financieele Dagblad. <https://specials.fd.nl/groningen>
- Florida, R. (2021). Discontent and its geographies. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 14(3), 619–624. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsab014>
- Gemeenteraad Het Hogeland. (2021). *Transitievisie Warmte Het Hogeland opstellen: "Het Hogeland warm en aardgasvrij"*. [https://raadhethogeland.nl/vergaderingen/lijst/vergadering?tx\\_windmeetings\\_windmeetings%5Baction%5D=download&tx\\_windmeetings\\_windmeetings%5BagendaItem%5D=98208&tx\\_windmeetings\\_windmeetings%5Bcontroller%5D=Agenda&cHash=d1bbfe9c03014c74a7daaf09272f228e](https://raadhethogeland.nl/vergaderingen/lijst/vergadering?tx_windmeetings_windmeetings%5Baction%5D=download&tx_windmeetings_windmeetings%5BagendaItem%5D=98208&tx_windmeetings_windmeetings%5Bcontroller%5D=Agenda&cHash=d1bbfe9c03014c74a7daaf09272f228e)
- Glaeser, E. L. (2006). *Cities, Agglomeration, and Spatial Equilibrium*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goodhart, D. (2017). *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics*. [https://openlibrary.org/books/OL28927368M/Road\\_to\\_Somewhere](https://openlibrary.org/books/OL28927368M/Road_to_Somewhere)
- Groninger Dorpen. (2022, April 28). *Transitievisie Warmte, hoe staat het ervoor? - Groninger Dorpen*. <https://groningerdorpen.nl/nieuws/transitievisie-warmte-hoe-staat-het-ervoor/>

- Haasnoot, M., Kwakkel, J. H., Walker, W. A., & Maat, J. T. (2013). Dynamic adaptive policy pathways: A method for crafting robust decisions for a deeply uncertain world. *Global Environmental Change*, 23(2), 485–498. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2012.12.006>
- Het Hogeland. (2023). *Voorlopige uitslag - Gemeente Het Hogeland*.  
<https://hethogeland.nl/bestuur-en-organisatie/verkiezingen/verkiezingen-provinciale-state-n-en-waterschap-noorderzijlvest-15-maart-2023/uitslag>
- Hyland-Wood, B., Gardner, J., Leask, J., & Ecker, U. K. H. (2021). Toward effective government communication strategies in the era of COVID-19. *Humanities & Social Sciences Communications*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-020-00701-w>
- Kammer, C., Stokmans, D., Luyendijk, W., & Middel, M. (2023, February 24). Vernietigend enquêterapport: kabinet, Kamer en topambtenaren verantwoordelijk voor ‘rampzalige situatie’ Groningen. *NRC*.  
<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2023/02/24/vernietigend-enqueterapport-kabinet-kamer-en-topambtenaren-verantwoordelijk-voor-rampzalige-situatie-groningen-2-a4158003>
- Kammer, C., Stokmans, D., Luyendijk, W., & Middel, M. (2023, February 24). Vernietigend enquêterapport: kabinet, Kamer en topambtenaren verantwoordelijk voor ‘rampzalige situatie’ Groningen. *NRC*.  
<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2023/02/24/vernietigend-enqueterapport-kabinet-kamer-en-topambtenaren-verantwoordelijk-voor-rampzalige-situatie-groningen-2-a4158003>
- Keizer, B. J. (2021, June 22). *The Netherlands Struggles to Find Political Stability as Polarisation Increases* | *Global Risk Insights*. Global Risk Insights.  
<https://globalriskinsights.com/2021/06/the-netherlands-struggles-to-find-political-stability-as-polarisation-increases/>

Kieskompas. (2023). *Resultaten onderzoek Kieskompas - Kieskompas*.

<https://www.kieskompas.nl/nl/resultaten/>

Klimaatpersco. (n.d.). *De klimaatpersconferentie - Minister Jetten gaat klimaatpersconferentie*

*organiseren*. <https://www.klimaatpersco.nl/eerste-klimaatpersconferentie-is-een-feit.html>

Klomp, M. (2022, August 24). Boerenprotesten: geritualiseerd handelen in tijden van stikstof-,

klimaat- en ecologische crises. *Protestantse Theologische Universiteit*.

<https://www.pthu.nl/irilis/nl/nieuws-agenda/nieuws/2022/08/boerenprotesten-geritualiseerd-handelen-in-tijden-van-stikstof-klimaat-en-ecologische-crises/>

MacKinnon, D., Kempton, L., O'Brien, P., Ormerod, E., Pike, A., & Tomaney, J. (2021).

Reframing urban and regional 'development' for 'left behind' places. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 15(1), 39–56. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsab034>

Marshall, C. C., & Rossman, G. (1998). Marshall, Catherine, and Gretchen B. Rossman,

Designing Qualitative Research, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999. *Sage Publications*. <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cirs/2725/>

Meij, E., Haartsen, T., & Meijering, L. (2020). Enduring rural poverty: Stigma, class practices

and social networks in a town in the Groninger Veenkoloniën. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 79, 226–234. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.08.031>

Meijer, B. H. (2021, October 28). Netherlands set to miss 2030 climate goals without further action. *Reuters*.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/cop/netherlands-set-miss-2030-climate-goals-without-further-action-2021-10-28/>

Ministerie van Algemene Zaken. (2022a, January 10). *Regio Deal Natuurinclusieve Landbouw*.

Regio Deals | Rijksoverheid.nl.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/regio-deals/de-regio-deals-van-10-regios/regio-deal-natuurinclusieve-landbouw>

Ministerie van Algemene Zaken. (2022b, July 1). *Nieuwe ronde Regio Deals gaat van start.*

Nieuwsbericht | Rijksoverheid.nl.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/07/01/nieuwe-ronde-regio-deals-gaat-van-start>

Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat. (2022a). Klimaatnota 2022. In *Rijksoverheid*.

Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat. (2022b, November 14). *Subsidie*

*Waardevermeerdering verlengd tot 1 juni 2023.* Nieuwsbericht | Rijksoverheid.nl.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/11/14/subsidie-waardevermeerdering-verlengd-tot-1-juni-2023>

Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat. (2023, January 17). *Klimaatbeleid.*

Klimaatverandering | Rijksoverheid.nl.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/klimaatverandering/klimaatbeleid>

Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit. (2019). *Regio Deal Natuurinclusieve Landbouw.*

Movisie. (n.d.). *Hoe voorkom je klimaatpolarisatie?*

<https://www.movisie.nl/artikel/hoe-voorkom-je-klimaatpolarisatie>

NL times. (2021, May 21). Only 34% confident in Dutch government's approach to Covid crisis.

*NL Times.*

<https://nltimes.nl/2021/05/21/34-confident-dutch-governments-approach-covid-crisis>

NL times. (2022, September 20). Emergency ordinance in The Hague as farmers head to protest at Budget Day. *NL Times.*



- <https://nltimes.nl/2022/09/20/emergency-ordinance-hague-farmers-head-protest-budget-day>
- NOS. (2019, October 4). Stikstof: vier vragen (en antwoorden) over de uitstoot van boeren. *NOS*.  
<https://nos.nl/collectie/13799/artikel/2304403-stikstof-vier-vragen-en-antwoorden-over-de-uitstoot-van-boeren>
- NOS. (2021, March 19). *Bekijk hier de uitslagen van de verkiezingen*.  
<https://nos.nl/collectie/13860/artikel/2373037-bekijk-hier-de-uitslagen-van-de-verkiezing-en>
- NOS. (2023, February 17). “Wantrouwen in politiek grootst in Zeeland en Limburg.” *NOS*.  
<https://nos.nl/collectie/13923/artikel/2464118-wantrouwen-in-politiek-grootst-in-zeeland-en-limburg>
- OECD. (2017). OECD Guidelines on Measuring Trust. In *OECD eBooks*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264278219-en>
- PBL. (2023). *Nationale Klimaatrisicoanalyse 2022-2026*.
- Philips, J. (1977). W.J. Formsma, Historie van Groningen. Stad en land. *Bmgn-The Low Countries Historical Review*, 92(2), 308. <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.1990>
- Pippa, N., & Inglehart, R. (2017). *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Plaatsengids. (n.d.). *Leens | Plaatsengids.nl*. <https://www.plaatsengids.nl/leens>
- Pohja-Mykrä, M., & Kurki, S. (2014). Strong community support for illegal killing challenges wolf management. *European Journal of Wildlife Research*, 60(5), 759–770.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10344-014-0845-9>
- Pot, W., Dewulf, A., & Termeer, C. J. (2020). Governing long-term policy problems: Dilemmas

and strategies at a Dutch water authority. *Public Management Review*, 24(2), 255–278.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1817531>

Provincie Groningen. (n.d.). *Provincie groningen: RES*.

<https://www.provinciegroningen.nl/actueel/dossiers/energietransitie/regionale-energie-strategie-res-groningen/>

*Regional Energy Strategies*. (n.d.). Regionale Energiestrategie.

<https://www.regionale-energiestrategie.nl/english/default.aspx>

Reuters. (2021, December 4). Thousands protest over Dutch coronavirus restrictions. *Reuters*.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-protest-over-dutch-coronavirus-restrictions-2021-12-04/>

RTV Noord. (2021, January 12). Groninger Landschap: ‘Alles doen om windmolens op zeedijk tegen te houden’. *RTV Noord*.

<https://www.rtvnoord.nl/nieuws/779005/groninger-landschap-alles-doen-om-windmolens-op-zeedijk-tegen-te-houden>

RVO. (2018). *Regio Deals*. RVO.nl. <https://www.rvo.nl/subsidies-financiering/regio-deals>

Short, M., Barton, H. F., Cooper, B., Woolven, M., Loos, M., & Devos, J. (2017). The power of the case study within practice, education and research. *Advances in Social Work*, 19(1),

92–106. <https://journal.anzswwer.org/index.php/advances/article/view/196>

Slater, T. (2013). Your Life Chances Affect Where You Live: A Critique of the ‘Cottage

Industry’ of Neighbourhood Effects Research. *International Journal of Urban and*

*Regional Research*, 37(2), 367–387. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2013.01215.x>

SNN. (n.d.). *Subsidie Waardevermeerdering*. Samenwerkingsverband Noord-Nederland.

<https://www.snn.nl/particulier/subsidie-waardevermeerdering/aanvragen>

Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau. (2020). *Klimaatbeleid en de samenleving*.

Steffen, W., Richardson, K., Rockström, J., Cornell, S., Fetzer, I., Bennett, E. M., Biggs, R., Carpenter, S. R., De Vries, W., De Wit, C. A., Folke, C., Gerten, D., Heinke, J., Mace, G. M., Persson, L., Ramanathan, V., Reyers, B., & Sörlin, S. (2015). Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet. *Science*, 347(6223).  
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1259855>

*Toetsing Klimaatwet*. (n.d.). Klimaattoezicht. <https://www.raadvanstate.nl/klimaatwet/>

Trouw & Kieskompas. (2023). *Resultaten onderzoek Kieskompas - Kieskompas*.  
<https://www.kieskompas.nl/nl/resultaten/>

Tweede Kamer. (2023, April 25). *Kabinetsreactie op het rapport “Groningers boven gas” van de Parlementaire enquête aardgaswinning Groningen*. Tweede Kamer Der Staten-Generaal.  
[https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven\\_regering/detail?id=2023Z07612&did=2023D17800](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2023Z07612&did=2023D17800)

Tweede Kamer. (2023, April 25). *Kabinetsreactie op het rapport “Groningers boven gas” van de Parlementaire enquête aardgaswinning Groningen*. Tweede Kamer Der Staten-Generaal.  
[https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven\\_regering/detail?id=2023Z07612&did=2023D17800](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2023Z07612&did=2023D17800)

Van Den Berg, C. (2018, November 22). *Van zuilen naar bubbels*. Montesquieu Instituut.  
[https://www.montesquieu-instituut.nl/id/vktoegixvex8/nieuws/van\\_zuilen\\_naar\\_bubbels?colctx=vji5dps4s4pu](https://www.montesquieu-instituut.nl/id/vktoegixvex8/nieuws/van_zuilen_naar_bubbels?colctx=vji5dps4s4pu)

Van Der Berg, C. F., & Kok, A. (2019). *Regionaal maatschappelijk onbehagen: Naar een rechtsstatelijk antwoord op perifeer ressentiment*.

Van Der Voort, N., & Vanclay, F. (2015). Social impacts of earthquakes caused by gas extraction

- in the Province of Groningen, The Netherlands. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 50, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2014.08.008>
- Van Der Voort, N., & Vanclay, F. (2015). Social impacts of earthquakes caused by gas extraction in the Province of Groningen, The Netherlands. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 50, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2014.08.008>
- Van Eck, C. (2021, October 28). *Sterke klimaatpolarisatie in de online blogwereld*. Universiteit Van Amsterdam.  
<https://www.uva.nl/shared-content/faculteiten/nl/faculteit-der-maatschappij-en-gedragswetenschappen/nieuws/2021/10/duurzaamheid-sterke-klimaatpolarisatie-in-de-online-blogwereld.html>
- Von Essen, E., Hansen, H. N., Källström, H. N., Peterson, M. N., & Peterson, T. R. (2015). The radicalisation of rural resistance: How hunting counterpublics in the Nordic countries contribute to illegal hunting. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 39, 199–209.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2014.11.001>
- Wacquant, L. (2016). Revisiting territories of relegation: Class, ethnicity and state in the making of advanced marginality. *Urban Studies*, 53(6), 1077–1088.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098015613259>
- Walker, W. E., Rahman, S. A., & Cave, J. (2001). Adaptive policies, policy analysis, and policy-making. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 128(2), 282–289.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0377-2217\(00\)00071-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0377-2217(00)00071-0)
- Wilson, A., Parker, V. A., & Feinberg, M. (2020). Polarization in the contemporary political and media landscape. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 34, 223–228.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2020.07.005>

Zoekplaats. (n.d.). *Leens gemeente Het Hogeland*.

<https://www.zoekplaats.nl/Leens-gemeente-Het%20Hogeland>