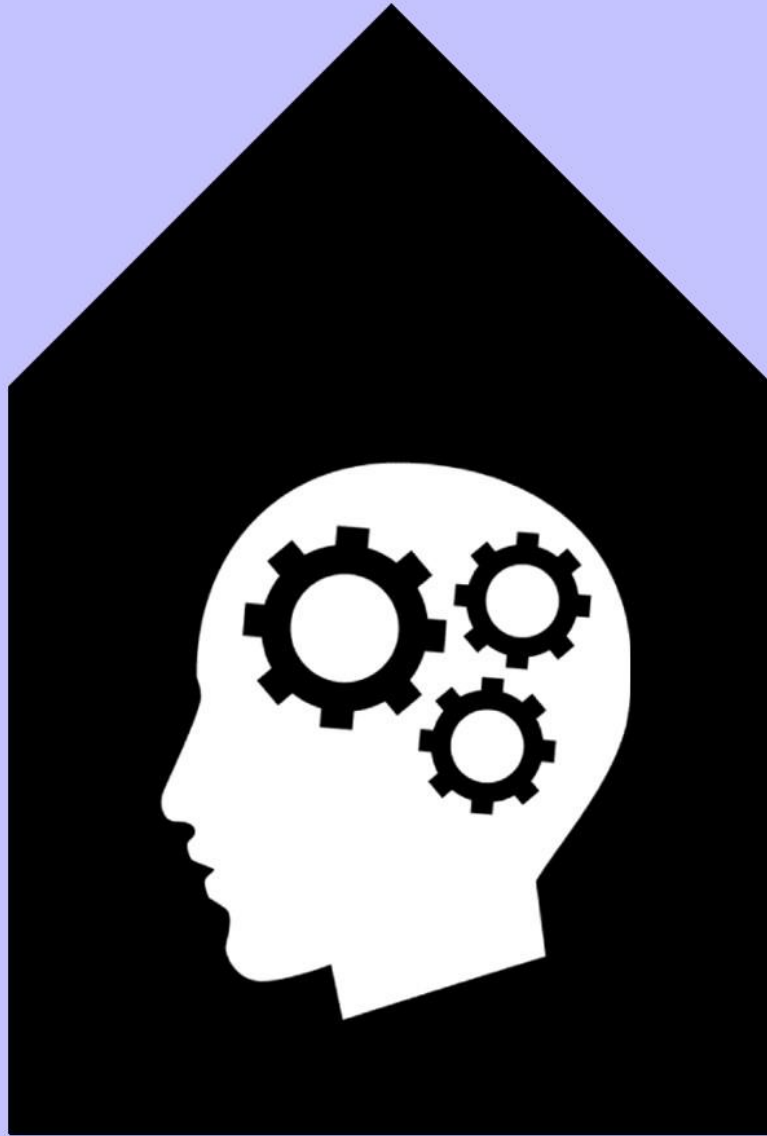


THESIS

PABLO LOCADIA



**Social Housing: Individual Work,
Shared Ambition - A case study
on Knowledge Exchanges by
Housing Corporations**

Social Housing: Individual Work, Shared Ambition - A case study on Knowledge Exchanges by Housing Corporations

Master Thesis

Society, Sustainability & Planning

University of Groningen

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PREFACE

Before you lies the Master thesis *Social Housing: Individual Work, Shared Ambition*. As I complete my master's degree in Society, Sustainability & Planning at the University of Groningen, I am pleased to present this thesis on the topic of social housing. I was engaged in researching and writing this thesis from September 2022 to January 2023. I hope this study's findings will contribute to the existing knowledge on this subject and deepen our understanding of social housing corporations.

I have always been interested in Dutch social housing, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to explore this topic. This thesis marks the finalization of my studies, and I am grateful for the opportunity to delve into an area of interest to me.

Writing a thesis is something I couldn't do alone. I wish to thank several people for participating and guiding the process of writing this master thesis. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Christian Lamker for the academic support, supervision, and input provided during the process, additionally, I would like to thank the research participants for their valuable time and contribution to this study. Without your insights, this work would not have been possible. Finally, I would like to thank my family, friends, and study mates for their support during the challenging months of thesis writing.

I hope you enjoy your reading

Pablo Locadia,

Groningen

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ABSTRACT

Social housing fulfills a significant social role in the Dutch Housing landscape through the provision of affordable housing. Housing corporations are private organizations that operate individually but share similar ambitions. Exchanging knowledge among housing corporations could offer a way to improve effectiveness. Despite a significant body of literature on Dutch social housing, with much of it focusing on its historical context, literature on how housing corporations exchange knowledge among each other is limited. This thesis investigates which structures social housing organizations in the North of the Netherlands utilize to acquire and exchange knowledge. A qualitative case study discovered that the social housing sector is a close-knit network that is in close contact with each other. It is primarily through informal interactions that targeted exchanges of knowledge are facilitated. Through the exchange of knowledge a wide range of inquiries can swiftly be addressed, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of operations.

Keywords: Housing Associations • Knowledge Transfer and Exchange • Collaboration

ABSTRACT (NL)

Sociale woningcorporaties vervullen een belangrijke sociale rol in het Nederlandse woninglandschap door betaalbare woningen te verhuren. Woningcorporaties zijn organisaties die individueel opereren, maar veelal dezelfde ambities delen. Kennisdeling tussen woningcorporaties kan een mogelijkheid zijn om de effectiviteit te verbeteren. Hoewel er een significante hoeveelheid literatuur beschikbaar is over de Nederlandse sociale huisvesting, met veelal gericht op de historische context, de literatuur over hoe woningcorporaties kennis met elkaar delen is beperkt. Deze thesis onderzoekt via welke methoden sociale woningcorporaties in het noorden van Nederland kennis opdoen en uitwisselen. Door middel van een kwalitatief case onderzoek kan geconcludeerd worden dat de sociale woningbouwsector een netwerk is die veel contact met elkaar heeft. Voornamelijk via informele interacties wordt veel kennis en informatie gedeeld. Door middel van kennisuitwisselingen kan een breed scala aan vragen snel worden beantwoord, waardoor de effectiviteit van corporaties wordt vergroot.

Kernwoorden: Woningbouwcorporaties • Kennisuitwisseling • Samenwerking

1. INTRODUCTION

Social housing and housing corporations are embedded in the Dutch housing sector. Housing corporations have a long and rich history and are important in the provision of affordable housing. Dutch housing associations are responsible for a more diverse, 'complex', and growing range of tasks, all while working with limited financial options (Aedes, 2021). Aedes, the umbrella organization for the vast majority of Dutch housing associations, aims to make housing associations as '*efficient and effective*' as possible (Aedes, 2019). Efficiency is targeted toward minimizing operational expenses, while effectiveness is focused on achieving established objectives.

Housing associations have a statutory duty to provide affordable housing (art 46. Housing act). Considering the current Dutch housing shortages (CBS, 2022), housing associations are expected to provide affordable housing to their target group in a timely manner, without neglecting secondary tasks. For this reason, it is of great societal importance that housing associations work effectively on these tasks. Operating efficiently enables the improvement of secondary services by utilizing financial surplus.

In 2020, 28% of Dutch households were housed in a dwelling owned by a social housing association (SCP et al., 2020). The maximum rent for social housing is €808,06. (Aedes, 2023) with an average rent of €560 (Aedes, 2022). Housing associations operate autonomously but share similar ambitions and goals. Primarily, the core task *housing people who, due to their income or other circumstances, experience difficulties in finding suitable housing* (Art. 46 Housing Act). In recent years, a shift from a hierarchal government toward governance practices can be observed.

Housing associations work on a multitude of secondary tasks, (Platform31, 2019) for example sustainability, the livability of neighbourhoods, housing refugees, and the construction of new housing. Housing associations are free in prioritizing their secondary tasks as long as they focus on their core task (MBZK, 2015).

A focus on short-term goals could hinder long-term strategic thinking (e.g. livability and housing quality are characteristics that manifest themselves over the long term). This can be considered problematic as the social housing sector faces a demand for innovation and cost efficiency (Aedes, 2019). *Aedes* is asking for more collaborations among corporations (Aedes, 2019) because the future of housing associations is more diverse and complex with regard to

the range of tasks (Aedes, 2020). There are multiple arguments for housing associations to actively work on their strategic capacity. Anticipating new developments allows corporations to make well-informed decisions and can help mitigate risks in the future. Therefore it is interesting to investigate through which ways housing associations obtain and make use of new knowledge.

Many studies have investigated Dutch social housing. (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014; Hoekstra, 2017; Musterd, 2014; Van Gent & Hochstenbach, 2020). Academics have scrutinized the implications of social housing policies (e.g., neo-liberalization or financialization) and provided an overview of the social housing sector in its entirety. Apart from the social importance of studying social housing, there is room for adding to academic literature on ‘governance,’ referring to pluricentric processes that (can) bring autonomous yet interdependent actors together (Kersbergen & Waarden, 2004). Multiple studies have looked at the shift from *government to governance* (Kooiman et al., 2005; Kooiman et al., 2008; Lo, 2018), researching the transformation of public services, once the responsibility of a central hierarchical regime, towards a system of multiple of actors. Actors that consist of a mix of public and semi-public organizations, with a cooperative attitude, carrying out essential societal services (e.g., public transit or energy). Housing corporations are a prime example of organizations that had to deal with multiple changes regarding their relationship with ‘the government’, id est central or regional bodies.

Knowledge transferring and exchange (KTE) is a method that has been studied considerably (McLoughlin et al., 2020; Sheate & Partidário, 2010; Walter et al., 2007; Ward et al., 2009), primarily in commercial organizations aimed at growth. Knowledge transfer can bridge knowledge and stakeholders, offering new ways through which organizations can obtain new innovative ideas and practices. Additionally, it is argued that there is a lack of knowledge about how corporations obtain knowledge and the interactions between individual cooperations, rather than the relationships between housing corporations and the central government.

This study aims to investigate through which structures social housing organizations in the North of the Netherlands obtain new knowledge and exchange knowledge. Addressing the strategic capabilities of housing associations and scrutinizing knowledge exchange processes. This study will focus on the northern part of the Netherlands including the provinces

of Groningen, Frisia, and Drenthe. This region faces unique challenges, such as shrinkage, an aging population, and earthquakes caused by gas extraction.

Research Questions

This study is structured surrounding a central question together with a set of secondary research questions. The following main question is formulated:

What structures and activities do housing associations in the North of the Netherlands deploy to acquire and exchange knowledge?’

To answer this central question, the following four secondary research questions are constructed

- I.** *How can the work field of social housing associations in the North of the Netherlands be contextualized?*
- II.** *Where is knowledge lacking in contemporary and future practices of housing associations?*
- III.** *What is the process by which housing associations acquire and exchange new knowledge?*
- IV.** *What is the impact of knowledge exchanges with fellow corporations on the effectiveness of housing associations' work?*
- V.** *What knowledge exchange methods can be implemented to enhance the effectiveness of housing associations?*

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

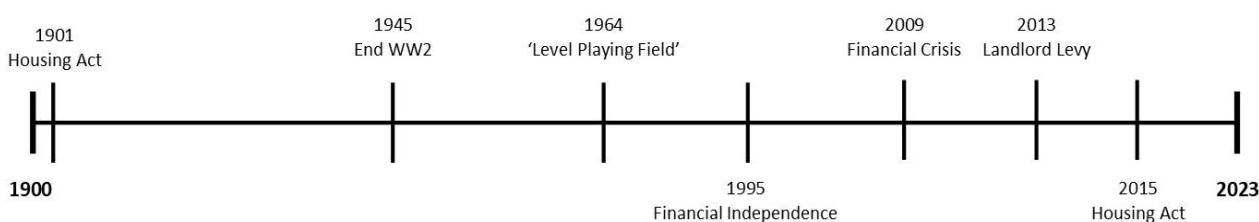
This chapter will elaborate on the concept of knowledge sharing and the history of Dutch social housing associations. Social housing in the Netherlands has a long and eventful history, the first paragraph will start with the historical background, followed by the modern age of social housing.

2.1. Background of Dutch Social Housing (1901 – 2015)

Several events and political decisions have influenced the way housing associations operate nowadays, starting in 1901 up to the present day. Figure 1 visualizes a timeline with the most influential events.

Figure 1

History of Dutch Social Housing (Elsinga et al., 2014; Author)



Blessing (2012) argues that insights into housing associations have to be sought within 'their hybrid status', the status of the housing sector has changed multiple times in history. Housing corporations can be regarded as *Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organizations* (Quango) or, more simply, as *hybrid* (Blessing, 2012). Quangos are organizations charged with the implementation of one or more public policies, but operate at arm's length of the central government, without an immediate hierarchical relationship existing with a minister or a government department. A history lesson on the social housing sector is vital in order to explain the hybrid status.

The sector started to develop in the 19th century. Private initiatives aimed to solve the housing crisis and bad living conditions for the labor force. At that time there was not any government involvement yet. This started in 1901 with the first Housing Act (1), which granted associations the exclusive right to rent directly from the government at a low-interest rate. After the Housing Act, the number of 'allowed associations' and their social housing units grew substantially (Elsinga et al., 2014).

The second World War (2) caused a significant housing shortage in the Netherlands. Cabinet-Drees I (1948-1951) recognized the potential of housing associations in the reconstruction of Dutch housing. The role of housing corporations grew enormously and was accompanied by greater government involvement. The Dutch government planned, arranged, subsidized, and controlled housing construction (Elsinga et al., 2014). Which reduces the private character of the housing corporations (Beekers, 2012; Elsinga et al., 2014).

The years after 1958 marked the start of the recovery of the independence of the social housing sector. A government commission explored ways through which the independence of housing associations could be increased, returning to a pre-war relationship between the housing sector and the central government. In 1964, the commission delivered its report, prescribing the status of social housing corporations (Elsinga et al., 2014):

the institute of housing associations must be regarded as a system of private initiatives, originated, and maintained by free social forces (p.5).

In addition, based on a Darwinian economic theory, arguing that competition encourages efficiency and innovation (Arrow, 1962), the commission advised that commercial investors and social housing corporations should act at a 'level playing field' (3) to achieve optimal efficiency of the real estate market (Elsinga et al., 2014). In the following years, with the help of construction grants, the social housing sector grew considerably. A series of decisions in the late '80s marked the end of financial support for the real estate market. Firstly, a parliamentary inquiry into construction subsidies (1986), and secondly the memorandum *Public housing in the nineties* (nota-Heerma). The memorandum marked a change of direction from support of social housing towards owner-occupied housing (Van Gent, 2010).

The introduction of *Besluit Beheer Sociale Huursector* in 1993 and the *Bruterling* (Grossing and balancing operation) in 1995 led to the financial independence of the social housing sector (4), resulting in the discontinuation of government subsidies to housing associations. In the years after the financial independence there were doubts as to whether the corporations would be able to cope with the financial independence. A period of professionalization begins aimed at making housing associations more market-oriented. For instance, the sale of housing and the development of commercial real estate should become part of the core business of housing associations (Elsinga et al., 2014). Processing government institutions towards the private sector is similar to the British social housing change since the seventies (Malpass & Victory, 2010). With the help of low-interest government loans and the

sale of housing, corporations became financially successful (de Jong, 2013). In the period after that, the concerns about whether corporations could survive financially changed into concerns about whether they are using their extensive wealth sufficiently (Elsinga et al., 2014).

The global financial crisis of 2008, ignited by the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, caused house prices to plummet and the sale of housing as a source of income vanished. The housing sector quickly transitioned from financial success to distress (5) (CBS, 2018). Furthermore, housing associations developed a negative reputation due to multiple cases of mismanagement, favoritism, self-enrichment, and fraud. In 2011, the government was forced to provide a bailout of over two billion Euros to the housing association Vestia after risky speculations failed (Aalbers et al., 2017; Van Gent, 2010). In 2014, research conducted by a parliamentary commission of inquiry concluded that structural deficiencies in the social housing system, since the ‘privatization’ of the social housing sector, have led to the incidents at multiple housing associations (Tweede-Kamer, 2014).

The financial crisis and the failures of associations created room for further restructuring of the social housing sector (Brenner et al., 2010; Van Gent & Hochstenbach, 2020). The introduction of the landlord levy marks a crucial point in the history of social housing. The landlord levy is a social housing tax that was introduced in 2013 (6). Van Gent (2010) argues that the tax ‘*was an austerity measure that served no other purpose than to cover the state budget*’ (p.160). The tax has generated over 13.7 billion Euros for the state until its abolition on the first of January 2023 (Aedes, 2020). Aedes states that this levy puts a brake on housing associations. Arguing that this money could have been used for more affordable and sustainable housing (Aedes, 2021). An investigation among housing corporations conducted by Aedes demonstrates a direct correlation between the introduction of the landlord levy and a decline in the construction of new social housing (Aedes, 2019).

Reform of the social housing sector has been called for by the European Commission (E.C.), which regarded the status of housing associations as market distortion, as social housing associations were allowed to develop housing for the private market with the use of state aid (Priemus & Gruis, 2011). In 2009 E.C. published its decision about the conditions of state aid. The Dutch government proposed new housing regulations, including the requirement that housing associations allocate at least 90% of their homes to people with a low income, which became part of the 2015 Housing Act.

To this day, the legal status of Dutch housing associations is still under scrutiny by the EC. The Dutch government and Aedes regard housing associations as private organizations. The EC does not agree with this and states that, given their core task, the corporations should be regarded as government bodies, and are therefore also subject to tendering (Aedes, 2021). Elsinga et al. (2014) confirm the fuzzy status of housing associations, noting that they are not subject to the discipline of the government, but also not to the discipline of the market.

Housing associations are private institutions in legal terms which are obligated to execute public tasks. The misconception that housing corporations are part of the government is therefore easily made. The incumbent Minister of Housing (de Jonge) confirms this special relationship by stating that housing associations are ‘allies and partners’ (Aedes, 2022). The minister has no direct authority over the housing associations but can hold them ‘accountable’ for their legal responsibilities (Aedes, 2022).

2.2. Modern age of social housing (2015 – Present)

The introduction of the 2015 Housing Act (7) marked the most recent transformation of the social housing system. Chiefly, because the act manifests the core task of housing associations *‘housing people who, due to their income or other circumstances, experience difficulties in finding suitable housing’* (art. 46.1 Housing Act). This is in accordance with the Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI) as specified by the EC (European Commission, 2022). The act regulates the investment practices of housing associations and access to social housing. Codified in a set of rules. For instance, the requirement is that housing associations must allocate at least 85% of their homes to people with a low income (< € 44.035) (Rijksoverheid, 2023).

In addition to the core task, additional services are conducted by housing associations. As an answer to the former lack of oversight, the 2015 Housing Act prescribes housing associations, municipalities, and tenant organizations to agree on a housing agenda ([Van Gent & Hochstenbach, 2020](#)). The housing agenda of housing associations must be drawn up in consultation with municipalities (art 44.2 Housing Act) in so-called performance agreements. The performance agreements concern more than the provision of housing. Five subjects are required to be addressed (art. 39. BTIV):

- Liberalization and sale of housing
- Plans for construction and purchase of housing
- Affordability and accessibility for the target group

- Housing of specific groups
- Quality and sustainability of housing (and the adjacent environment)
- Quality of life and social real estate

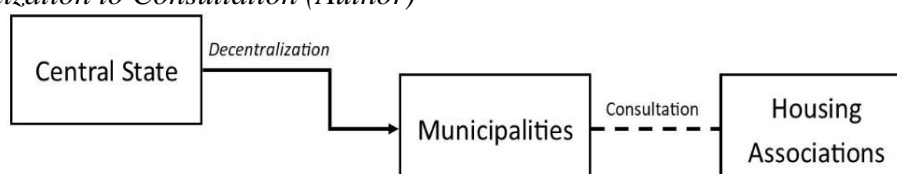
Since the housing act, municipalities in which housing associations operate are divided into nineteen geographically defined ‘housing regions’ (MBZK, 2021). Multiple housing associations can be active within a single region. Housing associations that operate nationally do not exist (anymore).

2.3. Governance

The term *governance* refers to pluricentric processes that bring autonomous yet interdependent actors together in their efforts to provide solutions to specific issues (Kersbergen & Waarden, 2004). Shifts in governance (i.e., *government to governance*) refer to a transformation of public services, once the responsibility of a top-down, centralized regime, towards a system involving a plurality of public and private actors (Lo, 2017). Such a shift has occurred in the private, semi-private, and public spheres, and at multiple levels. Section 2.1. described the waves of governance shifts within the Dutch housing section. Governance shifts in Dutch social housing do not necessarily symbolize a stereotypical, *neo-liberalistic*, and linear decentralization process - that is from *top-down* to *bottom-up* (de Roo, 2002), or from *higher* to *lower* (Allers & de Kam, 2010), as described by academics in the field of planning theory. Given that housing associations once started as private, bottom-up initiatives (Elsinga et al., 2014). Rather, it can be stated that the Dutch housing associations are divided into a ‘system’ of autonomous, yet government-affiliated organizations pursuing shared objectives. In the Netherlands, decentralization holds additional executive and regulatory tasks for municipalities, primarily tasks in the social domain including, health care, youth care (SCP, 2020), and the housing of status holders (i.e. former refugees) (Aedes, 2018). Municipalities try to solve some of the new tasks ‘in consultation’ with housing associations because unlike the central state, which cannot directly delegate tasks to the housing associations, municipalities agree with housing corporations annually on performance agreements (Art. 43 Housing Act).

Figure 2

Decentralization to Consultation (Author)



Van Gent and Hochstenbach (2020) argue that changes in Dutch housing policies sought to reorganize the social-rental sector from *'a collective provision to a last-resort tenure'* (p.11.), only for those with few other options – a safety net for low-income households (Angel, 2021). Policies changes have largely been inconsistent and non-linear. Crises offer new ways to rearrange politics, consisting often of temporary fixes that lead to new crises (Jacobs & Manzi, 2013; Van Gent & Hochstenbach, 2020). This has led to a residualisation of the social-rental sector (e.g., affordability, spatial segregation, and concentration), undermining the reputation of social housing (Van Gent & Hochstenbach, 2020).

Although, it is tempting to limit the scope of this theoretical framework to the historical events that have led to such a fascinating status. The future of housing associations consists of diverse and complex challenges (Aedes, 2020) which deserve further attention.

2.4. Knowledge Transfer & Exchange

Defining Knowledge Exchange

Knowledge transfer and exchange (KTE) offers new ways through which organizations can obtain innovative ideas and practices (McLoughlin et al., 2020; Ward et al., 2009), a way of breaking down barriers that hinder interaction, communication, and collaboration (Sheate & Partidário, 2010). Helmstädter (2003) defined knowledge sharing as *'interactions between actors where the raw material is knowledge'* (p. 2). In a more general perspective, knowledge sharing is defined as the means by which organizations have access to their own and other organizations' knowledge. Or the process of transference of experience and organizational knowledge to business processes through communication channels (Castaneda & Cuellar, 2020). A common recognition is that knowledge transfer and exchange describes the interchange of knowledge between research users and research producers (i.e. universities) (Kiefer et al., 2005; Mitton et al., 2007). The terms knowledge and information are repeatedly used interchangeably in knowledge-sharing literature (Wang & Noe, 2010). Although a distinction between the two does not hold any practical utility, knowledge can be considered as processed information by individuals or groups relevant to organizational performances (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Machlup, 1981). In this light knowledge exchange can be considered more meaningful than information exchange.

A practical and commonly used definition of the terms knowledge transfer and exchange encompasses all facets of knowledge production, knowledge sharing, storage,

mobilization, translation, and use (Best & Holmes, 2010; Cvitanovic et al., 2015). Cummings (2004) described knowledge sharing as the provision of task information and expertise to help others and to work in partnership with others to solve problems, develop new ideas and or implement policies or procedures.

In the context of innovation, knowledge sharing is the exchange of specific expertise aimed to create and improve products or services. Storey and Kelly (2002) argue that a lack of knowledge is the main barrier of innovation of service firms. Knowledge transfer can be aided through the transfer of personnel, or specialized knowledge intermediaries, and is expected to occur between a variety of stakeholders within a discipline. Kahn (1996) makes the distinction between interaction and collaboration. Interaction is defined as a mechanism that encourages information flow. While collaboration is defined as a philosophy of continuous relations. Collaboration is often aimed at a central theme, shared vision, and objectives. A collaboration manifests itself, for example, in the form of working groups, networks, partnerships, or consortiums.

Historically, it can be hypothesized that housing corporations do not cooperate or exchange knowledge organically with one another. Housing organizations are private institutions and therefore might regard each other as competitors. Certainly, when they operate in the same area and when a market orientation used to be the status quo.

Within the context of this research, the term knowledge transfer and exchange can be constructed using the aforementioned definitions: *the exchange of specific expertise, information, ideas, and experiences between key actors in Social Housing aimed to solve problems, develop innovative ideas, implement policies or enhance procedures.*

Knowledge transfer success

Following the most basic definition of knowledge transfer, success can be determined by the successful transfer of the sender's knowledge to the recipient (Cummings, 2004), that is whether the process has succeeded. Another approach to defining knowledge-sharing success focuses on the degree to which the knowledge is re-created to conform to those of the source. Knowledge-sharing success in this light is the extent to which recipients obtain ownership of, commitment to, and satisfaction with shared knowledge, which plays a vital role in creating value for organizational success (or competitiveness) (Abdul-Jalal et al., 2013; Cummings, 2004; Cummings & Teng, 2003). Merely, understanding knowledge is thus not sufficient for defining success. Kostova (1999) and Cummings (2004) argue that a recipient's

‘internalization of knowledge’ is a more appropriate way to gauge knowledge transfer success. Knowledge internalization is the process of accepting and adopting values, patterns, or knowledge within the organization, either conscious or subconscious, and applying it in real situations (Tsai & Lee, 2006). Valuing internalization can be complicated. Within a competitive business world, for example, one can look at profitability figures. However, in the social housing sector, this can be more complicated since there is a wide range of tasks available influenced by a wide range of factors (e.g., financial, expertise, geography, or politics). Knowledge sharing success is therefore highly context-dependent. Within the context of this research, using the definition of knowledge transfer and exchange constructed in the preceding section knowledge transfer success can be defined as *the extent to which the exchange of specific expertise, information, ideas, and experiences between key actors in Social Housing, has contributed to solve problems, develop new ideas, implement policies or enhance procedures of social housing corporations.*

2.5. Key Actors in Social Housing

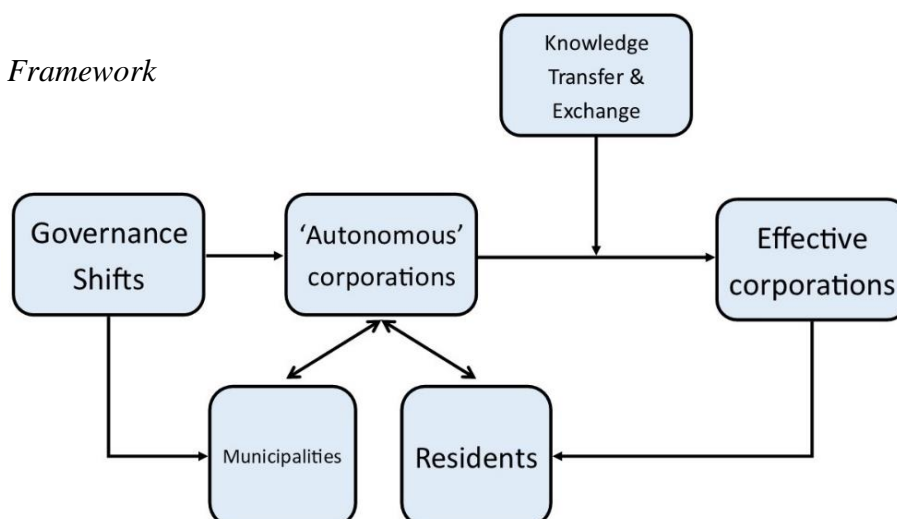
Within the context of Dutch Social Housing key actors and stakeholders can be identified. There are four main actors in this field: housing associations, tenants, municipalities, and the state. There has been a formal role for tenants since 2015, enshrined in Dutch law. Tenants are represented in ‘tenant organizations’, part of the consultation regarding the performance agreements (Art. 44 Housing Act). Housing associations are authorized organizations (Art. 61 Housing Act) that are responsible for the provision of affordable housing. Municipalities are important primarily because they establish performance agreements. In addition, municipalities develop local policies that are relevant to the work of housing associations (e.g., zoning plans). The joint consultation between the three most prominent actors, tenants, municipality, and housing association, is called the ‘tripartite’ (Platform31). The (central) State remains an important actor within the social housing sector. Not directly, as the state is not part of performance agreements. Nonetheless, the state has great influence over the social housing sector, primarily by adjusting legislating, as was described in §2.1., through the landlord levy that limits the budget of the housing associations (Aedes, 2021; Van Gent, 2010), and through the decentralization of government tasks, which can be redirected to housing associations (Allers & de Kam, 2010) (see Fig. 2). In June 2022, the central government entered into agreements with Aedes, known as national performance agreements. A new concept through which the state *‘aims to regain control of public housing’* (MBZK, 2022, p. 2)

Lastly, Aedes is the umbrella organization for most housing associations. Aedes lobbies in The Hague and Brussels for favorable legal, fiscal, and financial conditions for the housing corporations. In addition, Aedes works on the development and innovation of the sector by offering housing corporations knowledge and support and by conducting research together. Aedes also acts as a knowledge platform where its members can meet and exchange ideas (Aedes, 2021). This last role will be addressed in this study.

2.6. Conceptual Model

The conceptual model displays fundamental concepts and relationships with each other (Punch, 2013), defined in the foregoing paragraphs. Figure 3 illustrates the relations between each of the concepts. §2.1, §2.2. §2.3. has shown how shifts in Dutch housing governance have led to the current status and partial residualisation of social housing corporations. Effectively, corporations are autonomous organizations with strings attached to the local government and residents. §2.4., defined Knowledge Transfer & Exchange as an opportunity through which corporations can obtain new knowledge. In order to solve problems, develop innovative ideas, and or implement policies or procedures. Lastly, §2.5. listed the key actors in the context of Dutch Social Housing. ‘Residents’ are at the center of the model. For the reason that providing housing to residents is ultimately the most prominent goal of housing associations.

Figure 3
Conceptual Framework



3. METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework presented an overview of Dutch social housing and the concept of knowledge transfer and exchange. To answer the main research question a framework of data collection followed by analysis techniques is necessary. This chapter provides an overview of the research methods. The research design was constructed along Yin's (2003a, 2003b) work on case-study research and Punch's (2013) work on social research.

3.1. Case Study as Research Methodology

A case study as a research method will study one case in detail, using whatever methods and data seem appropriate. With the general objective to develop as full an understanding of the case as possible. (Punch, 2013).

A qualitative case study provides an approach of research that facilitates the exploration of complex phenomena using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the issue is not explored through merely one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which enables multiple facets of the phenomenon to be understood. Case study as a research method is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individuals, groups, or political phenomena. Using the case study as a research method is appropriate in contexts in which the aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena (Yin, 2003), such as governance settings.

There is not a clear-cut formula for a case study, the case study research is regularly used to explain '*how or why*' a phenomenon works (Yin, 2003). The focus of this study is about understanding *how* social housing corporations make use of knowledge transfer and exchange structures and activities. Additionally, a case study is an appropriate method to study the system of housing associations because it provides the opportunity to study complex systems in detail.

Baxter and Jack (2010) highlight Yin's (2003) approach to be based on a '*constructivist paradigm*'. This claims that the truth is relative and depends on one's perspective and interpretation. A case study will therefore not find the absolute truth, but rather an interpretation of the truth. A common criticism of case study concerns its generalizability. Whether a case study should even seek to be generalized, and representative, depends on the context of the case (Denzin, 1983; Punch, 2013).

Yin (2003) describes three main forms of case studies: (1) descriptive, (2) exploratory, and (3) explanatory. Based on this categorization this case study can be defined as either an exploratory and/or explanatory, single case study, with embedded units. Also known as a ‘embedded case study.’ Yin (2003) defined embedded single case study as a case study containing more than one sub-unit of analysis. The strength of this approach is the capacity of integrating quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study. The social housing sector in the North of the Netherlands will be the single case under scrutiny. It is challenging to clearly define the specific case to be studied due to its inherent nature as part of the research process. As it is not yet known whether and to what extent housing corporations operate as a knowledge exchange network.

3.2. Unit of Analyses

Yin (2003) points out that boundaries between cases and the context are not necessarily evident. The unit of analysis, or the case, is a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. Effectively, the case is the unit of analysis. An embedded unit of analysis refers to a group or individual that is studied within the context of a larger system or network. In other words, the unit of analysis is ‘embedded’ within a broader context, its position is analyzed in relation to that context. Figure 4 visualizes the typification of this study. In this study the context is ‘social housing in the North of the Netherlands,’ the individual corporations can be considered as embedded units of analysis.

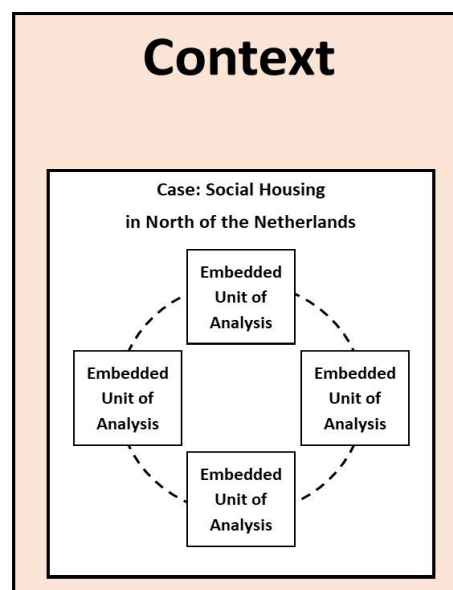


Figure 4

Typification of the case-study. (Author, based on Yin (2003))

Yin (2003) states that a case can also be defined by the spatial boundary, theoretical scope, and timeframe. The North of the Netherlands, includes the most northern provinces of the Netherlands; Groningen, Drenthe, and Frisia¹ (see fig. 5). The spatial boundary of this case, therefore, consist of the boundaries of this area. These three provinces are commonly referred to as the north of the Netherlands. C.B.S. (Dutch Bureau for Statistics) considers the three provinces as the ‘northern region of the country’ (CBS, n.d.). Apart from the geographic connectedness, (i.e., the provinces all border each other), the three are often grouped in other contexts (e.g. police departments, or government agencies). The provinces all have their regional governments; the provincial councils supplemented by municipalities.

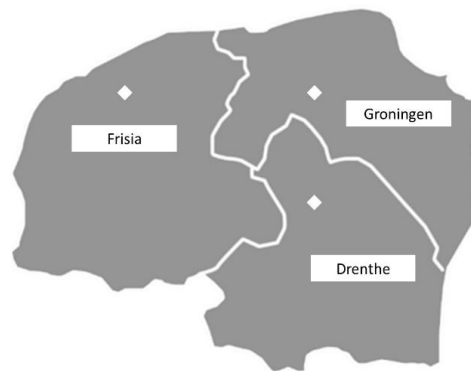


Figure 5

Geographical Unit of Analysis, Provinces of Groningen, Drenthe, and Frisia (Author)

The theoretical scope of this research is based on the literature study. The central key concepts are *Social Housing* and *Knowledge Transfer and Exchange*. Although historical events (see fig. 1) can be relevant to the contemporary practice of housing associations, there is no fixed timeframe. This study is a ‘snapshot of time’ and does not aim to make an evaluation over a certain period. As data collection took place late 2022 answers of key actors, with the interpretation of the author, are subject to the perception of that time.

3.3. Data Collection

Data collection requires proper preparation (Yin, 2003a) and must be driven by strategy (Punch, 2013). This research used a case study to strategize the data collection process. In case studies, multiple sources of data and multiple data collection methods are to be used (Punch, 2013). This will be no different in this study. The use of a multitude of research methods is

¹ Frisia is the province with the strongest individual identity, considering its unique language and culture.

not a goal in its own right. In this research, a specific method has been drawn up for each sub-question. In addition, Yin (2003a) prescribes three general principles for case studies that are significant for any data collection process.

- I. Use multiple sources: Also known as triangulation. From Yin's perspective, case studies should rest upon multiple sources of evidence. Findings based on multiple data sources are more powerful.
- II. Case study database: Creating a database of all the data of the case study adds to the reliability of the research.
- III. Maintain a chain of evidence: Consisting of explicit links between the questions asked, the data collected, and the conclusions drawn. This helps the reader to follow the derivation of evidence, ranging from the initial research question to, ultimately, the conclusions. In this regard, a transparent research design is highly important.

Document and policies review

Secondary research can be used to provide a description of the characteristics that is the focus of the research (White, 2010). Secondary data is primarily collected and made available by governments. In this research, a considerable amount of grey literature will be used to provide the context of housing corporations. Examples of grey literature are annual reports and policy plans from housing associations. This research has examined twenty business plans, policy plans and strategic visions of housing associations (Appendix I provides a list of scrutinized documents). Policy documents were downloaded from the websites of the housing associations. Based on these documents, it can be determined what the most important and common priorities of housing associations are. In addition, the plans of corporations regarding innovation, acquiring new knowledge, sharing and exchanging knowledge, and collaboration are listed. Results obtained in the first step offer the opportunity to approach housing associations in a targeted manner.

Interviewing

Interviewing is a qualitative data collection tool in which there is a spoken exchange of information. It is an excellent way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations, and constructions of (their) reality (Punch, 2013). Three types of interviews can be distinguished: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Dunn, 2021; Punch, 2013). According to Punch (2013), the type of interview used in research should align with the research questions. In line with this principle, this study employed a semi-structured interview

approach. This approach involves a pre-determined structure but also allows for flexibility to explore additional topics that may arise during the interview (Dunn, 2021). The use of semi-structured interviews allows the participants to elaborate on the topics that are important to them and allows the interviewer to conduct the interview in a conversational manner (Dunn, 2021; Longhurst, 2010). One of the participants (M.D.) was interviewed using an unstructured approach, as the predetermined interview guide did not align with her experiences and profession. This approach allowed for a more open-ended and flexible interaction.

A prerequisite of a successful interview is thorough preparation (Punch, 2013). To ensure consistent and focused questioning, an interview guide (see Appendix II) was developed based on the information obtained from business plans. However, the specific questions asked may vary depending on the organization being interviewed. The respondents for this study were recruited using purposive sampling, individuals were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. Recruitment efforts included email, phone, and LinkedIn outreach. The criteria are: (1) the respondent is employed within the social housing sector, (2) in the North of the Netherlands, and (3) lastly a housing corporation must in any capacity have given attention to its strategic goals (i.e., KTE-practices) in their policy plans. The focus of this research is on housing associations that highlighted knowledge and knowledge transfer. In total, five respondents were interviewed. With five respondents the data set is limited. Results cannot be used to be generalized beyond the context of the study (social housing in the North of the Netherlands) (Punch, 2013). A larger data sample allows for broader conclusions, but following a purposive sampling technique, only a limited number of housing corporations remain which meet the criteria for inclusion. The respondents who participated in the research are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Name participant	Abbreviation	Profession	Organization	Date of interview
Maaïke Draaisma	M.D.	Coordinator	Loopbaan- Initiatief	21 st November
Linden Douma	L.D.	Senior Strategic Advisor	Actium	29 th November
Ramon Hoogeveen	R.H.	Strategic Portfolio and Policy Advisor	Woonservice	8 th December
Michiel Hasslacher	M.H.	Strategic Policy Advisor	Domesta	14 th December
Herbert Bosch	H.B.	Strategic Policy Advisor	Lefier	19 th December

List of interviews

Literature Research

The final research question will be answered using interview data supplemented by a literature review. Literature review has identified relevant concepts, theories, and ideas about knowledge transfer and exchange, that can be deployed by housing organizations to strengthen their work. The review consists of scientific literature that the researcher selected based on relevance. Literature was collected via online catalogs, namely SmartCat, and Google Scholar. Key terms used to search for literature consists of *knowledge transfer*, - *exchange*, - *sharing*, - *practices*, and *governmental knowledge sharing*.

3.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation are essential to creating meaningful conclusions (Yin, 2003a). Policy documents were researched and coded to get an understanding of the background and basic information of the housing associations. The coded sections of the policy documents are used as examples in the results section. The policy documents provide essential information about the background and strategies of housing associations.

All the interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone Smartphone app. The interviews were conducted and partially transcribed in Dutch. The quotes have been selected by listening back to the interviews and transcribing and coding the most important segments. Coding is the starting activity in qualitative data analysis and the foundation for what comes later (Punch,

2013). Quotes are coded according to the themes and questions of the interview guide. In the results, references are made using the abbreviations of the interviewees. Appendix 3 contains the quotes from the interviewees. Respondents consist of professionals with strategic positions in housing corporations. The interviews lasted on average 49 minutes.

Interpreting case study data is done by a technique called '*explanation building*' (Yin, 2003, p. 120), by explanation building the researcher 'explains' a phenomenon by stipulating causal links. Explanation buildings occur in narrative form, this technique relies heavily on the '*analytic insight of the explanation builder*' (p. 122) (i.e. the researcher). The goal is to construct an explanation of multiple data sources that fit the case (Yin, 2003a).

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The importance of research ethics cannot be overstated, as it ensures that research is conducted responsibly and ethically. Most importantly ethical research is expressed by a commitment to the honest conduct of research and to the communication of results (Clifford et al., 2016). Research ethics ensures that the rights and welfare of research participants are protected (Smith, 2003). A consent form was provided to the interviewees including an explanation and aim of the interview and research. Additionally, prior to the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were asked for their consent to record the session. All interviewees provided their approval for the recording. The answers of the professionals are in relation to their function and therefore the names of the interviewees were not anonymized. The interviewer expressed gratitude to the respondents for their participation. The recordings of the interviews are deleted following the completion of the research.

4. FINDINGS

In this chapter, the results of the case study are presented. The case study involved a detailed examination of twenty strategic policy plans of housing associations, interviews with key stakeholders in the social housing sector, and a brief literature review. The structure of this chapter aligns with the research questions outlined in the previous Methodology chapter. Starting with (I) the contextualization of the social housing sector in the north of the Netherlands. Followed by insights (II, III, IV, V) obtained through the interviews. Finalized by a (V) literature review of promising knowledge sharing strategies. The findings serve as input for the discussion and conclusion which are presented in chapters 5 and 6.

200,000 dwellings are owned by housing associations in the three northern provinces of the country. This number has remained stable over the past decade. These dwellings are managed by thirty-two different organizations and are primarily located in urban areas. Within the province of Groningen, the municipality of Groningen alone contains more than half of the social rental housing units owned by housing associations (CBS, 2022).

4.1 Social Housing Context, introduction to a case

Prioritization

Although housing associations all operated within their own context (i.e., location, and organization, size, etc.), an examination of twenty strategic business plans shows that the prioritization of social housing corporations is generally equal. Appendix I list the names, locations, housing stock, and business plans of the corporations. Corporations all draft visions in which goals for the future are formulated. This includes concrete objectives aimed at the core task. For instance, *‘Patrimonium has reserved a budget for 70 new housing units p* (Patrimonium, 2019, p. 33) and secondary goals *‘Our goal is to make all our homes CO2-neutral by 2050’* (Dynhus, 2021, p. 10). The following priorities are most frequently listed

- *Quantity of housing*: housing associations make long-term plans for the number of homes to be built and demolished. Increasing the total housing stock is the highest priority for most housing associations.
- *Affordability*: corporations substantiate how they keep their housing ‘affordable,’ the annual rent increase, and how they deal with rent arrears.

- *Sustainability*: corporations describe how they want to achieve their sustainability targets (no CO2 emissions in 2050) (Aedes, 2022). For example, insulation, heat networks, or solar panels.
- *Quality of housing*: housing associations make plans aimed at maintenance of the housing.
- *Livability of the neighborhood or environment*: including plans regarding the quality of life of the neighbourhood.

The priorities match the terms, as stated in article 39 of the BTIV (see §2.2) and little deviation from the statutory duties can be found. Priorities that are mentioned to a lesser extent are, for example, strengthening cooperation and communication with tenants. Plus giving tenants a role within housing policy. For instance, Woonconcept aims to give their tenants a more prominent voice: *'We will involve residents more in our work. To be able to influence [our work] based on their experiences. As a result, their homes, neighbourhoods, and our services will better match their needs'* (Woonconcept, 2022, p. 2).

In non-urban regions, particularly in areas experiencing population decline (East-Groningen, Eemsdelta, het Hogeland, and North-East Frisia) (CBS, 2018), the emphasis on the quantity of housing is less significant in comparison to more urbanized regions. Instead, corporations strive for a 'suitable housing supply'; aimed at matching housing to the changing needs of tenants, mostly caused by aging (Marenland, 2018). Acantus (2018), titles this as *'housing in the right place'* (p. 28).

Organization

In addition to housing policy, housing associations draw up plans for their organization. Differences in prioritization between the corporations can be found regarding objectives within the internal organization. These objectives are diverse and include the structure of the organization, recruiting staffing, finances, partnerships, and digitization. Actium (2021) highlights the importance of collaboration: *'Our current tasks are too large and too complex for us alone. For us, 'together' means everyone with whom we can fulfill our ambitions now and in the future'* together includes *'tenants and partners'* (p.13). In addition, some housing associations indicate that, given the high average age of their employees, it is vital to rejuvenate staff by hiring young personnel (Woonstichting Weststellingwerf, 2021).

Knowledge and expertise

The importance of knowledge is recognized by gross of the scrutinized associations. Corporation Marenland (2018) argues that their task field is changing which requires them to update their knowledge and be able to apply this knowledge properly. Accolade (2019) emphasized the need for new knowledge writing *‘Moving with the times requires that we constantly improve, innovate, and develop. That we have important knowledge in-house and ensure that it remains up to date’* (p. 10).

Although objectives aimed at acquiring knowledge are common. Concrete strategies are not equally developed by corporations. Strategies diverge widely. The most mentioned strategy to become future-proof is aimed at the existing staff. Improving the skills of the employees through training and courses is the most commonly referred to strategy. Oftentimes through terms such as 'team development', 'retraining', or 'talent development' (de Huismeester, 2020; Domesta, 2021; Dynhus, 2021).

For several housing associations, it remains a matter of raising the importance of knowledge in order to become future-proof. Going beyond addressing the importance of sufficient knowledge in business plans, a number of corporations have developed concrete strategies and methods for developing their own knowledge. The biggest housing corporation in the North of the Netherlands, Lefier, has created the ‘Lefier-academy’, an online platform aimed at career-training for its workforce (Lefier, 2021). Corporation WoonFriesland experiments through their pilot project, ‘House of the Future,’ in which sustainability measures are tested in cooperation with researchers and construction companies which can be applied to their housing stock (Woonfriesland, 2021).

When knowledge is unavailable internally, housing associations can acquire it externally. A few housing associations indicate that they do this. For instance, Woonservice (2022) *‘If necessary, we obtain knowledge from outside’* (p. 11). Corporation Marenland (2018) emphasized the importance of knowledge for their organization *‘Marenland must be strong to be able to fulfill its role well. There is a greater appeal for knowledge within the organization and it is also necessary to obtain a lot of knowledge externally’* (p. 7).

Lefier (2021) recognized the growing importance of networking. Consisting of *‘connecting, collaborating and co-creating’* (p. 49). Lefier acknowledged that contact with network partners is going well, but that there is no shared policy. Lefier recognizes that changes within their organization affect other organizations due to their considerable size.

'Organizational change is also network change' (p. 48). That is why Lefier aims to play a more prominent role in the network. Without specifically referring to knowledge sharing with fellow corporations.

Knowledge Transfer and Exchange

Regarding knowledge transfer and exchange, several housing associations have highlighted this in their vision. Actium (2021) writes '*we share knowledge and together we draw lessons from things that can do better*' (p. 14), De Huismeester (2020) writes that their ideas, expressed in the strategic plan, are drawn up together with tenants, partners, fellow corporations, employees, and experts. and effectiveness can be increased by '*sharing knowledge and acquiring knowledge*' (p. 6). There is a lack of specific examples of how corporations exchange knowledge with colleagues. Stakeholders and fellow corporations are often collectively referred to as '(network) partners', a distinction is not always made.

Contact with fellow corporations is mainly aimed at cooperation. Patrimonium aims to increase cooperation with other corporations in (the city of) Groningen aimed at neighborhood renewal and sustainability (Patrimonium, 2019). De Bouwvereniging (2019) also stresses the importance of cooperation from a financial point of view '*through collaboration with fellow corporations, we save costs on materials and hiring consultants*' (p. 15). Domesta (2021), recognizes that a future-proof and flexible organization requires '*Research, Experiment and Innovate*' (p. 27), highlighting that innovation can be accomplished through collaboration with fellow corporations. It is not substantiated what is meant by the term "innovation". It can be inferred that innovation in this context is aimed at the development of sustainable and affordable housing construction.

Lefier stressed the importance of networking but does not explicitly write that they aim to share their knowledge and experience. The Lefier-Academy is aimed at 'learning together,' 'together' focused on their own employees, and 'employees of social partners' (Lefier, 2021). Woonservice (2022) has included the theme of cooperation as a central component of their course plan, *Working smarter together*. Arguing that this strategy is essential for achieving 'maximum impact'. The terms collaborating, connecting, or networking with fellow companies are used interchangeably by multiple corporations. It is therefore vital to find out what the impact of these interactions is. A structured method of knowledge sharing cannot be observed from the business plans.

4.2 From prioritization to actualization

In the methodology section, it was discussed that interviews were conducted with key social housing actors in the north of the Netherlands. The findings of these interviews can be found throughout this chapter in the form of citations. Table 1 provides an overview of the actors who were interviewed. A description of the respondents and the most important quotes from their interviews can be found in Appendix III. The interviews with professionals of key actors in the social housing sector offer insight into the network of housing associations and the ways in which new knowledge is disseminated within the field.

Strategy and Policy

Interviewees hold strategic positions and provide policy advice to housing corporations. A strategic position is aimed at guaranteeing the long-term course of a housing corporation (Appendix III, L.D., R.H., M.H., H.B.) *'Every four years we determine Actium's long-term strategy. Where do we want to go? What do we want to focus on?'* (L.D.). The respondents are concerned with developments that may impact a corporation in the future. In addition to the long-term course, respondents offer policy advice to the organization. 'Policy' encompasses a range of topics for example: sales of housing, agreements and collaborations with other corporations, and mainly performance agreements with municipalities and tenant organizations.

Linden Douma emphasizes the plurality of her job: *'You can come up with hundreds of thousands of subjects that require policy, which we make happen.'* The strategist act as trendwatcher and have to react on recent developments. For example, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine with its inflation. *'You are very dependent on external developments, which means that you try to be very flexible and yet try to adapt as quickly as possible'* (H.B.).

Anticipation

As respondents have highlighted their role in the long-term course of housing corporations and emphasized the need of flexibility in order to adapt to latest trends and developments, anticipation is recognized to be necessary in order to make decisions. Corporations are not able to precisely 'predict' what is heading their way or as Herbert Bosch from Lefier said *'We do not have a crystal ball.'* Anticipating new developments is *'a matter of hearing, reading, sensing, and keeping track'* (L.D.) and this is *'not a structured way of scanning'*, while *'You can try to look as far ahead as possible, to be able to discover trends'* (H.B.). Ramon

Hoogeveen from Woonservice notes that *'developments of the current time are so dynamic and extensive, a lot is coming at our organization, that you always have to look closely.'* Respondents reported that they anticipate future developments by remaining vigilant and attentive to changes in their industry beyond the boundaries of their own organization. This aligns with the role of strategic policy advisors, who are responsible for closely monitoring and analyzing developments in the field to inform decision-making. Information can be obtained by subscribing to newsletters, government letters, following the news, attending knowledge-sessions, participating in networks, or following Linked-In (M.D., L.D., R.H., M.H, H.B.). Aedes, the trade association for housing corporations, informs its members about developments that are taking place nationwide. Michiel Hasslacher of Domesta, confirms this saying *'Aedes always keeps us well informed'*.

Knowledge gaps

In general terms, a knowledge gap is a difference between the knowledge an organization has versus what the organization needs to have to fulfill its goals effectively. To the question *'Does your housing association have the necessary knowledge available to address its goals and priorities?'* (see Appendix II), respondents indicated that they believe that they in general do have sufficient knowledge within its organization to fulfill the core tasks. Ramon Hoogeveen indicated that there is sufficient in-house knowledge available to perform their 'daily operational' tasks. Linden Douma mentioned *'Yes, in a broad sense - yes. We do notice that there are subjects in which we ourselves still fall short and then we look at how we can supplement that.'* Michiel Hasslacher argues that Domesta does have the knowledge available to fulfill *'structural activities'*.

Knowledge gaps can be discovered based on the input of the respondents. Knowledge gaps exist at specific tasks. For example, health care real estate. A subject that is becoming increasingly prominent for housing associations due to the aging of the population and changes in the Dutch healthcare system (Aedes, 2021; Dankert, 2022). *'For example, housing and healthcare. Which requires extensive knowledge of target groups and how it works with financing within the housing and care system. I think that [knowledge] shortage has been there for a while. [The Minister for Housing and Spatial Planning.] says structurally that corporations have to build clustered forms of housing. (...) We do not have that knowledge in-house to know how to build an ideal clustered form of housing.'* This gap cannot be noticed across all corporations as Domesta, possesses a sufficient level of expertise in the realm of healthcare real estate.

A deficiency in knowledge was identified for tasks that are infrequent but nonetheless important. These tasks encompass large-scale studies such as demographic forecasts, housing costs research, and housing market research. Respondents indicate these are too complex and too labor-intensive to be conducted by corporations individually (L.D., R.H., M.H., H.B.). Housing market studies chart long-term developments of the target groups in a certain area. This information is necessary *'to be able to predict how large our housing stock should be for the coming years. That is knowledge that we do not have in-house'* (H.B.). Michiel Hasslacher notes that these studies are 'temporary' and 'very specific' and that there is no need to have this expertise permanently in-house. Additionally, support services may not always be accessible, including legal support.

Aedes

Respondents have indicated that there are several ways that they keep their knowledge up to date. Aedes, the umbrella organization for Dutch housing corporations, operates as a network organization and lobbyist in the Hague. Aedes is recognized as an important source of information (L.D., R.H., M.H., H.B.). Through information letters, network days, webinars, seminars, round table discussions, knowledge sharing sessions, online forums, and benchmarks Aedes makes sure that its members are well-informed about relevant developments. Aedes newsletters, divided over various themes, keep the respondents *'well informed'* (L.D.). These newsletters are seen as an update of the role that Aedes fulfills as a lobbyist: *[Aedes] informs us, almost daily, at least weekly. With all kinds of newsletters and developments and agreements that our sector has made with the national government'* (R.H.). *'It is a tool to be informed more quickly about things that may or may not play out'* (H.B.).

Additionally, Aedes organizes knowledge sharing sessions on certain themes. Seminars and webinars are meetings centered around a theme in which colleagues from different corporations share knowledge with each other. *'Very frequent there are webinars in which one or two corporations teaches us what they have done on a certain themes. So that we can learn from corporations that also have similar problems or can enter into a dialogue with them'* (H.B.). Ramon Hogeveen highlights that these knowledge sessions are a two-way street *'Sending but also collecting [information].'* Furthermore, Aedes facilitates Aedes-Communities - an online forum for its members. A place where *'Corporations throughout the Netherlands post questions and people respond to them'* (L.D.). Communities are organized into 28 themes. For instance, a community may focus on human resources, sustainability, or livability.

The Aedes Benchmark offers corporations insight into their performance on six themes: tenant rating, expenses, sustainability, maintenance & improvement of housing, availability & affordability, and new construction (Aedes, 2019). Centralized assessment of housing associations allows for easy comparison as argued by Michiel Hasslacher *'The [Aedes benchmark] provides insight into how your corporations perform in various areas compared to other corporations'* and offers an opportunity to learn, *'insight and knowledge can only be discovered when you see that there are differences and then ask the right questions. 'The benchmark is followed by a 'bench learning session. (...). In which a number of corporations that are doing well provide explanation about how they did it. So, we can learn from that for next time' (H.B.)*

Knowledge Exchanges

Respondents were asked how they exchange knowledge with fellow housing corporations. All respondents indicated that they can easily reach fellow corporations *'if there is any question. Then they know how to reach each other'* (M.D.). Respondents consider their field of work, which is the housing actors they have contact with, to be collegial, close-knit, and focused on cooperation. *'I think that we really value collegial collaboration. (...) we support each other and all pursue the same goal'* (L.D.). All respondents indicated that housing corporations consider each other as colleagues. Housing associations *'know how to find each other'* and contact is easily made (M.H.). Housing associations recognize that they are *'jointly working on one public housing challenge.'* Collaboration and consultation are considered to be *'constructive'* (M.H.).

Knowledge exchanges between corporations are built upon the existing relations. It is common for staff at a corporation to be familiar with one another due to overlapping work areas, as multiple housing associations operate in the same geographical area. They make joint performance agreements with the municipality and often meet each other in the field. This is not a necessarily a planned collaboration but is as Herbert Bosch calls it *'an organic way of working together. The more often we see each other, the easier it is to also ask questions (...) this makes the threshold to meet each other is very low.'* This organic way of collaborating and knowledge sharing is also expressed by Ramon Hoogeveen: *'I think there is a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing in our region at the moment'* this culture is of importance because *'most employees gain a great deal of knowledge from direct contacts at work'*

A dominant pattern that emerged from the interviews is the fact that these relations are concentrated within the region, id est a municipality or the province. Respondents argued that knowledge sharing and collaborations with fellow housing corporations primarily occur within the own working field and province. Michiel Hasslacher from Domesta a corporation in Drenthe: *‘It is strange, when you cross the provincial border, it feels further away, there are contacts, but these are less intense than within Drenthe. (...) that is not due to lack of will, but rather because you don't encounter each other as often.’*

Interactions between corporations tend to be informal and spontaneous, that is not officially organized. Established relations allow for spontaneous knowledge-sharing: *‘it is not always organized, it is informal. For instance, we arrange a drink, you organize a pitch. Very much informal. Also, because we know how to find each other very well, especially in Drenthe. That you can call each other easily’* (L.D.). Short-term knowledge gaps may arise in relation to specific challenges, but they can be efficiently addressed through the deployment of the network. Respondents provided several examples of how housing associations utilize their network to work more efficiently. An example provided by Linden Douma *‘Region Deals, had to be checked legally, but we do not have legal experts. But WoonConcept does. So WoonConcept then examines that document on behalf of all corporations and then emails all corporations what its findings are.’*

In addition to the informality and spontaneous nature of the interactions, the interactions are targeted and purposeful. Policy advisors share experiences and exchange policy documents per theme with colleagues from fellow corporations *‘we regularly exchange policy documents. I have recently sent our rental policy to Lefier, and I received Actium's trailer policy. So that we do not [have to] start completely from scratch’* (M.H.). Examination of policies from other corporations offers the opportunity to evaluate and enhance current policy.

Corporations are aware of each other's areas of expertise and thus can seek assistance with specific inquiries. Liden Douma from Actium provides an example of how a fellow corporation assists them with the topic of health care real-estate *‘Domesta, (...) already knows a lot about this. Then one of us, from strategy and policy, goes to them, just to have a chat, asking questions: how do you arrange that? Then we try to introduce that into Actium.’*

Another method in which housing corporations obtain knowledge is through collaborations, these are structured forms of working relationships between multiple housing

corporations, and sometimes other actors. *DrentheWoontCirculair* is a partnership with ‘significant organizational collaborations with professional assistance’ (L.D.) of multiple corporations in Drenthe aimed at gaining knowledge by experimenting with circular housing concepts, or in other words ‘discover together, by doing’ (Drenthe Woont Circulair, 2019).

Housing corporations in Groningen collaborate in the *G13* and eight corporations in the earthquake region are part of *KR8*. Formal collaborations are established in response to a ‘collective problem’ (H.B.). Additionally, there are several small networks that focus on collaborative endeavors such as ‘an energy agency in which we share and utilize each other’s expertise and jointly acquire resources’ (H.B.). Organized collaborations are, among other things, aimed at cutting costs. Housing associations enter into collective agreements with contractors to attain ‘economies of scale’ (M.H.). In addition to financial advantages, collaborations may offer possibilities to obtain new knowledge. Herbert Bosch from Lefier ‘Informal contact arises within the formal contact. If you know each other anyway, contact is easily made.’

A dominant pattern that the respondents highlighted is the reciprocity of the exchanges. Douma refers to this as ‘sending and receiving’. Knowledge exchange is a ‘two-way street’ (R.H.), albeit it is suggested by respondents that large corporations take a more prominent role in knowledge sharing processes. In this light and due to a lack of ‘manpower or capacity’ (M.H.), small corporations are more dependent on large corporations, ‘you see that the large corporations have a more leading role and are generally present’ (M.H.). For example, Actium, a relatively large housing corporation, organizes knowledge sharing sessions and invites local housing corporations to discuss a specific theme. Associations stress that a lack of staff can impact the ability to operate effectively (L.D., H.B.).

Lastly, it is worth noting that knowledge exchanges are fragmented. Employees exchange knowledge with colleagues that have comparable responsibilities, pertaining to a specific theme. For instance, Actium organizes knowledge-sharing sessions which are centered around a specific theme. Networks are established based on a wide range of subject areas. Such as sustainability, or neighbourhood livability. These networks are often maintained by an employee (L.D.) and are informal in nature.

4.3. Enhancing Knowledge Exchange

The current network of housing associations effectively shares knowledge and there is no pressing need to strengthen it. However, any improvements to the system would be welcomed.

Herbert Bosch hints at a possibility of optimizing. Supporting tasks such as human resources or ICT could be further standardized. Due to the similar challenges faced by housing corporations, it is possible to: *'set up an HR department that works for several corporations. The same goes for legal. You could start a legal consultancy together. Which you, as corporations, all use collectively. Instead of when everyone employs their own advisor.'* Such services are often carried out by (more expensive) consultancy firms.

Literature offers examples of promoting further knowledge exchanges. Knowledge exchanging is one of the enablers for an organization to be a *'great achiever.'* This can be achieved by encouraging a *'sharing culture'*. A sharing culture is not a specific method but rather it refers to a deep structure of organizations that is rooted in values, beliefs, and assumptions held by organizational members (Tompang & Yunus, 2018) aimed at exchanging knowledge. A culture that supports knowledge sharing is one that promotes and cultivates the attitudes and beliefs that motivate and encourage members to actively engage in communication, translation, conversion, and filtering to make knowledge available and accessible throughout the organization (Intezari et al., 2017), or in this case the sector.

Knowledge sharing methods can be divided into several categories comprising multiple methods. Abu-Rumman (2021) lists effective knowledge sharing methods, including: *(i) Peer Learning, (ii) After-Action Review, (iii) Communities of Practice, (iv) Knowledge - meetings, -forums, and -conferences, (v) workshops, training, seminars, (vi) online intra- and extranets, and (vii) social networks.*

Interviews demonstrated that a diversity of approaches is utilized in the context of social housing. Through knowledge sharing sessions with colleagues, respondents actively make use of peer-learning (i). Aedes benchmark followed by bench learning sessions are an example of an after-action review (ii), knowledge is shared with colleagues from corporations with a similar set of tasks (iii, iv) through formal and informal channels. Through workshops and training the skills of individuals are strengthened (M.D.) (v), Aedes communities are extranets (vi) where questions can be asked at a national level, and connections can be made through social networks (Linked-In) (vii).

Respondents did not indicate that they acquire knowledge through knowledge institutions such as universities. Internships are occasionally offered, however, no academic research is conducted in collaboration with universities. Although corporations are open to cooperating

with universities, there is no urge to take initiative. Ramon Hoogeveen recognized that '*there is more to be gained.*' in the realm of knowledge institutions, referring to it as a '*blind spot*'.

5. DISCUSSION

The major takeaways that can be drawn from the collected data in this study are outlined in the following sections.

5.1. Prioritization of housing associations

Policy plans of housing associations in the north of the Netherlands have highly similar structures and objectives. The priorities are highly uniform and correlate with legally bounded tasks, little deviation from the statutory duties can be found. Differences between housing corporations can be found in context-specific challenges. The importance of knowledge sharing and collaborating is recognized by multiple housing corporations. Both terms are used interchangeably in the same context. Collaborative efforts among corporations are acknowledged, however, a presence of a structured strategy for exchanging knowledge is not apparent in the business plans. This hints at unplanned forms of knowledge exchange or the fact that knowledge sharing is not a goal.

The concept of "knowledge" is frequently perceived in relation to the quality of individual workers and can be enhanced through training. To discover how, and if, housing corporations share knowledge with each other. A qualitative research method is necessary. Interviews with experts active at multiple housing associations were conducted.

Similar to the uniformity of the prioritization of housing associations respondents answered in a similar manner. Respondents are concerned with future developments and trends outside of the organization and provide policy advice. Additionally, they maintain connections with external partners, including other housing corporations.

Anticipation is necessary to be able to know what is coming their way. Although it can be said that there is not a specific or structured method to predict the future. It remains a matter of 'keeping track'. It is important for housing associations to constantly remain attentive and aware of their surroundings. This involves actively monitoring and analyzing external factors in order to stay informed.

5.2. Identifying knowledge gaps

The scrutinized housing associations have sufficient knowledge available within their organization to fulfill their core tasks. Core tasks refer primarily to housing tasks as prescribed in the housing act (see §2.2). This takeaway is significant because it demonstrates major

knowledge gaps that impede the work of corporations are not acknowledged. From this standpoint it may appear that housing associations operate efficiently, however, minor knowledge gaps exist. These gaps in knowledge often pertain to specific tasks that have emerged recently and that are the result of the process of *'Decentralization to Consultation'* of government tasks (see fig 2.). Additionally, it is not feasible nor desirable for these organizations to conduct infrequent and large-scale research. With an emphasis on 'feasible,' given the capacity of housing corporations and the complexity of such research. As a result, housing corporations have to seek the assistance of consulting firms.

5.3. Aedes a centralized facilitator and information source

Aedes operates as a network organization and is recognized as a vital information source. Through multiple communication methods, Aedes aims to keep its members up to date. Newsletters are regarded as an update on political developments. Furthermore, Aedes actively promotes the exchange of knowledge among its members. By facilitating knowledge sharing sessions centered around a theme in which housing associations are provided an opportunity to take lessons from colleagues. The Aedes benchmark allows for the evaluation of the performance of various corporations and allows for comparison among these corporations. This offers the opportunity to learn from strengths and weaknesses.

5.4. Identifying networks

The responses of the respondents regarding mutual interactions are consistent in nature. Housing corporations experience no difficulty in reaching fellow corporations. The social housing sector is collegial, close-knit, and focused on cooperation. Knowledge exchanges are founded on relationships that have been established due to shared geographical locations. Multiple housing corporations are active within one municipality. The overlap of corporations leads to collaboration as they are connected by necessity. This results in an organic way of cooperating and coordinating. These connections provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaborating. This also results in the fact that relations between individual corporations are the strongest within 'a region.' In this context a region can be defined as an area in which housing corporations meet each other; that is a municipality or a province. Consequently, these regions can be considered as networks. Although this study did not aim to distinguish which networks exist, based on the collected data it can be said that each province can be distinguished as 'a network' and these break down into smaller subnetworks. The three northern provinces are often grouped as 'the north of the Netherlands' hinting at uniformity,

as this may be correct in other contexts this is in general not the case in the social housing context. Bureaucratic boundaries correlate with the networks. This means that housing corporations interactions are geographically concentrated. Therefore, it is not accurate to consider the North of the Netherlands as a unified sector as often happened in other contexts.

5.4. Knowledge Exchanging = Collaborating

The term "network" may suggest that these relationships are formal and are based on a structured organization. In reality, the majority of interactions between these corporations are informal and based on existing relations. Therefore, labeling these relationships as networks may not accurately reflect the nature of the interactions.

Through established relations knowledge gaps can quickly be solved. Interactions are targeted in nature meaning that specific questions are asked to colleague corporations. Policy documents are transferred among corporations, serving as an excellent illustration of the exchange of knowledge. Generally, knowledge exchange involves mutual benefit and is aimed at strengthening all parties involved. The accepting and adopting of knowledge from fellow corporations can be regarded as the 'internalization of knowledge' (Cummings & Teng, 2003), an appropriate way to gauge knowledge transfer success (Tsai & Lee, 2006). Exchanges operate on a two-way street, with both parties contributing and gaining knowledge. It is recognized that large corporations play a more prominent role in the network as facilitators and activators and small corporations often follow suit.

The feasibility of small corporations to effectively manage their operations remains a topic of ongoing and recent discussion. WoonGroep Marenlanden, a corporation based in the province of Groningen, announced at the end of 2022 that it will be shutting down all operations, due to its inability to independently carry out tasks (Marenland, 2022).

The terms *Knowledge Exchanging* and *Collaborating* are used interchangeably despite having distinct definitions. However, in practice, a correlation between the two can be observed. Collaborations are structured forms of relationships, based on collective challenges. Partnerships serve as a means of cost reduction and provide opportunities for obtaining knowledge through hands-on experimentation. Additionally, collaborations create new informal contact within a formal context, thereby expanding the network. These results can be considered a *positive feedback loop*.

5.5. Knowledge sharing culture

Sharing knowledge and working collaboratively is seen as positive and impactful and regarded as common practice. This is an important takeaway because it indicates that the practice of knowledge sharing among housing associations does not need to be activated but can rather be defined as a '[knowledge] sharing culture', as defined through literature (Intezari et al., 2017; Tompang & Yunus, 2018). Such a culture is an instinctive way of operating - an organic way of functioning. Not artificially imposed but spontaneously. This contradicts the hypothesis that housing associations operate independently of one other.

A list of KTE-methods again demonstrated that the practice of knowledge exchanges is not an unknown ground, as many KTE-methods are already being utilized. This leaves little room for improvement. However, there is still leeway to extend the knowledge base of housing associations in addition to the standard practices. There, is currently no relationship between housing corporations and the academic world. A relationship with 'research producers', id est universities (Mitton et al., 2007) has the potential to yield insights from an external perspective.

6. CONCLUSION

This research investigated through which structures social housing corporations in the North of the Netherlands acquire and exchange knowledge. This chapter outlines the conclusions of the study. Firstly, the findings will be concluded along the secondary research questions after which the main research question will be answered. Subsequently, the reflection of the study will be given finalized by recommendations for future research.

The social housing sector in the North of the Netherlands can be characterized by the high degree of uniformity between the various housing corporations. While each corporation operates within its unique context, there is a general sense of equality among them in terms of their priorities and objectives. These goals are aligned with the tasks as listed in the Housing Act. While 'knowledge,' in general terms, is regarded as an important condition for achieving efficient business operations, the exchange of knowledge with fellow corporations is not prioritized by everyone as a possible strategy.

Crucial and major knowledge deficiencies that impede the work of housing associations were not discovered. Housing corporations believe that they possess the necessary expertise to fulfill their day-to-day primary housing tasks. This does not result in completely autonomous practicing housing corporations as there is still a demand for knowledge and expertise. Firstly, a deficiency in knowledge exists for tasks that are infrequent but vital. It is not feasible for housing associations to conduct extensive housing investigations on their own due to the complexity and scope of such inquiries. Corporations do not have this expertise in-house to carry out such tasks, but at the same time do not express a desire to undertake such investigations independently. Secondly, knowledge gaps arise in the short term and consist of a variety of specific topics and recent (unknown) tasks. It is difficult to accurately predict which subjects will be relevant in the future, but professionals utilize various sources of information to anticipate future trends and developments.

Housing corporations utilize multiple methods in order to acquire new knowledge. It can be concluded that the process in question can be classified as either (i) centralized. As housing associations make use of a continuous stream of information and the knowledge sharing sessions offered by Aedes. Primarily, knowledge is acquired and exchanged, within the network, through informal and targeted interactions with fellow corporations, a more decentralized approach (ii). Knowledge exchanges consist of sharing experiences, ideas,

policies, and procedures. Exchanges are concentrated within regional bureaucratic boundaries and are built upon existing relations. Furthermore, it is possible for corporations to establish formal collaborations centered around a shared ambition. Collaborations through partnerships directly yield new innovative ideas and expand the network.

It can be concluded that knowledge internalization, resulting from exchanges with fellow corporations, improves the effectiveness of housing associations' operations. Knowledge exchanges provide swift solutions for specific inquiries thereby enabling corporations to save time by eliminating the need to formulate policies from scratch. Corporations incorporate knowledge acquired by fellow corporations to develop new products and to improve the services to their tenants. Knowledge expansions lead to the ability to complete more tasks in-house, thereby reducing the need for outsourcing which results in cost savings. Reduced operating costs ensure that the affordability of social housing can be guaranteed. Ultimately fulfilling the core task optimally: *providing affordable housing*. Following the criteria of *knowledge sharing success* established in the theoretical framework, high internalization of knowledge by the recipients can be determined in this study and therefore proved to be a success.

It is not possible to identify a single, universally applicable "best practice" approach to knowledge sharing. The effectiveness of different approaches varies depending on the specific needs and the context of individual organizations. The organic nature of the knowledge exchanges can be conceptualized as a culture. A wide array of applied KTE-methods, in combination with an overall satisfaction with how knowledge is exchanged, leaves limited room for further enhancement. Additionally, it can be concluded that there is 'a window of opportunity' to gain knowledge through knowledge institutions (i.e. universities). Research provides a chance to gain knowledge and further enhance the effectiveness of associations beyond the current methods.

In conclusion, housing associations in the North of the Netherlands utilize a wide spectrum of structures and activities to acquire and exchange knowledge ultimately aimed at the enhancement of the effectiveness of the operations. Knowledge is exchanged through cooperative and close-knit networks. Exchanges are, organic, informal, geographically concentrated, and originate from direct work relations. The process illustrates a deep-rooted culture of knowledge exchange.

6.1. Reflections and recommendations for future research

When looking back upon the research process strengths, weaknesses and limitations can be identified. Qualitative data collection has generated fewer responses than desired. Housing corporations can be hard to contact as an outsider. From the 15 corporations that were approached to take part in this study, five agreed to an interview. An extended data collection process utilizing snowball sampling may have allowed for the inclusion of additional participants. However, it is uncertain if this would have significantly impacted the findings, as the depth, duration, and especially homogeneity of the interviews yielded satisfactory results. One of the strengths of this research is the selection of respondents, who are individuals holding strategic positions at housing corporations. This makes them well-suited to take part in this research. Furthermore, no housing corporation from the province of Frisia agreed to take part in this study. This turned out not to be problematic as data demonstrated that the three northern provinces cannot be labeled as one network. Therefore, the absence of interview data from the Frisian housing corporation does not diminish the validity of the conclusions presented in the current report.

Housing corporations have demonstrated to exchange knowledge with fellow corporations. Follow-up study could repeat this research in a different geographical context. For example, in the province of Frisia, or in large cities with a concentration of multiple corporations (e.g. Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague). Additionally, research into housing corporations could focus on the impacts of formal partnerships, for example, the *BouwStroom-Noord*, *DrenteWoontCirculair*, or *KR8*.

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APPENDIX I: SCRUTINIZED POLICY DOCUMENTS

List of scrutinized housing corporations

#	Housing Corporation	Province	Housing stock \pm	Policy Plan
1	Lefier	Groningen & Drenthe	30.000	Ondernemingsplan 2021 – 2025
2	Accolade	Frisia	15.700	Koers 2020 - 2025
3	Dynhus	Frisia	4.000	Strategisch Plan 2021 - 2025
4	Actium	Drenthe	16.000	Strategische Koers 2022+
5	Nijestee	Groningen	14.000	Strategisch Kader
6	de Huismeesters	Groningen	8.600	Ondernemingsplan 2021 - 2024
7	Woonconcept	Drenthe	12.500	Ondernemingsstrategie
8	Acantus	Groningen	13.000	Visie 2019 – 2024
9	Woningstichting Westellingenwerf	Frisia	2.700	Ondernemingsplan 2021 - 2025
10	Patrimonium	Groningen	6.700	Strategisch Beleidsplan 2020 - 2023
11	Woongroep Marenland	Groningen	2.500	Ondernemingsplan 2019-2022
12	Domesta	Drenthe	11.000	Ondernemingsplan 2020 t/m 2022
13	WoonFriesland	Frisia	20.000	Jaarplan 2022
14	Groninger Huis	Groningen	4.500	Strategische Koers 2022 - 2026
15	De Bouw Vereniging	Frisia	2.500	Ondernemingsplan 2020 - 2024
16	Woonservice	Drenthe	5.700	Koersplan
17	Woonborg	Drenthe & Groningen	4.900	Koersplan 2022-2025
18	Wonen Noordwest Friesland	Frisia	4.000	Ondernemingsplan 2022 - 2025
19	Wold&Waard	Groningen	5.500	Ondernemingsplan 2019 - 2022
20	Wierden en Borgen	Groningen	7.000	Ondernemingsplan 2021-2024

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Given that the target group of this research is housing associations within the North of the Netherlands, the questions are presented in Dutch. This interview guide consists of a semi-structured format. It is possible to deviate from the question guide.

Interview Guide (NL)

[Start: Introduceren/uitleggen van onderzoek(er)]

In mijn onderzoek '*kennisdelen tussen woningcorporaties*' onderzoek ik via welke methoden woningcorporaties nieuwe kennis opdoen en/of deze kennis deelt met collega-corporaties.

[Aanleiding: Is er een match tussen de taken/doelen die bij de woningcorporatie ligt en de kennis die zij in huis hebben om hier aan te voldoen]

Algemene Vragen

1. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over uw werk bij de woningcorporatie? / Welke functie heeft u? / Wat houdt u werk in? / Hoe lang bent u actief in de sociale woningsector? / etc.

Thema 1 [SQ2]: *Where is knowledge lacking in contemporary and future practices of housing associations?*

Het is duidelijk dat woningcorporaties voor diverse en complexe uitdagingen staan. Jullie hebben veel taken erbij gekregen en er ligt druk om meer woningen te bouwen.

1. Is er bij (uw) woningcorporatie voldoende kennis aanwezig om deze uitdagingen/doelen aan te gaan?
Op welke wijze benadert u deze nieuwe misschien wel onbekende taken? In hoeverre bent u in staat om uw taken uit te voeren met het oog op expertise?
2. Is er binnen de corporatie een vraag naar meer kennis/ervaring? + Waar heerst er een tekort aan kennis/expertise? + Op welk vlak denkt de corporatie dat zij 'wel' voldoende kennis in huis hebben.
3. Hoe weet u als corporatie wat er op u af komt / te wachten komt te staan?

4. Hoe denkt u dat dit tekort is ontstaan?
5. Op welk gebied denkt u dat uw corporatie voldoende kennis heeft?

De volgende vragen gaan over de methoden die corporaties inzetten om nieuwe kennis op te doen en uit te wisselen.

Thema 2 [SQ3&SQ4]:

- *How do housing associations currently obtain and exchange new knowledge?*
- *How does the exchange of knowledge with other actors contribute to the work (i.e. the tasks) of the housing associations?*

De volgende vragen gaan op welke wijze doet een woningcorporatie nieuwe kennis op doet.

1. Hoe doet u als woningcorporatie nieuwe kennis op? /
> Hoe blijf je bij als woningcorporatie bij veranderingen en nieuwe ontwikkelingen?
2. U bent aangesloten bij kennis netwerken / samenwerkingsnetwerken. Kunt u mij wat vertellen wat er in deze netwerken plaats vindt.
3. Wat draagt een samenwerking aan dit netwerk aan uw werk als corporatie (zoals ervaring)? Kunt u een (concreet) voorbeeld geven waaruit dit blijkt?
4. Deelt u kennis met collega woningcorporaties?
 - Kunt u collega (corporaties) gemakkelijk bereiken? / Hoe is uw contact met collega corporaties?
 - Merkt u dat woningcorporaties (veel) contact met elkaar onderhouden?
 - Kan je stellen dat woningcorporaties opereren binnen een 'netwerk'?
 - Wordt er volgens u mee gedacht om uw probleem om te lossen? / Ervaren andere woningcorporaties u als collega (vs. concurrent)?
5. Doet u kennis op via een centrale partij? (>Aedes) / Welke rol speelt Aedes bij het opdoen van nieuwe kennis?
6. Zo ja. Wat neemt u mee uit deze deelname(s)?
 - Kunt u een concreet voorbeeld geven?
7. Besteden jullie taken uit aan derden? / Welke / waarom taken besteden jullie uit aan derden?
8. Zijn er evenementen/congressen waar u als woningcorporatie aan participeert?
9. Wat is voor u de waarde van deze evenementen/congressen?

10. Doet u kennis/ervaring op door middel van contact/samenwerking met onderwijsinstellingen. (zoals onderzoek)?

Scenario Vraag

Als woningcorporatie wilt u iets ondernemen/aanpakken waar u nog geen of weinig ervaring/kennis over hebt. Hoe zou u dit benaderen. Intern bijvoorbeeld? Of door contact op te nemen met collega-corporaties? (of kennis inkopen).

Optional Questions

- Vindt u dat woningcorporaties (in NN) goed samenwerken?
- Zijn er pilot-projecten die jullie ontwikkelen?
Experimenteren jullie met innovatieve concepten?
- Valt er op het gebied van kennisdelen(/samenwerking) volgens u nog winst te boeken?

Hartelijk dank dat u wou meedoen aan dit interview! Is er nog iets wat u wilt toevoegen voordat we het interview beëindigen. Heeft u nog vragen voor mij of aanbevelingen voor mijn onderzoek?

U mag mij altijd contacteren.

Interview Guide (EN)

This is a translation of the Interview guide. The purpose of this translation is to make it easier for the reader of the thesis to understand the questions.

[Start: Introducing/explaining the research(er)]

Background

1. Could you tell me about your job? / What is your role within this housing association?/ What does your job consist of?
2. How long have you been active in the social housing sector?
3. What defines your housing corporation compared to fellow corporations in the Northern Netherlands?

Thema 1 [SQ2]: *Where is knowledge lacking in contemporary and future practices of housing associations?*

1. What do you think are the main challenges/goals/priorities for the coming years?
2. Does (you(r)) housing association have sufficient knowledge to tackle these challenges/goals/priorities?
3. The range of tasks of housing associations has grown in recent years. How do you approach these new/unknown tasks?
4. Is there an interest within the corporation in more knowledge/experience? Is there a lack of knowledge/expertise?
5. if so: What is the cause of this knowledge shortage?
6. How do you want to tackle this knowledge deficit?

Thema 2 [SQ3&SQ4]:

- *SQ: How do housing associations currently exchange/obtain new knowledge?*
 - *SQ: How does the exchange of knowledge with other actors contribute to the work (i.e. the tasks) of the housing associations?*
11. How do you gain new knowledge as a housing association? / > Hoe blijf je bij als woningcorporatie bij veranderingen en nieuwe ontwikkelingen?
 12. Are you affiliated with knowledge networks / collaboration networks?

13. If so; What is the value for you of participating in these networks? / What are the benefits of participating in these networks? If so: Can you think of a (concrete) example that demonstrates this?
14. Do you share your knowledge with fellow housing associations
 - Is it easy to get in touch with other fellow housing associations?
15. Do you think that fellow housing associations think along to solve your problem? / Do other housing associations perceive you as a colleague (vs. competitor)?
16. Do you acquire/update knowledge through a central party? (like Aedes) / What role does Aedes play in gaining new knowledge?
17. If so: What is the value of the role of Aedes a
18. 7. Do you outsource tasks to third parties? / Which/why tasks do you outsource to third parties?
19. Are there events/conferences in which you participate? (aimed at learning etc.)
20. What is the value of these events/conferences to you?
21. Do you gain knowledge/experience through contact/cooperation with educational institutions. (such as participating in research)?

Scenario Question

Imagine. As a housing corporation you want to undertake/approach something that you have no experience/knowledge about. How would you handle this. Internally for example? Or by contacting fellow associations?

Optional Questions

- Do you notice that housing associations maintain (close) contact with each other?
- Do you think housing associations (in NN) cooperate well together?
- (/How) Do you think there is room for improvement in regards to knowledge sharing?

Thank you for taking part in this interview! Is there anything else you would like to add before we end the interview? You can always contact me.

APPENDIX III: TRANSCRIPTIONS

The transcriptions of the interviews can be requested from the author.

