THE INFLUENCE OF AGE ON LIVEABILITY PERCEPTIONS

A qualitative study for the relation between different stadia of life, liveability perceptions and governmental legislation, in regards to demographic decline

Sander Engels
S4593944
Master Society, Sustainability and Planning
University of Groningen, Faculty of Spatial sciences
Coordinator: Gwenda van der Vaart
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Abstract

How do people from different stadia of life perceive their future liveability in a region that is expected to decline in population, and how do these different perceptions align to municipal and regional policies? In recent years, the Dutch national government has developed a vision regarding which regions in the Netherlands are seen as shrinking regions and anticipation regions (Rijksoverheid, 2018). As demographic decline impacts the inhabitants of a region (Leidelmeijer et al., 2014; Dieleman, 2016; Rijksoverheid, n.d.), and literature suggests different liveability standards based on age, I want to find out how people from different stadia of life perceive their future liveability. I also research how these perceptions relate to existing policies, to explore their relation and if certain characteristics could be improved. A liveability framework, based on the works from multiple academic sources, was used to explore what aspects are relevant to the concept of liveability. This framework consists of six pillars, namely survivability, environmental aspects, relations and culture, facilities and accessibility, health and wellbeing, and personal development. It distinguishes liveability aspects from one another, to be able to consider what characteristics are well perceived, or could use some improvement in consideration to demographic decline.

A case study was executed in the municipality of Coevorden, as example of a municipality in an anticipation region with both a larger settlement, as well as smaller villages. Both a policy analysis, together with a first exploration towards different perceptions from multiple stadia of life were conducted. As this is an exploration, no hard statements can be made, but there were interesting findings in the qualitative data. No demographic decline was estimated by any participant, but participants from younger stadia of life reflected more openly on a possible reduction of youthful inhabitants. There are differences in liveability characteristics found by participants from different stadia of life, which are also influenced by settlement type, that need further research. Next to this, I find examples of how participants also look out for the needs from other stadia of life, suggesting that liveability is both a personal, as well as a social concept. In general, the policy themes by municipal and regional legislation were in line with the interview results. However, the lack of entertainment facilities, mainly related to youth, is the main point of improvement for future legislation. As a main cause for shrinkage is a decrease of youthful inhabitants (Gieling & Haartsen, 2017; Dieleman, 2016; Nefs et al., 2013; Rijksoverheid, n.d.), this aspects is also relevant to consider in other anticipation regions. Recommendations for further studies are found in further exploration of liveability definitions based on looking out for each other, while research should also be done towards children's liveability and liveability in a shrinking region.

Acknowledgements

Table of contents

List of figures and tables

1. Introduction

In Europe, an increasing amount of cities and regions will decrease in population in the nearby future, which will extend on larger scale when time passes by (Dieleman, 2016). Looking at the Netherlands specifically, demographic decline and shrinkage are receiving more attention in the Dutch institutional legislation (De Haan et al., 2014). In 2019, the Dutch government regarded certain areas within its national borders as point of interest for their demographic decline (Rijksoverheid, 2018). These areas are mostly situated in the border region, and are characterised by their rural features. In Dutch national legislation, two types of declining regions were defined, namely shrinking regions and anticipation regions. These types of regions differ from each other, because shrinking regions are estimated to shrink on a larger scale in a shorter time spawn, when compared to anticipation regions. Within shrinking regions, the possibility exists that the population declines with a maximum of 12,5%, and in these cases demographic decline is already estimated. In anticipation regions, there is an estimated shrinkage prognoses for the future, which is far less significant, with a maximum of 2,5% shrinkage of inhabitants or households (Rijksoverheid, 2018).

Shrinkage is of importance for societal research, because shrinkage means a change in demographic characteristics, and therefore has an impact on its inhabitants day-to-day life (Leidelmeijer et al., 2014; Dieleman, 2016; Rijksoverheid, n.d.). People who live in cities that are declining in population experience a difference on the perception of the city, which also influences the experienced life circumstances. However, creating a positive image of the city could reduce and even counteract shrinkage (Dieleman, 2016). This asks for a strategy for maintaining certain levels of liveability, by developing the environment with attention towards local wishes (Dieleman, 2016). Liveability is becoming more relevant in the work field of spatial planning (Gieling & Haartsen, 2017; De Haan et al., 2014) and is already more commonly used in policies of spatial planning and governance (Gieling & Haartsen, 2017; Paul & Sen, 2020). Liveability, however, is difficult to measure. There is no unanimously used definition for liveability, because scholars import their own values in their definitions. It is therefore perceived as a complex concept (Paul & Sen, 2020; Ruth & Franklin, 2014). Because there is no clear definition, this thesis withholds a literature review where important aspects for liveability are considered.

A significant amount of studies were conducted to explore the relation between liveability and urban and rural shrinkage (Delken, 2008; Nefs et al., 2013; Leidelmeijer et al., 2014; Leidelmeijer & Marlet, 2011, cited in Dieleman, 2016). Shrinkage and demographic decline are seen by many, including Rijksoverheid, as a negative occurrence for liveability (Nefs et al., 2013). Shrinkage, however, does not directly have to be negative. Shrinkage also creates chances for improving the quality of life and liveability in certain areas (Dieleman, 2016; Nefs et al., 2013). Interestingly, Nefs et al. (2013) have considered shrinkage as an opportunity specifically for elderly. They saw chances for shrinking cities as places where the older population could retire, making use of the empty spaces for greenery and other spatial elements that contribute to elderly wellbeing. Therefore, there might be different factors relevant to someone's perception of a liveable region, depending on their age.

Although a significant amount of research is done for liveability and demographic decline, a certain amount of studies concluded no relation between shrinkage and liveability (Dieleman, 2016). This statement is, however, debunked by Dieleman (2016), because these studies contain statements based on uncertainty, in combination with large difference in opinions between respondents. This provides an example where opinions could be too divergent, because opinions from different ages are generalized. Therefore, in this thesis it is explored how liveability is perceived by different ages, who live in a region that is expected to decline in population.

My assumption is that a knowledge gap exists in how difference in age in one study are feeling toward the liveability of their region, in relation to the current prognoses of population decline. How do these different perceptions on liveability relate to one another? What chances for liveability do they perceive? Shrinkage is presumably not only negative for the liveability, but could also provide opportunities for the region. In this thesis, I also reflect on how regional and municipal governments corporate these perceptions in their legislation. Are they generalizing adults, or are specific age groups also represented in their legislation?

Hence, this study has aims on two different scales. The abstract aim of this study is to contribute to literature regarding liveability, stadia of life and demographic decline, to give an example and provide insights how the difference of age has an influence on opinions, and how these differences relate to current legislation. It also stresses the possible importance of keeping different stadia of life in mind. The specific aim of this study is to investigate what perceptions for liveability exist among the inhabitants in an anticipation region, categorized by their stadia of life. I want to find out how this relates to anticipation regions specifically, as I assume that these regions are currently less dominantly researched. This study aims to provide the municipality with new insights, given by the local inhabitants, on how local inhabitants' perceptions could contribute to existing legislation.

Therefore, the main research question to elaborate and analyse these aspects is: How do people from different stadia of life perceive their future liveability in a region that is expected to decline in population, and how do these different perceptions align to municipal and regional policies? This research question consists of multiple elements, namely liveability, demographic decline, and different stadia of life, and how these elements influence governmental legislation. The anticipation region of Oost-Drenthe was chosen as case study area, which will be further explained in the methodology. To structure the main research question, four secondary questions were defined:

1. What does the literature so far specify about the relation between liveability, shrinkage and stadia of life?
2. What regional and municipal policies exist in the region of Oost-Drenthe regarding liveability and future demographic decline?
3. What views regarding liveability and demographic decline exist among inhabitants of Oost-Drenthe, who are part of different stadia of life?
4. How do the perceptions of these participants and the regional and municipal policies relate to one another?

The societal relevance for this project is that liveability might be researched more effectively when focusing on different stadia of life, while it is assumed that these are more commonly generalized in academic studies. This research explores what the impact of researching multiple age groups is, when making visions for liveability in shrinking regions. This could contribute to how municipalities can better plan for liveability, by acknowledging the opinions of different ages. This thesis should provide an example how the perception of inhabitants can contribute to larger scale vision making by the municipality for liveability in shrinking regions. The academic relevance of this research is to give an example how difference in age can influence the perception of liveability in an anticipation region. This research sets itself apart from the literature, because it relates four different stadia of life to perceptions that are normally generalized in these kinds of research projects regarding shrinking regions. This research therefore adds to the existing literature regarding demographic decline.

1.1 Reading guide

In chapter 2, a theoretical framework is presented, which reflects upon literature focused on liveability, and its relation towards age and shrinkage. The section regarding liveability consist of an in-depth study how liveability should be interpreted, and what characteristics are important in academic literature. The study regarding difference in age and shrinking regions focuses on finding additional information that elaborates on the aspects that are of relevance to liveability, that are influenced by demographic decline. Afterwards, a conceptual model is used to review the most important relations and components for this study. A hypotheses concludes this chapter.

Chapter 3 contains the methodology. The chapter reflects on the chosen approach to answer the research questions. It contains two different methods of research. The first one is a policy analysis, in which the existing regional and municipal legislation regarding liveability in the region of Oost-Drenthe is evaluated. The second one is conducting interviews. Interviews were used to find out how participants from different stadia of life in the anticipation region perceive their liveability, and this section reflects on how these interviews were organized and executed.

In chapter 4, the results from the data collection are presented and reflected upon. First, the results from the policy analysis are shown, in which six documents from both regional and municipal governments were explained. Second, the interview results are presented and reflected upon. Conclusively, these are related to one another.

In chapter 5, the research is finalized with a conclusion. In this conclusion, the main findings are considered, the research question is answered, and recommendations are given for further research. Furthermore, a discussion about certain aspects of this thesis is presented.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Liveability

Liveability is a concept that is relevant to society, but is not directly definable through one scope, even though many authors have tried to develop their own definition (Paul & Sen, 2020; Leby & Hashim, 2010). Much social research that has contributed to the academic literature had the goal to resolve certain social issues. This was carried out by seeking the opinions of people about how to improve their quality of life and wellbeing, which is in line with liveability (De Haan et al., 2014).

Liveability is heavily influenced by interpretation, because there is not a shared, commonly accepted methodology how to deal with related questions (Paul & Sen, 2020; Ruth & Franklin, 2014). Concepts of what liveability is are divergent, as these are interpret by individuals with different perceptions, making them inconsistent (Leby & Hashim, 2010; De Haan et al., 2014). These are also influenced by the proficiency of the researcher, and the standpoint from which they are writing (Leby & Hashim, 2010). This is problematic for finding the core elements of liveability, but I assume that this can be solved by reflecting on aspects that are relevant to liveability in multiple academic works.

First, liveability in essence is about the relation between humans and the environment (Gieling & Haartsen, 2017; Dieleman, 2016; De Haan et al., 2014; Ruth & Franklin, 2014; Jacobs, 2011; Leby & Hashim, 2010; Werner, 2005; Vergunst, 2003; Jarvis, 2001). Werner (2005) specifically stresses how the built environment is not the only aspect of liveability, it is also about the people living there and the relation between these people. Humans and environment are the base for what liveability is. Dieleman (2016) reflects on it quite extensive, and states: *"Quality of life has the person as object and uses the perspective of the surroundings, in other words, the extent to which the surroundings contribute to the degree to which characteristics of life fit someone's needs and wishes. Liveability concerns the surroundings and uses the perspective of people, liveability is about whether the living environment meets the conditions that are set by the residents and, if so, to what extent these conditions are met."* (Dieleman, 2016, p. 26). There is also a relation between humans and environment, in the sense that liveability is about how the current environment meets the needs of residents (Dieleman, 2016; De Haan et al., 2014; Ruth & Franklin, 2014; Werner, 2005). Jarvis (2001) stresses, it is about different scales of the environment that create chances for aspects of wellbeing, specifically safety, movability, economic chances, health, ease and leisure. Liveability is therefore present through multiple city scales (Jarvis, 2001; De Haan, 2014). De Haan et al. (2014) also state that different liveability standards exists for cities and rural areas. It would, for example have competition with economic profit in certain circumstances (Barry, 2019; De Haan, 2014).

Second, liveability is about the present, but presumably also about the future. De Haan (2014) reflects on liveability in relation to sustainability, and sets them apart as counterparts when it comes to their time scope. De Haan (2014) states that liveability is mostly about the present, where sustainability is about the future. Liveability has taken the human centred role from sustainability, and thereby focuses on human rights and living standards for the current inhabitants, where sustainability focuses on creating certain conditions in the future (De Haan, 2014).

Ruth & Franklin (2014), however, stress the importance of liveability not only being about the present, but also about the future. Liveability measures contribute to the current liveability standards, but could also be taken for future generations. The perceptions of inhabitants heavily contribute to the success of adaptive planning, as well as creating new legislation for the region (Ruth & Franklin, 2014). In this thesis, I argue that expected future liveability is something that could be measured in advance, and relate with Ruth & Franklin's statement.

Third, liveability is <u>measurable by researching multiple related elements, aspects or needs</u>. Liveability on its own is considered to be very broad, but researchers have chosen to reflect on it by defining key elements that are of relevance to what liveability is. Multiple sources indicate that there is a relation between fulfilment of needs and quality of life. As quoted from De Haan et al. (2014): *"…a needs concept is a good starting point for an analytical treatment of normative aspects of societal systems. It seems appropriate at this point to propose an implicit definition of human needs within the context of this article: Fulfilling human needs, and fulfilling more of them, increases the quality of life"* (De Haan et al., 2014, p. 124). The source indicates that giving answer to those specific needs, however, do not provide a more long and healthy life, but the quality does increase. Therefore, these different kinds of needs should be studied, as they contribute to aspects related to liveability.

Characteristics of liveability

The current and future relation between humans and environment, measurable by multiple related elements, aspects or needs. This is what liveability consists of, but what elements can be found that fit within this description? In this thesis, six perspective on liveability from academic literature are considered. I have made the choice to include these six studies based on two aspects. First, I searched for sources where frameworks for liveability were developed. Second, I included academic works from different years of release, to look at consistencies over time.

The Global Liveability Index, which was established by the Economist Intelligence Unit, is used to measure liveability in cities on global scale. According to the index, liveability can be measured according to five aspects: Stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education and infrastructure (Paul & Sen, 2020). As these are relatively broad terms, descriptions are given. Stability is seen as the basics of life, having chances for steady income, housing and consumption possibilities. Healthcare is about how people are cared for with regard to their mental and physical condition. Interestingly, culture and environment are interconnected in this index, where culture is normally seen as more normative and the environment more physical. Education reflects upon the chances to learn certain skills in regards to someone's' life, work or other activities. Infrastructure is focused on how places are connected by physical or technological means. These are personal interpretations, as these are not highlighted in the document.

De Haan et al. (2014) developed a framework in which multiple theories were reformed into three groups that, with some further in-depth elaboration, gives an extensive look on aspects that relate to liveability. This framework is shown in figure 1.

	Needs	Description (the need for …)
Existence	Sustenance & livelihood	Food, drink and other ways to sustain life.
	Shelter	Protection against the elements.
	Health	Protection of mental and physical well being.
	Safety	Safe physical environment.
	Security	Safe social and institutional environment.
Relatedness	Interaction & social cohesion	Opportunities for social, economic and other types of interactions.
	Ecological health	Protection of the intrinsic qualities of natural ecosystems.
	Knowledge & beliefs	Making sense of the world, to understand the social and physical environment, one's role in them and ways to shape them.
	Beauty & pleasure	Enjoyment and appreciation of the world.
	Comfort & convenience	A comfortable environment and a life without hardship.
Growth	Culture & identity	A sense of belonging and connection.
	Equity & justice	Fair treatment and equal opportunities amongst all beings across time.
	Purpose & expression	Reasons for being and opportunities for the pursuit of personal and collective interests.
	Influence & respect	One's opinions, desires and actions to be valued and opportunities to affect the course of events.
	Freedom & autonomy	Self determination, possibility to voice opinions without constraints or penalties and opportunities for self subsistence.

Figure 1: Components of liveability by De Haan et al. (2014).

As can be seen, liveability is divided into three main components, namely existence, relatedness and growth. Existence focuses on aspects that are related to the core factors of life, for survivability. Relatedness is about the personal connections with the world. Growth is about personal key values and believes. These values show a relation with the Global Liveability Index, but there are also significant differences (De Haan et al., 2014).

Stability is a broad term that fits the majority of the more specified needs that are mainly found within the existence component. Healthcare relates to the needs for health and ecological health, arguably with other dimensions of relatedness as well, where social wellbeing also has interfaces with the point of Interaction & social cohesion. Culture and environment fits almost all aspects of relatedness and growth, because it is a very broad terminology. The points of education and infrastructure are less prevalent in the definition of De Haan et al. (2014), which already shows how the interpretation of the author can influence the outcome of the definition. This also highlights the relevance of researching multiple frameworks.

Namazi-Rad et al. (2012) focused on a study on liveability in the city of Sydney. They describe liveability in the context of six key factors, namely job, house, neighbourhood, transport, Entertainment and Services. Their framework is showcased in figure 2. These six groups, together with their subgroups, fit inside the current themes in some kind of way, but have different outputs (Namazi-Rad et al., 2012). These six concepts all focus on certain amenities, be it personal, physical or economical. Job is centred around economic opportunities for stable income. House is about the personal living qualities and how much it is accessible. Neighbourhood is about the direct living environment, with a more social character and living quality. Transport reflects upon the way in which the living environment is connected, and in which ways people could travel properly. Entertainment reflects upon facilities for recreational purposes, and services reflects upon more primary and necessary facilities (Namazi-Rad et al., 2012).

Figure 2: Environmental and Social Living Elements, by Namazi-Rad et al. (2012).

Leby & Hashim (2010) define the four concepts of community, physical environment, functions and safety as key dimensions regarding liveability on neighbourhood scale, and plead for a fair distribution of facilities and recourses through the neighbourhood. Their vision is portrayed in figure 3. This framework shows a clear distinction between different objectives, namely social, physical, functional and safety (Leby & Hashim, 2010). The social dimension encompasses the personal and didactic relations, where perceptions, behaviour and connectedness are important. These correlate with the work of de Haan et al. (2014), but are less dominant in the Global Liveability Index, only to be related to the culture and environment . The physical dimension plays a key role in all three sources, which is backed by the argument that liveability is about the environment. The functional dimension is part of the relatedness aspect of de Haan et al. (2014), and is the primary dimension connected to the infrastructure component of the Global Liveability Index. This dimension is also highlighted in the texts by Rijksoverheid (n.d.). Lastly, safety gets a more prominent place in this framework, where it was accommodated under existence in De Haan's framework, showing that it is of severe prominence for this academic work.

Liveability dimension	Theme
Social dimension (social relations)	behaviour of neighbours (nuisance)
	community life and social contact
	sense of place
Physical dimension (residential environment)	environment quality
	open spaces
	maintenance of built environment
Functional dimension (facilities and services)	availability and proximity of amenities
	accessibility
	employment opportunities
Safety dimension (crime and sense of safety)	number of crime
	number of accidents
	feeling of safety

Figure 3: Summary of liveability Dimensions and Indicators, by Leby & Hashim (2010).

Vergunst (2003) formulated 5 factors that have a large role in the perception of liveability of a place, namely local citizens, cohesion, facilities, local economy and physical environment. Local citizens is a logical choice, since liveability is about humans. Cohesion touches upon the social bounds between individuals, and the concept of community, which fits with Leby & Hashim's social dimension and multiple of De Haan's components. Facilities and local economy touch upon the functional dimension of Leby & Hashim, but is less connected to the Global Liveability Index. Lastly, physical environment once again is a prominent part. Next to these 5 factors, Vergunst (2003) stress the importance of keeping in mind the demographic information of the target group, with how many they are and what kind of lifestyle they are preserving.

Kevin Lynch (1984) stated in his work that to be able to define the concept of liveability, it is first and foremost important to learn about what is needed for a "good settlement". Lynch (1984) stresses for three steps of action, namely first accounting for the essential human-related physical restrictions and demands, which is followed by researching the culture of the place in de second step. The last step is about researching so called dimensions, which are quantitatively measured, that can evaluate how a certain aspect relates to the purpose it is used for. Lynch (1984) formulates 5 dimensions that are relating to liveability, namely vitality, sense, fit, access and control. Vitality stands for the more essential contributions to life that the environment has to offer, with the components of sustenance, safety and consonance as the vital parts. Sense is about how people perceive the world, relating to personal and cultural values. Fit relates to how the environment gives answer to the direct consumer-related and executive needs of humans. Access is about the connectedness and accessibility in general, for amenities, locations and even knowledge is available. Control is about the amount of influence someone has on the environment. Leby & Hashim also reflected upon Lynch' work, and noted how Balsas (2004, cited in Leby & Hashim, 2010) added another component to this list, namely viability. Viability is about taking the soul of a place into account.

Defining new pillars for liveability

When reflecting upon these aspects and their divisions, the authors have some overlap with one another. The aspects they define do differ in context, but all relate to, with some exceptions, overarching themes. These overarching themes are presented as new pillars for liveability, and the relation between the indicators made by the scholars and these pillars is shown in appendix 1. From this disquisition, the framework for liveability was made, and can be seen in table 1 on page 14.

The first pillar is survivability. The Cambridge dictionary defines survivability as *"the fact of being able to survive"* (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023a). With survivability, I mean the essential components that people need to survive. People for example need shelter, food and safety to keep themselves alive. Survivability was chosen to be relevant, as the aspects related to this concept are the core of what liveability is, and all other factors are more or less succeeding factors. When reflecting on the aspects in appendix 1, I argue that the most relevant characteristics have something to do with the actual and perceived safety, the housing condition and opportunities, the consumption component related to food and materialist consumption, and to a certain extent the positive vision that people have for a bright future.

Second, the concept of environmental aspects refers to how the physical environment contributes to liveability. '*Environmental means relating to or caused by the surroundings in which someone lives or something exists'* (Collins Dictionary, 2023a). Environmental characteristics in this context are related to the neighborhood, the quality of the public space that is used, the aesthetics of the building and the spaces in between, how these are maintained, if these environments are suitable to the wishes, needs and demands from the users, and if there is diversity in the kinds of places available.

Liveability	Definition	Characteristics
Survivability	Survivability: 'The fact of being able to survive' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023a).	• Safety • Housing • Income and work • Consumption • Positive vision of the future
Environmental aspects	Environmental: 'Environmental means relating to or caused by the surroundings in which someone lives or something exists' (Collins Dictionary, 2023a).	• Neighbourhood characteristics • Public space quality • Aesthetics • Maintenance • Suitability • Diversity of locations
Relations and culture	Relation: 'The way in which two people or groups of people feel and behave towards each other' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023b). Culture: 'The way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023c).	• Social interaction • Coherence • Identification • Attachment • Rootedness
Facilities and accessibility	Facilities: 'Facilities are buildings, pieces of equipment, or services that are provided for a particular purpose' (Collins Dictionary, 2023b). Accessibility: 'The quality of being able to be entered or used by everyone, including people who have a disability' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023d).	• Versatility • Fitting to demand • Convenience • Connectivity • Reachability
Health and wellbeing	Health: 'Health is the ability to adapt and to self-manage, in the face of social, physical and emotional challenges' (Huber, 2014). Wellbeing: 'Wellbeing is about feeling good and functioning well and comprises an individual's experience of their life, and a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values' (Department of Health, 2014, p. 6).	• Mental condition • Physical condition • Security • Enjoyment • Healthcare system
Personal development	Personal development: 'The process of improving your skills and increasing the amount of experience that you have in your job' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023e).	• Proficiency • Motivation • Ambition • Autonomy

Table 1: Framework for liveability, own work.

Third, relations and culture is a concept which considers the aspects that are related to how society works, and how it enacts with and between its inhabitants. It focuses on which norms and values are embedded in the related society, and in how people interact with one another. Fitting definitions are found in the Cambridge dictionary: Relations as '*the way in which two people or groups of people feel and behave towards each other*' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023b) and culture as '*the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time*' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023c). I deem social interaction, coherence, identification and attachment as important, together with the concept of locality and characteristics that define the cultural values of a place.

Fourth, facilities and accessibility relate to the different kinds of functions that are available for people, and how well these places are reachable for everyone. '*Facilities are buildings, pieces of equipment, or services that are provided for a particular purpose*' (Collins Dictionary, 2023b). Accessibility is defined as: '*The quality of being able to be entered or used by everyone, including people who have a disability*' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023d). The facilities and accessibility should be fitting to the demand of the users, convenient to use, and the offer should be versatile.

Fifth, the concept of health and wellbeing. To refer to them accordingly, two definitions are: '*Health is the ability to adapt and to self-manage, in the face of social, physical and emotional challenges*' (Huber, 2014) and '*Wellbeing is about feeling good and functioning well and comprises an individual's experience of their life, and a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values*' (WHO 2012, cited by Department of Health 2014, p. 6). These definitions were chosen, because they provide the possibility for improvement. When relating the two to one another, health consists of the more perceivable aspects of human consideration, where wellbeing is about their feelings and perception on them. Therefore, I describe the mental and physical condition, together with security, enjoyment and the healthcare system as most important characteristics for this concept.

Finally, liveability also consists, mainly found in the more recent approaches toward liveability in this literature review, of the concept of personal development. How well is someone able to improve themselves when it comes to their personal goals and wishes they want to achieve? Personal development is '*the process of improving your skills and increasing the amount of experience that you have in your job*' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023e). The characteristics are found in learning to get proficiency in certain skills, having motivation to improve, having ambitions for yourself, and having a certain autonomy to choose your own future.

The six pillars are not distinct from one another, but are in a way interconnected, as certain characteristics have an overlap and could even be considered in multiple places. However, It can be stressed that these 6 pillars do point at different a part of what liveability is. Hence, I define liveability as "*The relation between humans and environment, in current and in future perspective, measured by aspects related to the pillars of survivability, environmental aspects, social relations and culture, facilities and accessibility, health and wellbeing, and personal development.* This definition helps to understand liveability as a reachable concept, and gives insights in which aspects should be researched.

2.2 Difference in age

Difference in age is assumed to be a relatively understudied concept, when it comes to qualitative liveability studies. Eckert (2017) expresses the influence that age has on humans, as it influences their perceiving of the world. People's opinions are differentiating while they age, and the moment that they evaluate on it is an opinion created at a fixed point in time (Eckert, 2017). Age is most commonly seen as one of the sociodemographic variables in quantitative data collection (Gieling & Haartsen, 2017; Van de Pas et al., 2015) and liveability studies for one of the specific age groups are somewhat common. An example for different opinions between age groups regarding liveability is found in Namazi-Rad et al. (2012), who executed a case study in Sydney. Namazi-Rad et al. (2012) researched a new experimental method to measure liveability and satisfaction, by both social and environmental aspects. Data from four age groups, namely 18-29, 30-49, 50-64 and 65+, was analysed with a one way ANOVA test. The results showed that age was a significant part of perceiving liveability, as age group 19-29 perceived a significantly lower liveability and perception, when compared to the older age groups (Namazi-Rad et al., 2012).

Research for elderly liveability and wellbeing is more common in literature, in comparison to other age groups. As was mentioned earlier, Nefs et al. (2013) saw chances for improving the living environment for the wishes of the elderly specifically. This gives an example how one of the age groups gets more attention, because there are no statements made that shrinkage could also relate to improvement of the living qualities that are important to the other age groups.
Van der Pas et al. (2015) reflect upon the liveability for older South Africans by doing a quantitative survey study. A specific focus is put on the elderly, because elderly are more connected and residing in their homes. In developing countries, elderly are also socio-economically less viable than other age groups. The most important components for elderly specifically regarding liveability were divided in two components, using the words from Van der Pas et al. (2015):

1. Their direct home environment, which consist of household amenities, household composition, income and safety in the home. This would be both be equally important in South Africa as in Europe;
2. The neighbourhood environment, which consist of appropriate services, organizations, civility and safety and walkability.

The direct home environment groups correspond with what I describe in the pillars of survivability and relations and culture. Household amenities are seen as basic living standards, being the quality of services regarding water supply, sanitary conditions and electricity. Interesting to note is the difference in safety in this context, where vandalism is seen as the main fear regarding people's homes, not the possibility to hurt themselves (Van der Pas et al., 2015). The neighbourhood environment component relates to what is described as the pillars of survivability, relations and culture and facilities and accessibility. In a lesser extent, they also highlight some aspects related to health and wellbeing with a notion toward healthcare facilities. No mentions were made regarding environmental aspects and personal development in both components. They found significant results in their study that these components are relevant to the life satisfaction of the respondents (Van der Pas et al., 2015).

Foglia et al. (2023) created a 'senior liveability index for European cities'. This index tackled the specific needs that elderly have for their liveability in cities. They define 3 pillars of the physical urban area for liveability, namely physical urban environment, service accessibility and public transport, and amenities (Foglia et al., 2023). These pillars are connected to what I define as environmental aspects and facilities and accessibility. These pillars were quantitatively examined by inventorying core elements related to the three pillars in multiple European cities, and compared with one another to give an index which cities would be more liveable for the elderly (Foglia et al., 2023). The results from this study show that facilities and accessibility play a significant role in the reduced perception of liveability by the elderly in both northern and explicitly southern European cities. They would need travel, healthcare and municipal support. Next to this, Foglia et al. (2023) finds that social cohesion is of importance to elderly liveability, as it would contribute to improving environmental aspects in the neighbourhood, as well as the community.

Next to the elderly, Mensinga (2021) took notice of young adults and their impact on the liveability in a shrinking region. She executed a qualitative study towards the perception of liveability regarding young adult stayers in a shrinking region, and also reflected how this influenced the region altogether. She found that young adults appreciate the social side of liveability more, and the physical side is important if it stimulates this social contact. Housing and accessibility were also perceived as important (Mensinga, 2021)..

Examples for different age groups as a variable for other social concepts are found in the work of Franssen et al. (2020). Franssen et al. (2020) researched loneliness with age as a variable, differentiating between three different groups, specifically 19 to 34, 35 to 49 and 50 to 65. They found out that loneliness is more common within the older category, and is characterised by the amount of contact with others, but also by personal interpretation and feelings play a role in it. They also found out that in different studies evidence exists that loneliness does have a connection with different age groups (Franssen et al., 2020). They plead for more studies that delve deeper into differences by age groups. Although there were similarities at certain aspects of loneliness, there were significant differences at specific levels, and therefore a general approach was not preferable to solve loneliness in all age groups (Franssen et al., 2020).

2.3 Shrinkage

Urban shrinkage can be related to social, environmental, financial and demographic areas, and has influenced multiple policy fields in European legislation (Nefs et al., 2013). Nefs et al. (2013) describe dimensions that are relevant to quality of life. There are two major groups, namely subjective and objective dimensions that contribute to quality of life in shrinking regions. The subjective is about people's behavior, their opinions on their quality of life and their psychological wellbeing. The objective dimensions consist of the space, the economy and socio-demographic characteristics (Nefs et al., 2013).

One of the main causes for shrinkage in a region consist of relocation movements. The younger and more highly educated inhabitants change their living environment in favour of a more interesting and viable location in the Netherlands, due to the larger offer of activities and better economic chances (Gieling & Haartsen, 2017; Dieleman, 2016; Nefs et al., 2013; Rijksoverheid, n.d.).
 A relation exists between a high amount of jobless people and the shrinking cities that they reside in (Delken, 2008). There is difficulty in finding a balance between the available work opportunities and the working grade of the local inhabitants in the shrinking and anticipation regions (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Delken (2008) highlights that, even though people are bothered by this economic position, this does not negatively influence their day-to-day wellbeing. At the same time, in Germany and the Netherlands more people will retire, as the baby-boomer generation retires between 2012 and 2035. This creates problematic consequences for the current political and economic legislation (Nefs et. al, 2013). The amount of facilities are also influenced by the process of shrinkage (Dieleman, 2016). The amount of schools in shrinking regions will reduce, because less children are attending these facilities. As a result, certain children will have more difficulty traveling to school, as travel distance in general will increase. Stores will also have more difficulty getting enough profit, as there are less customers in the region. The same happens for the public transport services (Rijksoverheid, n.d.).

Another phenomenon is that the existing houses are not fit for the new demography, which is the elderly. These people will need more healthcare in comparison to what is available within the direct living environment, due to a limit of people working in healthcare. This last phenomenon will have a larger impact on shrinking regions, than it will have on other parts of the Netherlands (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Non-western immigrants take the place that the relocation, which result in a change the demographic characteristics (Dieleman, 2016).

Another main contributor to shrinkage is found in natural demographic developments related to birth and death rates. In shrinking regions, in general the death rates are higher than the birth rates. The inhabitants left behind in the countryside are of higher age (Gieling & Haartsen, 2017), who also have a higher probability of dying than younger adults have (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). This last part is important to note, because a higher percentage of people in the Netherlands has passed the age of 75 years. Therefore, the increased probability of dying result in further decrease of population (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Ageing and shrinkage are therefore mostly perceived in urban planning as a negative phenomenon (Nefs et al., 2013). There are also less children born within these shrinking or anticipation regions (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Both the relocation movements and natural demographic developments in shrinking regions cause less viable and interesting regions. These regions start to look old and unattractive. This also stimulates the process of people searching for more viable regions (Nefs et al., 2013).

2.4 Conceptual model
In figure 4 on page 19, the conceptual model for this study is presented. In this conceptual model, I reflect upon the most relevant relations between the concepts of multiple stadia of life, liveability and shrinkage, together with the visions from governments. The goal of this model is to create a guideline how to research the different relations between these concepts.
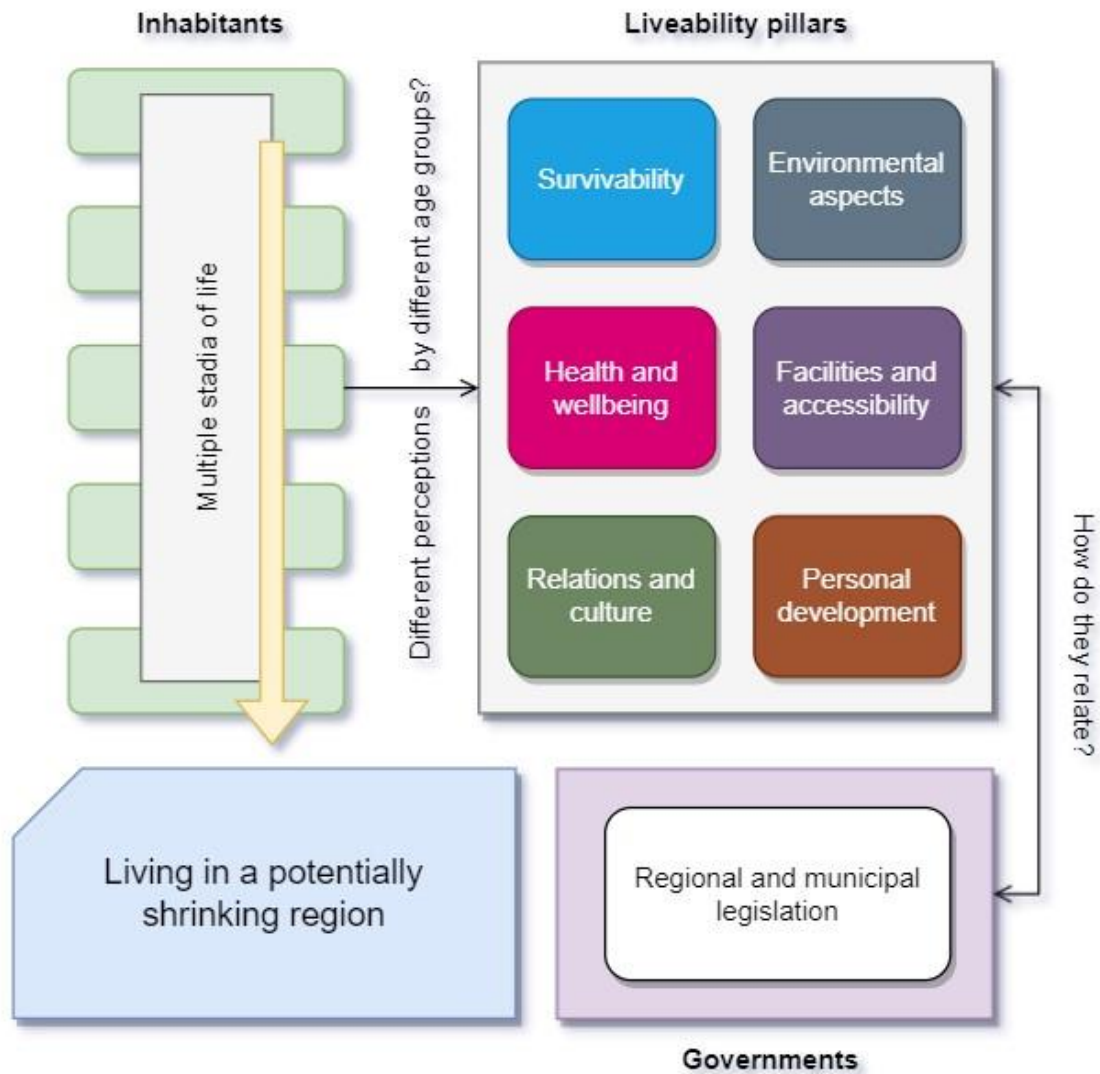
Figure 4: Conceptual model for understanding the main liveability concerns in a shrinking region, own work.

First I reflect upon different stadia of life. Because of the less strict, more qualitative nature of this study, I chose to loosen the age groups more and categorize participants by shared characteristics of their daily life. This choice is different, when compared to the work of Franssen et al. (2020), and is further elaborated in the methodology. I explicitly leave children out of this research, because I think a different methodology is needed to effectively study what liveability is for them, when compared to the adult stadia of life. I therefore recommend further research on children's perception regarding liveability in a future study.

The second relation is about the perceptions regarding liveability of the inhabitants. As reflected upon in the theoretical framework, a framework for liveability was created, and consist of six pillars, namely survivability, health and wellbeing, relations and culture, environmental aspects, facilities and accessibility and personal development.

The third relation is the link between these perceptions and the current existing regional and municipal legislation. In which ways do they interlink with one another, and how could they be influential for an inclusive new vision regarding future liveability in the region?

2.5 Hypothesis

I expected that for the different stadia of life, other aspects will be of importance to their living standards. More youthful generations presumably have more affiliation towards relations and culture (Mensinga, 2021) where higher middle age and older adulthood focus more on environmental aspects (Foglia et al., 2023). Certain aspects are expected to give more general responses, but would contain differences in characteristics that are most relevant for its contribution. For example, it is expected that facilities and accessibility are more or less equally important for all participants, but different kinds of facilities will be regarded as essential, and virtual accessibility will be more important for younger stadia of life. All-in-all, my expectation is that there is valuable in-depth insights that can be valuable for the regional and municipal legislation. This research will give insights to understand how the inhabitants of the region want their living area to evolve. These insights create opportunities to reflect on the existing governmental strategies, together with giving inspiration to new ones.

3. Methodology

For this study, I argue that both a qualitative approach and desk research for existing policies are needed to answer the research questions. The main research question requires an answer that contains information about the existing policies of the region, together with in-depth knowledge provided by local citizens. This means that a mixed methods approach is necessary. Hence, I chose to study this by conducting both a policy analysis and interviews. This was done in the form of a case study.

3.1 Case study

A case study is seen as the most effective means to find relevant information on the topic of future liveability in an anticipation region. It namely provides a tangible setting where research can be conducted, as boundaries are set. This means that focus can be put on the specific policies of that certain spatial boundary, and interviews can be held with participants from only that region. This provides an example how individuals from different stadia of life perceive their liveability, and how legislation relates to it.

For defining a successful case study, Yin (2003) stresses that the spatial boundary, theoretical scope and the timeframe are components that should be specified. For the spatial boundary, we focus on one of the municipalities from the anticipation region of Oost-Drenthe, which are Aa en Hunze, Borger-Odoorn, Coevorden and Emmen. Their position is seen in figure 5, area 14. After consideration, I chose to execute my study in the municipality of Coevorden, shown in figure 6. I made this choice, because this municipality possesses both a central larger town, and smaller villages that are more communal. This is relevant, due to the difference in liveability standards between cities and rural areas (De Haan et al., 2014). Aa en Hunze and Borger-Odoorn only possess smaller villages, and the municipality of Emmen has a larger focus on the main city of the region. The theoretical scope of this study is found in the literature review. The conceptual model reflects on the theoretical scope, which highlights the three main relations of this study:

1. The different stadia of life;
2. The perceptions from these participants regarding six pillars for liveability;
3. The relation between the visions on liveability and existing governmental legislation

These are seen as core elements, and are therefore of highly relevance for the interview guide. The research project as a whole has taken place in the timeframe of September 2022 until November 2023. The data collection for both legislation regarding liveability and the interviews were estimated to start from February onwards. The date for finishing the data collection was estimated in early July. The last months were reserved for writing the results chapter and thereafter finalizing this thesis.

Krimpregio's
1. Noordoost-Friesland
2. Het Hogeland
3. Eemsdelta
4. Oost-Groningen
5. Achterhoek
6. Zeeuws-Vlaanderen
7. Westelijke Mijnstreek
8. Parkstad Limburg
9. Maastricht-Mergelland

Anticipeerregio's
10. Kop van Noord-Holland
11. Friese Waddeneilanden
12. Noordwest-Friesland
13. Zuidoost-Friesland
14. Oost-Drenthe
15. Krimpenerwaard
16. Hoeksche Waard
17. Schouwen-Duiveland
18. Walcheren
19. Noord-Limburg
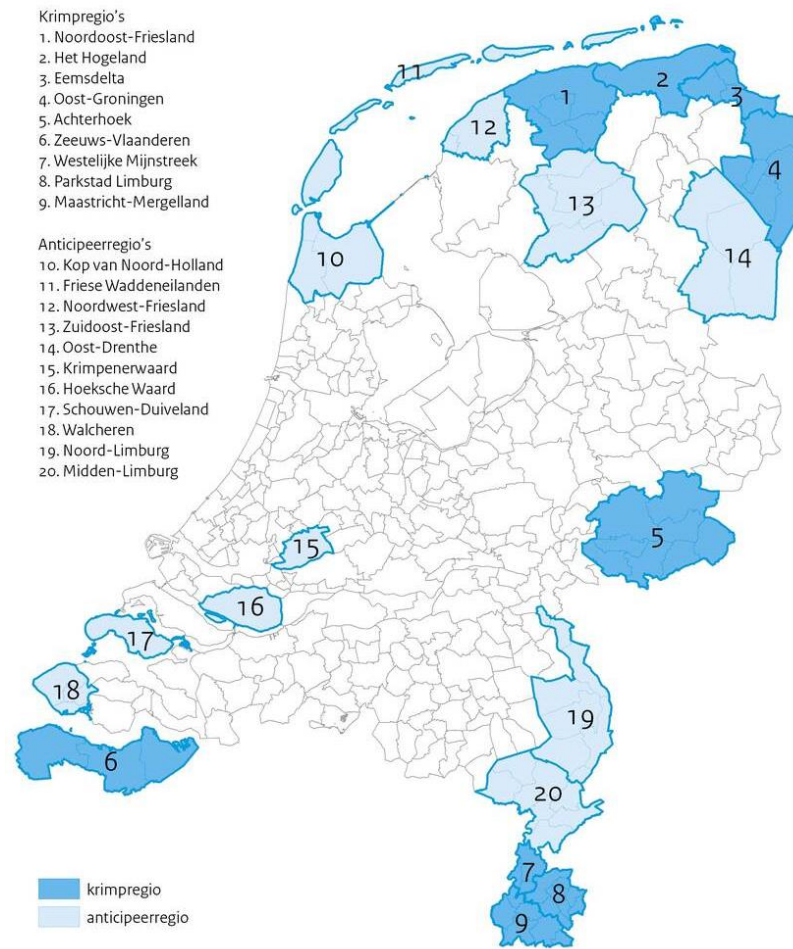20. Midden-Limburg

krimpregio
anticipeerregio

Figure 5: Overzicht Krimpgebieden en anticipeergebieden (Rijksoverheid, 2018).
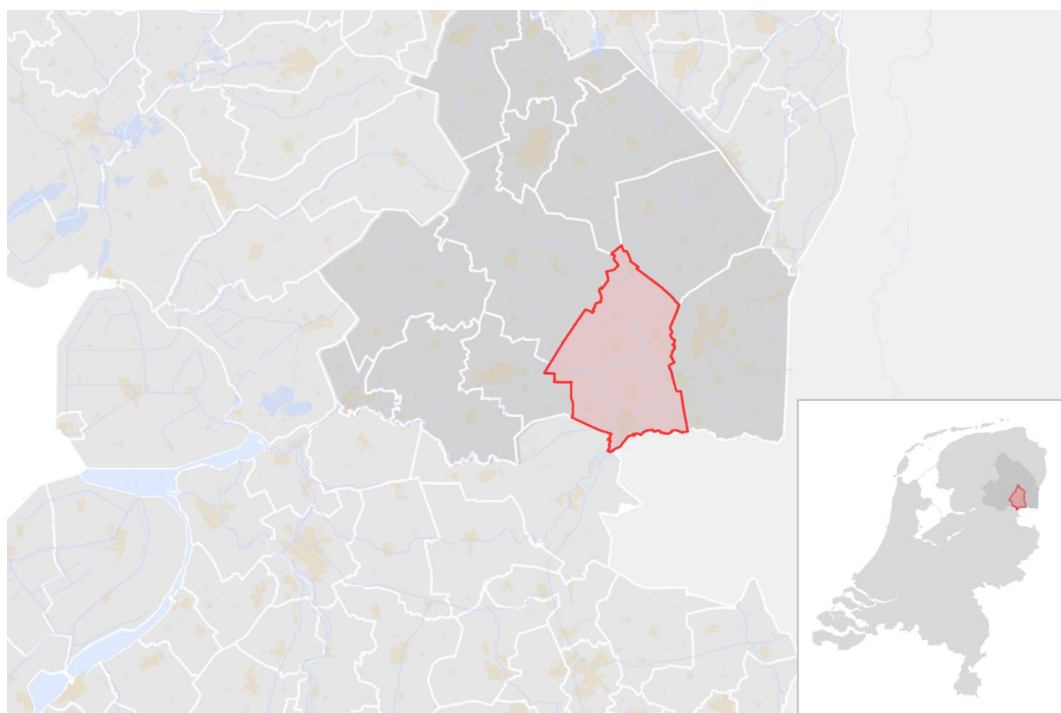

Figure 6: Municipality of Coevorden (Wikipedia, 2023).

3.2 Policy analysis

How do the local and regional governments act upon the possible danger or chances that shrinkage in the region contains? From what was already discussed in the introduction, it can be stated that the national government puts emphasis on monitoring certain regions that are expected to shrink in the foreseeable future (Rijksoverheid, 2018). Their main focus for battling demographic decline is bringing change to the current housing offer in the region, to boost the local economy, improving the accessibility of the region (both infrastructural and digital) and promote the preservation of the existing amenities (Rijksoverheid, 2016).

In this policy analysis I have researched core elements that made specific contributions to how liveability in the region is enhanced and maintained. A total of six policy documents were analysed. These documents were found during a search for relevant policies, and were filtered by how much the documents related to liveability and demographic decline. The analysis was structured by studying the policy documents in the order that they were written. By analysing these documents, and already filtering the found aspects in line with the six pillars of liveability, a clear line is created to note shared governmental points of attention. This was done to create a framework, in which the more dominant characteristics in legislation provide a base to compare with the interview results.

This method was seen as fitting for this study, because studying existing policies and relating them to the liveability framework gives insights in what aspects are most dominant in the existing legislation. The six documents provide information which aspects of liveability are perceived as most relevant by these governments, and how its condition could be improved. This policy analysis was a source of inspiration for the interview guide.

3.3 Interviews

I chose to conduct interviews with a total of 12 participants, as a first exploration to find out how participants from different ages perceive their liveability, and which characteristics are important to them. Interviews were seen as the most fitting method to study how liveability is perceived between different stadiums of life. The strength of this method is that it provides insights how participants give a perception of their stories, of their lives. It gives an insight into how these specific inhabitants perceive their region, and if there are interesting differences between the participants that differ in age.

The 12 participants can therefore be seen as an example, as they are individuals who cannot be compared to some average standard. They are also not with a large enough group to make statements for different stadia of life in general. This means that this chapter is not about finding hard results for how liveability should be interpreted in the municipality of Coevorden. It can be argued that a more quantitative approach could have resulted in more significant information, but I argue that a qualitative approach is necessary to answer the research questions. I searched for input how legislation can be improved, and therefore the opportunity to provide open, detailed answers is preferable. Interviews lend themselves fittingly for this approach.

Interviews namely provide the freedom and space so that participants can effectively stress, illustrate and explain their perception on liveability. An interviewer is also able to ask further, what the thoughts behind the participant's answers are. These insights, even though they are only from 12 participants, give examples of liveability perceptions. They are most likely influenced by other aspects that are not only related to age, such as settlement type and how long someone lived in the municipality. However, to compare the rich data found in the policy analysis, this kind of information was necessary, as data from a more quantitative method like surveys would not have given this freedom that participants now had.

The intent was for participants to have the full opportunity to give their insights. The interview guide, found in appendix 2, is semi-structured to give the participant more freedom to come up with personal stories, while it still provides a guideline that focuses on the content of this study. The questions are inspired by aspects from the theoretical framework and the policy analysis, and were made comprehensible for all participants. The formulation of certain questions was adjusted over time, when questions were hard to answer. In general, however, this was not needed. The interview started with an introduction of the participant, and afterwards open questions were asked regarding their definition of liveability, how it relates to their living environment and if demographic decline was perceived by the participant. These stories show what truly was important for the respondents, as these were the thoughts that they had on their minds. However, follow-up questions were used when certain aspects were not addressed by the participant him- or herself, to collect insights for the missing liveability aspects. Furthermore, we asked the participant if there was a reason for not mentioning these aspects.

To recruit 12 participants for the interviews, I first started with the goal to recruit as many participants as possible. This was done with both individuals found in public space, and people connected to social organizations that were publicly accessible. Different stadia of life were loosely taken into account while searching for participants, to look out for an overrepresentation of one or multiple stadia of life. During this process, the concept of snowball sampling was used, as during interviews I asked participants if they knew other people who would be willing to participate. This strategy was chosen, because it provides a larger amount of participants, and can be supplemented with a more critical approach later in the process. To limit bias and to compensate for this, I changed the strategy into purposive sampling. I namely reflected on what stadia of life participants I missed insights from, be it having well distributed stadia of life, but also to get in touch with participants who are less active when it comes to participation in these kinds of research.

Elaboration from interview results
As can be seen in table 2, five stadiums of life are defined, and participants are categorized. I chose to look more into shared characteristics of each age group, and therefore I neglect a strong division paired with specific age numbers. The stadiums of life are characterised by aspects related to their position in life, mostly regarding their career, but also influenced by aspects related to their family composition. However, family composition is not leading here, as some people for example do not have children at all, or started their family in an earlier or later stadia of life.

Stadia of life	Pseudonym name	Settlement type
Stadia 1: Starter	Raven	Town
	Jessica	Village
Stadia 2: Settled	Diane	Village
	Iris	Town
Stadia 3: Mid-career	Yorick	Village
	Priscilla	Village
	Roos	Town
Stadia 4: Last phase of career	Emmy	Town
	Thirza	Town
Stadia 5: Retired	Linda	Town
	Piet	Village
	Bernhard	Town

Table 2: List of respondents.

Stadia 1 relates to people starting with their adult life, who have just finished their studies and start working. The respondents that I found for this stadia did not have children, but they did live independently from their parents. Stadia 2 comprises participants who already work for some years, and are more inclined to have young children. Stadia 3 relates to adults who are mid-career, and likely have children that passed puberty. Stadia 4 are the people who are in the last phase of their career. Their children mostly have left home, and they will retire in the upcoming years. Stadia 5 is related to retirement. I also chose to implement the settlement type as a secondary characteristic, to assure that respondents from both the town and villages were included, as they might have different liveability standards (De Haan et al., 2014).

Transcripts were made for 11 out of 12 interviews, as one of the participants asked not to be recorded. Transcribing was done with regards to making participants anonymous. These transcripts were coded to create a general view which liveability pillars were important to which participant, and what reason was behind these thoughts. In appendix 3, the coding scheme used for the analysis is presented. It was used to determine which characteristics of the six pillars were mentioned by the participants. The six pillars were specified with the most characterizing aspects from the policy analysis. Next to this division, we also looked at if the responses were positive, neutral or negative, in regard to the certain characteristic. Attention is paid towards statements based on a change over time, as we are researching future liveability. A seventh category was added, which relates to demographic characteristics that are relevant to liveability and demographic decline. Next to the question if demographic decline is perceived, codes were made for three other aspects. First, tensions between the rural and urban areas were mentioned several times. Second, multiple participants noticed people moving from the municipality towards larger cities, and back. Lastly, attention is paid when participants had statements about a specific target group.

Ethical consideration and personal positionality

While doing interviews, several ethical considerations were taken into account. The goal was to make the interviews as pleasant for the participant as possible. The participant could choose the location for the interview, with the hope it would contribute to a relaxed atmosphere. Important in these interviews was to inform the participant as best as possible. Each interview started with a careful explanation what the aim of the interview was, what their specific rights were, and how their answers contribute to this thesis. Afterwards a permission form was signed, and the general form can be found in appendix 4. The results from the literature study and policy analysis were not specified, because these results could influence the answers of the participant. After this introduction, we asked if the participant agreed with being recorded during the interview, with an explanation that the purpose of this recording is for transcribing only. One of the restricting factors was seen as having to implement a recording device in the interview. This could have had an effect on the general mood of the interview. However, the participant did have the option to decline the interview being recorded, which occurred during one of the interviews. The goal was to make it as less perceivable as possible after asking and receiving consent by the participant. Transcriptions were made with anonymity, as information would not be retraceable. This was taken into account when developing the results and conclusion chapters.

It is important to reflect upon your own positionality, when doing interviews. I consider myself as interested in developments of the municipality of Coevorden, because I grew up close to this municipality. Next to this, I am enthusiastic when it comes to finding interview results, as I chose to study a topic which I find interesting. This means that I have personal interest in doing these interviews, which influences my positionality. I also am part of the youngest stadia of life that is part of this study, as I am finalizing my studies and I am childless. This means that I might have more affinity with participants who share certain characteristics. I also think of myself as kind hearted and charismatic, and being a good listener. Consequently, I perceive these points as personal qualities that have helped me thorough the interview process. While I tried to not influence any answering of interview questions in any way, there is a possibility that in moments of enthusiasm, I tried to ask further with information about certain aspects.

4. Results

4.1 Policy analysis results

In this policy analysis, regional legislation from the province of Drenthe and the Dutch national government, and legislation from the municipality of Coevorden are analysed. This analysis contains a study on six policy documents, that are all written in regards to improve the liveability of the region, and concern demographic decline. The first three documents are developed for the whole anticipation region, while the second three are all municipal governing documents. This chapter is structured by first reflecting on main shared characteristics in both regional and municipal legislation, and main differences between the two. Afterwards, a reflection from the documents is provided, which is also summarized in appendix 5.

In general, I consider both regional and municipal legislation as being complementary to each other. The regional legislation sets base standards, where the municipality developed these themes into developments for their specific region. As these documents are influential for the future of the respective areas, they bear a certain weight, and it is logical that these relate to one another.

For survivability, I would argue that both types of legislation stress the importance of good housing conditions, and improving the economic position of its inhabitants. In regards to housing, regional legislation relates to dated housing conditions and reduced dwelling prices. They plead for improvement of these conditions, with sustainability and affordability as key components. In that sense, the municipal legislation stresses a more fitting housing market, where inclusivity and affordability play a role. Housing should be fitting for all ages, for example. Regarding economic position, regional legislation reflects on a lack of fitting jobs in the region, high unemployment, poverty and a need to improve the local economy. The municipal legislation is less negative, as multiple types of industries are praised as economic stimulators. However, it becomes clear in these documents that both emphasize further stimulation. The municipality also relates liveability to safety issues, as emphasize is put on traffic safety, safe living environments and crime in general.

In regional legislation, environmental aspects relate to the creation and stimulation of an attractive living environment, which has reduced overtime in the region. The municipal legislation relates to this, and fills in certain aspects that can be improved. For example, amount of green, peacefulness, cleanness, history and agriculture are important. The town centre of Coevorden also gets much attention, as its physical attractive characteristics should be preserved and used to develop the town. I assume that the regional government is less precise in their environmental legislation, to provide room for the municipalities to make more specified legislation for their own environment.

The regional legislation relates to changing demographics, when it comes to relations and culture. More elderly and refugees live in the region, which results in certain social occurrences, for example detachment. This would have negative consequences for the community feeling. The municipal legislation also relates to less youthful inhabitants living in the municipality, and puts emphasize in increasing connectivity between inhabitants. The importance of meeting places, traditions and opportunities for neighbourhood connectivity are highlighted.

A reduction in amenities is mentioned in both regional and municipal policies, and the municipality stresses maintaining the most important facilities in the direct environment as important. However, centralising facilities in larger centres is necessary to keep them lively, as vacancy should be reduced. Both regional and municipal legislation also encompasses a mix of functions on a certain location, so that facilities are not too segregated from the rest of the settlement. For infrastructure, regional legislation is more broad, and defines that accessibility towards amenities, healthcare, and internationally is important. The municipality shares this sentiment, and gives importance towards improving the cycling, walking, driving and public transport conditions. Here, both types of legislation are corresponding with each other, and the municipality formulates certain answers to problems raised by the regional legislation.

Health and wellbeing relates in both regional and municipal legislation to a less healthy population, and sports and healthcare are important estimators to tackle this. For sports, the regional legislation stresses to improve general health and vitality by providing accessible and qualitative sports activities. The municipality stresses this too, and focuses on sports associations and exercise opportunities in public space. Healthcare is stressed by the regional legislation to improve by having fitting amenities and a well-educated professional organization. The municipality also focuses on living independently, in their own living environment and having healthcare on location.

Personal development relates in regional legislation towards a less highly educated population, which resulted from the current regional education system. Holding onto talented people and connecting them to the work field is relevant, as are equal chances. The municipal legislation also highlights education, but reflects extensively on other aspects that are important to children's upbringing too. The municipality stresses the importance of safe school routes, playgrounds, and inclusivity. They also relate to cultural activities and facilities, for example the offer of museums.

Visie op krimp en leefbaarheid 2016-2020

"Visie op krimp en leefbaarheid 2016-2020" is the most recent provincial vision, which was developed by the province of Drenthe to take an active role for anticipating on shrinkage and liveability. 90% of the inhabitants are content with their living environment, but the feeling of community decreases. The people are less willing to invest in the liveability of their neighborhood, and are influenced by the aging population and a larger amount of refugees moving into the region (Provincie Drenthe, 2016).

The province elaborates on a division between people, regarding their economic power, education, health, sports and work capabilities. A social dichotomy exists due to social detachment, joblessness, income, bad health and literacy. The province puts specific focus on increasing the general health and vitality of the people. Points for improvement are the attractiveness of the region, the education system and the region's accessibility. Furthermore, the housing situation is positive, but needs to be made futureproof (Provincie Drenthe, 2016). Therefore, the province of Drenthe proclaims five important themes for liveability chances:

1. The availability and quality of the healthcare system;
2. Health and vitality stimulated by stimulation of movement;
3. Educational qualities and the connection with the working environment;
4. The quality of the living environment;
5. The amenities and the accessibility towards them.

Figure 7: Visie op krimp en leefbaarheid 2016-2020, Provincie Drenthe (2016).

Figure 7 shows the provincial vision regarding shrinkage and liveability. Drenthe divided their overarching vision in three different parts. It starts with the strategy, in which the vision itself is formulated. This strategy was further developed into assignments, which are divided between the social and the physical. Afterwards, these assignments were translated into an executive program. The core message is that everyone has the same rights, and should be able to partake in the day-to-day activities. To gather knowledge, the province of Drenthe collaborates with partners such as trend agencies, local educational faculties, and civilian steered platforms. In this document, a specific notion is made that the southern and eastern region of Drenthe needs to pay more attention to liveability (Provincie Drenthe, 2016). I argue that this vision shows a sentiment that liveability measures are more needed in the anticipation region, when compared to other municipalities in the province, and therefore the points given in these visions are of relevance to this study.

Uitvoeringsagenda krimp en leefbaarheid 2019 Drenthe

This document was the executive answer to the vision from 2016. It reflects upon how to improve and contain the current qualities for people living in the area, to keep it attractive. Demolishment or renewal of dwellings and public space are key strategies for spatial development, and extra attention is paid to sports, healthcare, education and inclusivity. Making sustainable adjustments to all dwellings is mentioned, and all amenities should be accessible (Provincie Drenthe, 2018). These qualities capture a new vision, where multifunctional locations with great physical and digital accessibility are seen as key stimulus for the region. Shrinkage contributes negatively to the living conditions and the economy, resulting in less liveability. Therefore working, living and wellbeing are set as pointers towards improvement of socioeconomic status. However, next to shrinkage, liveability is reduced due to lower worth of existing dwellings, poverty that is created due to familial relations, no fitting work, an average bad health and therefore a high need for healthcare (Province Drenthe, 2018). Improvement of amenities and dwellings that are fitting for its citizens and the current times is the envisioned result. Lastly, higher national and international accessibility and a fitting economic environment, which is a manufacturing industry with fitting educational opportunities, is highlighted (Province Drenthe, 2018).

Regio Deal Zuid- en Oost-Drenthe

Multiple governments collaborated in this document, to adapt the southern and eastern regions of Drenthe to the future situation of possible shrinkage, and improve its liveability. It highlights the strengths of the region, namely its communal feeling and industry in a green environment. The document considers main causes for shrinkage, namely the lack of fitting jobs, high unemployment, inheritable impoverishment, a less healthy population, increased needs from healthcare, a reduction in amenities and a reduction in housing prices. It considers three main pointers of interest: Working, living and wellbeing (Rijksoverheid, 2019):

1. Working conditions should be improved for structural stability. More traditional industry and less highly educated people are characteristic for this region. Finding and holding onto talented people, and being able to re-educate them if necessary, are potential solutions.
2. Living conditions are dated, as current housing characteristics do not fit the current needs. The region has a high percentage of people that have ownership for their houses, while they are not financially able to take sustainable measures.
3. Healthcare in the region asks for an increased accessibility of the region, because less facilities are available and people how to travel more frequently. There is also a higher need for qualified healthcare staff. For education, it is stated that children have above average cognitive capacities, but are largely restrained from attending a higher professional educative path by their living environment.

With the ambition to increase the broad prosperity of the region, the region focuses on stimulating innovative economic opportunities and improved accessibility, fitting education for the new local economy, and popular living conditions, leisure activities and fitting amenities for healthcare, education and wellbeing (Rijksoverheid, 2019). Aimed results were:

1. A closer collaboration between different fields of work and education, together with an assessment digitalization in the recreational economy.
2. A neighborhood and village development plan for improving the housing supply, where at least one plan per municipality should be created to experience and learn from this process and to make the current housing supply more sustainable. Next to this, a focus is put on creating a long-term strategy for low-cost housing with sustainable improvements.
3. Wellbeing focuses on creating more healthcare-related improvements related to professional healthcare organizations, with fitting staff and educational opportunities. Lastly, it consists of fitting education for the cognitive capacities of children, and a reduction for youth services.

A total of 40 million euros is available for these goals (Rijksoverheid, 2019). As this document was made in collaboration, together with having clear goals and a large amount of funds available, it is perceived as highly influential for municipal legislation.

Hoofdlijnendocument Omgevingsvisie Coevorden 2020

In this first initiation for a new environmental vision by the municipality, four challenges for the future of the municipality are defined, which are related to sustainability, pride, liveability and vitality (Gemeente Coevorden, 2020). A reduction in inhabitants, paired with a higher median age, and a specific reduction in younger inhabitants would change demographic characteristics. Attention is paid towards healthy aging and sports, in relation to creating pleasant living areas. As a reduction in inhabitants per household was estimated, focus is put on tackling loneliness by stimulating social encounters in public space (Gemeente Coevorden, 2020). Specific ambitions have been formulated in this chapter:

- For survivability, creating fitting dwellings, with specific focus on life-cycle resistant dwellings to house all age groups is highlighted. Safe living environments and traffic safety are also mentioned several times.
- For environmental aspects, peacefulness, having enough space and being clean and safe would contribute to pleasant living environments. The villages and its greenery should look aesthetically nice, maintenance should be regulated properly and new dwellings should fit the aesthetics of the environment.
- Aspects of relations and culture are found in stimulating the bottom-up community feeling, and providing an environment that encourages social contact. Creating opportunities for people to work together on initiatives that contribute to liveability, and to the community feeling, are seen as important.
- The most important facilities should be accessible in the direct living environment, and therefore preservation of existing amenities is important. Amenities should be well accessible, in regards to both the buildings as well as the routes towards them. The infrastructure should be safe, steady and reliable, and it should not look outdated. Amenities should be well connected by car and public transport, and travel delays should be limited. Also, attention is paid on innovative ways of traveling, next to unmotorized ones.

- Health and wellbeing gets attention by stimulating movement. Next to this, a specific notion is made towards all people, also with healthcare compatibility, being able to live independently in their own living environment.
- In light of personal development, the vision focuses on the development of children. Areas should be suitable for children to grow, and fitting sports associations, schools and cultural institutions should be in order.

In the paragraphs regarding pride and vitality, other aspects of the liveability framework were found. Pride relates to inhabitants having affinity with the agrarian region. This point fits the description of rootedness and attachment. Vitality relates to the economic position of Coevorden. Top-sectors are in logistics and the manufacturing industry and the recreational industry also creates a large sum of jobs in the region. Having enough well-educated people in the region for these sectors is important. In regards to facilities and accessibility, the amount of stores have reduced in the town of Coevorden, and certain buildings are empty as a result. Consequently, the municipality started decreasing the centre to a compact size, and stimulating the experience of the town. The accessibility with both national and international regions is also stimulated.

Woonvisie Coevorden 2021

The most recent residential vision by the municipality of Coevorden is constructed with different guidelines compared to the vision of 2017. More people move into the municipality, and estimates are hard to make because of the turbulent housing market. This is in contradiction with former legislation, which was based on the prognoses of possible shrinkage. The vision specifies themes related to core values, which relate to five central words: "durven" (to dare), "eigenhead" (identity), "grensverleggend" (groundbreaking), "verbindend" (connecting) and "trots" (pride) (Gemeente Coevorden, 2021), and the content of these themes relates to what we describe as part of liveability:

- Regarding survivability, less people are living in one house, resulting in an increased need for mainly affordable dwellings. However, due to an ageing population, the future need for dwellings is not as high. Affordability stays a central topic. Social rent is highly demanded, and due to certain neighborhood problems equal distribution of social rent over the neighbourhoods and villages is key. The municipality also increases the construction pace for more affordable housing. Focus is put on legal boundaries to give existing inhabitants more chances for housing, so that they are not replaced by new settlers.
- Environmental aspects are mostly related to the execution of new neighbourhoods and dwellings. The municipality focuses on creating attractive living and working environments, where dwellings are of higher quality and futureproof. Building within existing boundaries of the towns and villages is favoured, as much emphasis is put on the rural area. Ecology and ground are important to consider when developing new neighbourhoods. Also, archaeology and cultural and historic landscape characteristics are to be researched.
- For relations and culture, new and existing neighbourhoods should be developed as such that they increase the chances of social contact.

- Parking, traffic and accessibility are important themes when the municipality considers new plans is made.
- Health and wellbeing are considered on multiple points in this vision. While people get older, they are longer stimulated to live independently. The amount of care grows in all settlements, and therefore the importance of adapting existing neighbourhoods is highlighted for current and future care needs. The municipality stimulates people to make these adaptations, and new fitting dwellings for specific care groups are developed. Furthermore, public space in new and existing neighbourhoods should tempt people to exercise more. The care facilities are seen as qualitatively high and locally oriented, but the municipality collaborates with other municipalities to achieve a better regional care setting.
- Personal development gets no specific attention in this document.

Omgevingsvisie Coevorden 2023

The 'Omgevingsvisie Coevorden 2023' is the most recent municipal environmental vision, in which challenges for the future for all settlements are formulated. This document is divided into 5 separate categories, from which the first two are of importance to this analysis. First, the municipality shares information about their vision towards 2040, and how this relates to their development strategy. Second, they developed area compasses. These contain the execution of their vision in the five specific areas that make the municipality. The municipality formulates personal values. These relate to stimulating grassroot initiatives and putting focus on and preserving unique characteristics of the municipality. They are also perceptive for creative directions with cross-border partnerships, stimulating collaborations between parties, and showing pride in being part of this municipality (Gemeente Coevorden, 2023).

Two dimensions are being formulated, namely the personal scale, and the regional scale. The personal relates to the important characteristics of locality, with historical value as one of its main focus points, while the regional relates to the role the municipality has on economic value. Sustainability plays a key role in keeping the municipality liveable for future generations. In relation toward the six pillars of liveability, the vision provides certain statements:

- Related to survivability, it encompasses three main themes, namely dwellings, economy and safety. Residents have trouble settling because of a shortage of fitting and available dwellings. Therefore, the municipality focuses on building a minimum of 750 new homes, both for purchase and rent, mostly within the current settlement boundaries.
There is also room for new larger neighborhood projects in 4 to 5 settlements, and affordability and sustainability are important for these developments. Furthermore, a strategy for stimulating the elderly to move into smaller, fitting homes is made, to improve the housing market. New initiatives for innovative dwellings are also promoted. The municipality aspires a strong economical position within the region. Both national and international collaborations for a dynamic economy and increased employment chances are aspired. The international business park plays a key role, and there is focus on expansion and room for new locations. Therefore, good settlement conditions for companies are essential.

The recreation sector also contributes significantly to the amount and variation of jobs. For safety, attention is paid towards villages with a high traffic frequency, and possible subversive criminality in the rural area is tackled by giving new functions to empty farms.

- For environmental aspects, the municipality stresses the importance of both the rural area, as the built environment. Preserving characteristic, historically important cultural landscapes and the quality of nature is key. Agricultural activity is also important to tourism. Nature and biodiversity are important factors, and water and soil are important estimators. However, sustainable measures should be taken, while considering the cultural landscape, to adapt the farms into sustainable agricultural companies. Therefore, a mix of farms, living, recreation, climate and energy is favourable. For the built environment, green environments to reduce heat stress are important, next to preserving the identity of the settlements. The facilities and historical value of the town centre of Coevorden are specifically highlighted. The focus is on transformation from shopping oriented towards a recreation setting. The refurbishment of the train station also played a role in creating a more lively town centre.

- Relations and culture are highlighted by encouraging a community feeling, and the preservation of existing traditions. A high sense of community is important to tackle loneliness, and therefore a segregation of the different age groups is not aspired. The municipality also stresses the importance of meeting places in every village. Traditions and meetings are stimulated, due to their importance to the peoples' identity and rootedness towards the region. Connection between citizens, companies and municipality is important.

- Facilities, connectedness by different modes of transport and infrastructure are important items. Basic facilities are in the direct environment , but main facilities should be grouped in larger centres. The centre of Coevorden is the main dynamic facility hub, and focus is put on reducing vacancy in the town. The catering industry gets a special place around the market, and facilities for visitors also get specific attention. Public transport, car, walking and cycling connectivity are important for both visitors as inhabitants. Connections should be safe, fast and qualitatively high. The municipality focuses on stimulating new train connections towards Groningen and into Germany. Improving public transport between both larger and smaller settlements, by train and bus gets attention. Good infrastructure for cycling, walking and driving are in order, both within the municipality, and towards partner municipality. The municipality speaks in high regards to its walking and cycling infrastructural network.

- For healthcare, general practitioners should be available for every citizen. Empty farms could be refurbished into locations where healthcare is executed. Healthy lifestyles are stimulated by focusing on sports associations and accommodations, by developing the walking and cycle network, and by researching external effects on health, for example not using unhealthy methods in the agrarian sector.

- For personal development, the importance of personal identity and learning chances is stressed. Schools should be in liveable neighbourhoods and school routes should be coordinated safely. The importance of playgrounds is also highlighted. For the cultural sector, the municipality gives attention towards museums and cultural projects in the region.

The area compasses relate to five different areas that are part of the municipality. Those five all have their own identity, and are all differently developed, together with local input. Most of these aspects and actions relate the six pillars for liveability:

- First, the compasses relate to working chances, connected to the manufacturing industry, logistics and recreation. The expansion of business parks is researched, and strengths from the current recreation sector are used to become futureproof. Chances are found in initiatives of agricultural recreation, by connection catering facilities better with a new bicycle network, and working together with Emmen to boost larger regional recreational landmarks. Second, focus is put on creating fitting dwellings by building new ones and adapting the existing offer. Specific settlements are chosen to expand outside of their borders. In the other villages, small scale developments within the current boundaries is promoted. For example, the village of Dalen can expand more, because of the village's popularity and activities. However, the largest expansion is prepared for Coevorden itself, to improve its image and regional position. Former stores in the centre are also being rebuild into fitting dwellings. In the villages directly connected to Coevorden, dwellings are built to house the current demand for the town itself. Age groups are receiving specific attention, as in multiple villages youth dwellings and elderly homes are considered. The municipality explicitly states they indent when plans are stagnating in some matter. For the existing neighbourhoods, attention is paid to spread the less fortunate inhabitants equally. In certain villages, a focus is put on monitoring the traffic flow, to keep the environment safe.

- Environmental aspects are related to historical value and physical structure of the settlements, and nature related aspects such as flora and fauna. The quality to reside in a place is important. Historical elements are refurbished within the town, to increase its attractiveness. Development projects for the shopping streets, the train station, the market and harbour contribute to an attractive physical environment. The neighbourhoods also differ due to different building periods. Vital neighbourhoods should be clean, pleasant, and green, and the municipality focuses on improving these qualities. Therefore, within the settlements important green structures are protected, and are connected to opportunities for children to play and people to recreate, to increase the user and aesthetical quality. A strong separation between nature and agriculture in the rural area is characteristic, and should be protected and developed. Agriculture plays an important role for the cultural landscape. The natural qualities play a large role when the existing settlements expand.

- Relations and culture come back in the amount of community in certain villages and neighbourhoods. Club life, for example via sports facilities, contributes greatly towards social connectivity in most of the rural areas. The town centre should be a place where people interact and a feel welcome, to give people a sense of belonging to the town while staying interested to spatial developments. The municipality works together with the people to make this happen. In neighbourhoods, the social cohesion is stimulated, but cannot be resolved easily. Some neighbourhoods are quite diverse, making it hard for people to get together. The municipality tries to resolve this by providing services that could help improve social cohesion.

- Facilities are based in well-known facility settlements. The primary focus is on the centre of Coevorden, which had a troublesome condition in recent past. The municipality works together with entrepreneurs and property owners to stimulate a lively town centre. Extra focus is put on bicycle accessibility. The cycling network is highlighted on multiple points through the vision, and cycling distance is also quite well reflected upon. In the town of Coevorden, walking and cycling gets priority over the car. However, car accessibility too receives considerate attention. For all modes of transport, the municipality focuses on creating infrastructure that makes place well accessible, for example between the town centre and recreational points of interest. Multiple large roads are highlighted in the text, and are seen as essential for the economy as well, as these connect Coevorden towards thriving regions, both in the Netherlands and in Germany.
- Health and wellbeing is mainly related to the focus on sports and facilities related to sport, together with facilities for healthcare. The municipality puts focus on the health of its inhabitants, by stimulating sporting in open air. The municipality for example researches the opportunities of redeveloping a lakeside nearby the town, to improve the chances for sports activities. Next to this, playing grounds and green environments for sports are taken into account when developing green areas. The healthcare facilities get a lot of attention in the town of Coevorden itself, where facilities for healthcare and wellbeing should be part of the new vital neighborhood.
- Personal development gets attention with the notion of museums, cultural activities and schools. Education is important, and a lot of focus is put on the school within the town of Coevorden. In neighbourhoods, the social structure would be stimulated directly by the municipality, for both education and culture accessibility. Children growing up less fortunate also get more attention.

4.2 Interview results

The results from the interviews gave insight what personal stories 12 inhabitants of the municipality have regarding their liveability and living in an anticipation region. These interview results are an explorative study to what kinds of perceptions on liveability exist in the municipality. As stated in the methodology, the results from this chapter are no hard statements regarding how liveability is perceived in general. This chapter reflects on examples of perceptions, and what linkages can be made with age related aspects. First, we reflect on the general sentiment regarding liveability and demographic decline, followed by a reflection on the six liveability pillars. During the reflection, I will note down the number of which stadia of life a participant is, for improving the readability of this chapter.

In general, people are positive about their lives in the municipality. The participants state that the basics for living are there, and highlight qualities from the region that contribute to their livability. Some participants also stress negative aspects, that reduce this quality. Some of these aspects are consistent, while others occurred thorough the time that they lived in the area. The next chapters will expand on this more.

In regards to demographic decline, interestingly none of the participants actually perceived it. The participants from stadia of life 1, 2 and 3 were more hesitant to formulate their perception on shrinkage, where the respondents from stadiums 4 and 5 were more certain about rejecting the possibility of demographic decline. Priscilla (3) for example thought that her village was actually recovering from lesser times, and gives the example that the school once again has more children. Some of these participants were, however, concerned that specific demographic groups are shrinking, while others grow. Young people would leave for larger cities, and are replaced by older, mostly western people. Reasons are the lack of fitting houses, better work chances elsewhere and more fun activities in cities. This increase of elderly people from elsewhere creates social disturbances, for example that the smell of fertilizer is seen as a nuisance:

> "Then, you get a lot of friction in the community, which reduces the liveability. There are constant discussions, people who lose touch, which results in bickering between neighbours". – Yorick, stadia 3.

Stadia 4 and 5 strongly reject the possibility of shrinkage in the municipality, but the concept of younger people being replaced by older generations is also mentioned. However, this statement is also debunked in statements from Emmy (4) and Piet (5). Emmy stated specifically that her and her children all came back to live in the municipality, and she hears the same from her friends. Piet is also not perceiving this trend, as he mentions that multiple families are living all over his village, and young people are staying. This gives the assumption that younger people moving away is less observed by the older participants.

Survivability

Participants quite extensively talked about survivability during the interviews. They are in general positive about their housing conditions, which are seen as important. Diana (2), for example, states that she moved to her village because she liked the house. Affordable housing is an item that gets mentioned several times during the interviews. Both Iris (2) and Piet (5) note that the houses in this region are more affordable, when compared to their former living environment. Participants from different stadia of life, however, mention concerns about the younger inhabitants of the municipality not being able to find a home. Priscilla (3) mentions that not enough dwellings are available in her village, and is also perceived in other settlements, and people in her village are working with the municipality to resolve this. In the past, it was easier to purchase a house, as loans were more easily achievable. This is in line with statements from Raven (1). Raven, as starter on the housing market, mentions that the rent sector for housing is lacking to the demand. Too much houses for purchase or high rent are on the market, or being developed. She fears that this will continue on in the future. Priscilla (3), Yorick (3) and Emmy (4), also think that many houses are for purchase, the houses for rent are less, and youth has to wait long to find a place for themselves. Furthermore, the retired participants highlighted being able to live independently. Interestingly, Jessica (1) and Diane (2) also expressed their gratitude that elderly are able to stay in their villages. This shows that for housing conditions, liveability is actually a social concept, as participants are not only thinking about their own living conditions, but are also looking out for other target groups.

Regarding economic position, it is interesting to note how participants from earlier stadia of life were generally less positive when reviewing the jobs in the region. Jessica (1), thought that there is a sufficient amount of jobs in the region. Raven (1), Diane (2), Yorick (3) and Priscilla (4), however, showed dissatisfaction in regards to the job offers. Raven stated that the jobs are mainly interesting for students and people with specific diplomas, and requirements for these jobs are sometimes not achievable. Diane perceives a clear lacking offer of jobs in her workfield, which Yorick also suggests, while Priscilla thinks that the job offers are largely not fitting for people with higher education. The participants who are at the end of their career or retired did not mention the status of the jobs, or were positive about them. This could be, because these participants are longer connected to the local workfield. Roos (3) mentions that in the past, there were no jobs here, which has improved over the years, and people also go to Emmen for work. Emmy (4) and Linda (5) also positively review the jobs and the international industrial area. For economic costs and poverty, four participants from different stadia of life, with the exception of stadia 1, mentioned increased economic costs. Priscilla stresses that it is important for governments to realize that some people are not able to contribute to liveability:

> "*If you have to survive, then you cannot pay focus for nature and stuff. Then, you first need food and something to drink, to care for your family. And only if you are higher up that tree, then you are able to spend your money, then you start thinking about art and all those things*"
> - Priscilla, stadia 3.

This can be seen in the other answers from participants. Iris (2) felt that daily costs are getting more expansive and Emmy stresses that many inhabitants of Coevorden are in a lesser economic position. Bernhard (5) also states that he wants to put his attention and money towards his family instead of things such as sustainable adjustments. Here again, both statements are based on personal, but also social liveability, as some of these answers were out of concern for fellow inhabitants of the municipality.

For safety, Iris (2), Yorick and Priscilla (3), state their concerns specifically to drugs. Iris's stresses that drugs are used in the skatepark and near the public pool, and a lot of rubbish is left behind by the users. Yorick and Priscilla both also see the current local pub as tainted by drugs, and also share Iris' perception that the current night life options in Coevorden therefore are not appealing. Youngsters would also be gathering around town, in which both Iris (2) and Priscilla (3) highlight that this is a problematic feature. Priscilla even mentions that it does sometimes make her feel less safe when she visits the town. There could be a possible connection with the stadia of life, as participants from these stadia of life could have children from this age.

Other safety concerns are related to environmental developments and aspects related to certain demographic groups. For the environment, Raven (1) criticizes a spatial development where a well-used street in town was transformed into a shared space. This development endangers pedestrians and cyclists, and specifically blind people, as bicycle- and walking paths are entangled with the car related infrastructure. Roos (3) also mentions that street tiles in the town centre are not well kept and dangerous, as people tripped over them. Bernhard (5) perceives the redevelopment of an old sand hole into a recreation spot as very dangerous.

Yorick (3) also gives examples how certain policy actions regarding trailer parks contribute negatively to his village's safety. He states that this is a result of the municipality giving all their attention towards the town of Coevorden. The asylum policy and the general integration of internationals towards the community is criticized by multiple participants from different stadia of life. Their living conditions are seen as lacking, and have a negative influence on the environment, and its perceived safety. All the other participants perceived their living environment as safe. This feeling of safety is generally highlighted by feelings of peace, ambience and social control.

Environmental aspects

For the public space of the municipality, participants that put specific emphasis on it were overall positive. The town centre of Coevorden was mentioned severely. As the municipality puts focus is on recreation and tourism, now making use of the town's history, Coevorden becomes more attractive to live. Roos (3), Thirza (4) and Bernhard (5) show excitement for the new garden with historical elements around the castle, and the renovation of the market. Raven (1), Roos (3) and Bernhard (5) also compliment the harbour and ships passing by, and Roos mentions that the harbour will be improved with certain crafts around it. Next to these developments, Priscilla (3), Roos (3) and Thirza (4) mention that the shopping streets look nicer, and it gets more lively again after a lesser period.

> *"The people living here do not see it most of the time, but I speak to many tourists who walk the Pieter route. You walk from town to town, and come through places you have never been to. They are always happily surprised here".* - Thirza, stadia 4.

There is, however, also critique on certain spatial developments. As mentioned earlier, Raven (1) is critical about a shared space that replaced an important road. Even though it is now aesthetically better, she thinks its function is unfit for the location, which results in less safety. She fears that this development will also occur in more streets in that area. Emmy (4) states that the environment is not fittingly designed for handicapped people, wheelchairs and people with strollers. Certain streets would not have enough space to pass safely and comfortable. Roos (3) thinks that much money is spend unnecessarily because streets and buildings are being adjusted too much, and sometimes the goals for these developments are unnecessary. She also notices how more attention is paid to the shopping street between the market and the station, while the other shopping street gets less attention.

Buildings are mentioned by most participants from later stadia of life, while only Raven (1) from the younger participants mentioned it. Roos (3), Thirza (4), Emmy (4), Linda (5) and Bernhard (5) highlighted the importance to the historical value of the town centre. Thirza mentions that in the past a lot has been demolished, and in some cases, it is a shame that these buildings are no more. This is, however, a trend from the past, as it is nowadays well contained, which is also perceived by both Emmy and Linda. Given examples are an old restaurant being renovated into its original state after a fire, and a million euros projects for an old town gate fundament to be perceivable again. The old town gate gets both positive and negative feedback. Some find the historical value important enough, while others mention it being way too expansive.

Furthermore, there is critique on new dwellings around the town centre. Bernhard is disappointed in redevelopments around the old canal, where originally canal houses were to be build, but nowadays the municipality allows modern housing. Roos is most negative, as she is uncertain if Coevorden can still call itself an old fortified town.

The villages and neighbourhoods are characterised by their peacefulness and the amount of green. Village life is well received in general, and no specific differences by stadia of life was perceived. Priscilla's (3) is overall very positive about her living conditions in the village, but she mentions that large gullies next to the road in winter are not resolved by the municipality, and she also missed walking paths thorough the village, as she did not like walking on the road with her children. Diane (2) thinks that extra attention is paid to the aesthetics of the village by the municipality, because everything looks well maintained and clean. She states a clear difference when she compares her villages to certain neighbourhoods in the town of Coevorden. This peaceful sentiment is interestingly also mentioned by the town inhabitants. Raven (1) mentions that when she still lived with her parents, one of the qualities of her living environment was all the places where she was able to play. Iris also likes her neighbourhood, which she describes as peaceful, and highlights the quality of the green spaces. In regards to nature in and around the settlements, most respondents had positive opinions. Jessica (1) even states that nature and public spaces for children to play are the true qualities of this region. However, Raven (1) does mention that the large town park is impoverished. The attire has never been renewed, and people are not able visit the animals anymore. Furthermore, Linda (5) states that she is proud of the landscape style of the region, but would not necessarily call it real nature, such as a forest. Roos (3) shares this sentiment.

Relations and culture

Relations and culture was relevant for most participants. Social contact and the connectedness between people was important, next to the feeling of being at home. Multiple participants mention that they do not feel rooted in the municipality, but do feel attachment to their living environment. Most attention was paid to social contact between inhabitants, as all twelve participants reflected upon it quite extensively. Interesting was the influence of organizations and other external parties on social life, next to communication characteristics.

Regarding the influence of organizations, multiple participants from different stadia of life describe how sports and other kinds of associations influence someone's social connectivity. This was most relevant in the participants who lived in villages, but was also mentioned by people living in town. Jessica (1) states that the offer of different kinds of sports in her village is not broad, and as she is not into soccer she is less connected to the village. Piet (5) also thinks that associations like sport clubs or churches help with becoming part of social groups in a village. Diane (2) states that her children had an important role in her social life:

> "*I actually think that because of, and thanks to the children you built up a network. Because of the school, but also because of sports and that you are more present in the neighbourhood… Well, it grows, literally*". - Diane, stadia 2.

This is also her main point when asked about things that have changed over time. These were examples from villages, but Iris (2), who recently moved into town, also relates to how sports and her children helped with getting in touch and connecting to others.

The participants in general experience and appreciate the community feeling of the municipality, but at the same time that privacy still exists. Being nice to one another, open for social contact, and looking out for people around you are positive characteristics that are felt by multiple respondents from different stadia of life. Respect for each other, from both sides, and people's unique personality are felt by the majority of the participants. Iris (2) specifically states that this is completely different from her former home, as she feels that people actually care about one another in this municipality.

However, there are also negative aspects related to social contact, mentioned by participants from stadia 3, 4 and 5. Some participants perceive a more individualistic culture, and the concept of othering is mentioned multiple times. Yorick (3) feels that he sometimes cannot freely speak his mind, as he feels mocked about some conservative viewpoints, even though he stays respectful. Roos (3) is not able to speak or understand the local dialect, and she experiences people being less open towards her and having less compassion because of it. Piet (5) experienced a lack of social connections with his neighbours for the first months when he moved to his new village, before someone tried to start a conversation with him. He now states that it increases over time. Bernhard also specifies that othering takes place by physical restraints. A clustering of less fortunate, international residents exists in one street in his neighborhood, which is regulated by the housing corporation. The families are diverse, are segregated from the rest of the neighbourhood and are not welcomed properly into the community.

People from the villages would also be scared to be left out of municipal attention, and Linda stated that this phenomenon resulted in the opposite, namely the endangering of the town center's amenities. A specific culture rules Coevorden, according to both Roos (3) and Thirza (4), where people are always searching for compromise.

> "If you see the town hall, there is evidence of it in those two façades. [...] For ten years a nice looking building stood empty. They could not do anything with it, but the façade had to be saved. Well, then in name of peace, those facades were reworked into the new building. That is somewhat characteristic to Coevorden, that people never come to easy conclusions. [...] But in the end it is finished, and it looks beautiful". - Thirza, stadia 4.

Multiple participants from stadia 3, 4 and 5 had experience with doing voluntary work. The most commonly mentioned aspects are the lack of volunteers, and cooperation with the municipality. Both Emmy (3) and Bernhard (5) also state that less volunteers are nowadays willing to help with neighbourhood projects. Activities, like camping weekends, were according to Emmy not possible anymore due to unwillingness to help. Bernhard also mentions that he has trouble with the large amount of elderly inhabitants of his neighbourhood, who do not want to participate. Cooperation with the municipality is mostly negatively reviewed by participants. They highlight a dissatisfaction with how the municipality supports bottom-up initiatives. Yorick (3) stresses how larger and smaller associations, both firms and associations, are differently impacted by the municipal government.

Larger associations have more expertise and staff while the smaller ones need more support from the municipality to compensate this. Roos (3) also mentions that during a participative trajectory, she felt that the municipality already had a clear vision and goal, while interaction were still happening. Linda (5) also mentions a conflict of interest between the rural villages and the town of Coevorden.

Facilities and accessibility

Again, most participants from all stadia of life, mention the convenience of having facilities nearby. Raven (1) highlights the importance of having supermarkets, the town hall and activities such as book markets in the direct environment. Priscilla (3) also thinks that facilities should be accessible and the store should not be too far from home. The other definitions are in line with this, and this characteristic also comes back in most other interviews.

The participants state that in the town centre of Coevorden is well received, and they can easily access it. The majority of the participants, from different stadia of life, voice that all their daily needs are met within town. There are enough supermarkets in the town itself, and the facilities are fitting for the town's size. Thirza (4) for example mentions that every needed type of facility is now present again, which is a huge improvement when comparing it to the past. Both Diane (2) and Thirza (4) also highlight the compactness of the town as a strength, which was stimulated by the municipality in the recent past. Several participants, from all ages, expect for stadia of life 5, do mention that they find the offer of stores somewhat lacking, as too much of the same kind is present. More specified kinds of stores would be disappearing, or were not present beforehand. However, a reduction in more well used types of stores in the town centre is also perceived. A butcher, a greengrocer, many healthcare related facilities, a cinema and an outdoor swimming pool are given as examples of facilities that are not present anymore. Priscilla (3) relates it to the consequence of increased online shopping, which are also sparsely mentioned by some other participants.

Multiple participants from stadia 1 to 3, mention that they travel to larger settlements for their shopping. Emmen is mentioned several times for having a large offer of stores, but others state that they also cannot find what they are looking for in that area. Jessica (2), for example, misses an IKEA, which is not present in all of Drenthe. Jessica also highlights that she has difficulty finding find fun places to go out in the region. Interestingly Iris (2), all participants from stadia 3, and Emmy (4) state that, even though they do not use these facilities themselves, they wish for the youth to have good nightlife venues again. This shows that they care about these needs for the younger generation. Other entertainment venues and activities are also mentioned. For example, the old cinema that once had a place in the town is missed by multiple participants.

The basic facilities in the villages are characterised by minimalism, but the participants are positive that they are still in place. Jessica (1) mentions a supermarket, and a swimming pool that is getting subsidized by the municipality. Diane (2) states that, even though there is a store en some other facilities, some people think that the offer of facilities and sports is not diverse. Both Yorick and Priscilla (3) mention that the local store closed, which negatively impacted their liveability.

Priscilla, however, does like that a baker visits her village every week and that a cafeteria and multiple associations for sports and children are in place. Piet admits that that a store in his village would not be profitable, but still wishes for one. These villagers highlight that they make use of the facilities in Coevorden. However, supermarkets would be too much centred in the town itself. An example is the EKS square, where large store chains are clustered together, which is also not corresponding with municipal legislation as these are not in the town centre.

Regarding modes of transport and infrastructure, public transport receives much attention by participants from stadia 1 to 4, while the retired participants do not mention it. The train connection between Zwolle and Emmen is well received by most participants that live in the town. Bus connectivity is mostly negatively received, with the exception of Iris (2), who does mention that fallout of busses is inevitable. Raven (1) states that the buss connectivity is lacking within the town, as there are not many bus stops. She cannot visit her parents by bus, for example. Multiple participants from villages also state a clear dissatisfaction regarding public transport possibilities. Jessica (1), Diane (2) and Yorick (3) find their options lacking, stating their reliance on the car, while Priscilla (3) is positive about the public transport options for her village. However, she mentions that discussions were in place about the removal of the bus line, which would reduce her village's liveability. Connectivity by public transport to other regions is also less received. Emmy (4) states that the public transport connection with Groningen is bad, and Jessica (1) mentions that she has difficulty visiting her friends by public transport:

> "If I want to meet up with my friends from my old town, and we want to drink a glass of wine, well, then you do actually want to travel by public transport. But then I would have to travel for two hours, instead of less than one hour by car". – Jessica, stadia 1.

Other modes of transport are positively received, by participants from all stadia of life. Cycling within town is a great means of transport, and Priscilla (3) and Diane (2) state that cycling connections with their village are good. Car connectivity is characterized by being easy to travel and well connected to other regions. For example, Linda (5) states that the fact that there is no butcher anymore is no problem at all, because she visits "a delicious butchery" just across the German border. Piet (5), however, does state that he is negatively affected by several infrastructural projects in the area, making travel by car much harder. His village would also not be well connected.

Parking is also mentioned by Raven (1), Diane (2), Roos (3) and Bernhard (5). It is positive that parking is still for free in Coevorden. However, these four participants all highlight that not enough parking places exist right now, or are lacking in quality. Sufficient parking spaces on top of the local indoor shopping centre exist, but the driveway would be dangerous. A large parking lot next to the public pool compensates for people who are able to walk a certain distance. However, Bernhard is critical about elderly who cannot easily visit the centre, as all 50 parking lots next to the central market will be sacrificed for redevelopments.

Digital aspects did not get much attention from the participants, when they were asked about it. Some general remarks about different providers were made, online shopping, and Yorick was critical about the municipality taking a long time to install an electric car charge pole in his neighbourhood.

Health and wellbeing

Healthcare is generally well received, and are mentioned by most of the participants. The facilities for healthcare are centred in the town of Coevorden, in one large location where all healthcare related expertise is present. All participants are mostly positive that the quality has increased, and that it is still possible to visit these facilities in the municipality:

> "Listen, the outpatient clinic is still here, X-ray is still here, everything is still here. The hospital might have physically left, but all the necessary facilities are still present in the care centre. [...] You don't need to travel to Hardenberg. Often, when a doctor wants to make an appointment, I tell them: In Coevorden, please!" – Linda, stadia 5.

Raven (1), Priscilla (3) and Bernhard (5) also see this as a quality of the town. They do, however, mention that they are sometimes not positive about how different kinds of general practitioners work, but are nonetheless positive about these facilities. Priscilla stresses that in healthcare, she hopes that the importance will be on the people, and not on the jurisprudence. Participants also highlight that with larger healthcare demands, they are also content with traveling to the hospitals in Emmen or Hardenberg. Most village inhabitants mentioned that healthcare facilities are well connected to their villages, or are present within the village. Bernhard (5) is concerned that this quality will decrease in the future, as he fears that the rejuvenation of the municipal employees will result in less attention towards the needs and wishes of the elderly.

Regarding sports, participants mention that sports facilities are present in their town or village. In the town of Coevorden, a large amount of different kinds of sports are available and health related sports are stimulated by the municipality. Iris (2) reflects upon how these sports associations are very important for youth, as they would have nothing to do in the region without them. Emmy (4), is concerned that due to lesser economic position, people might not be able to do much about eating healthy and sports. In the villages, the participants that sports associations are well received, but are also characterized by minimalism. This is compensated by the facilities in the town or elsewhere in the municipality. Jessica, however, does feel that this would not resolve her problem of getting to know more people in her village.

Personal development

For personal development, a clear devotion is perceived by participants from stadia of life 2. This is logical, as these two participants are both raising children. Diane connects liveability towards her children, the schools, the offer of sports for them, and the kind of people that are living in the village. Iris thinks that for smaller children a lot is being organized, and playgrounds are great to play. However, the youth is being kept out of these activities, which she sees as problematic. She therefore thinks the youth need more activities, and places where they can voice themselves. Interestingly, Diane states that in her village, children are actually getting a lot of attention, and many associations exist for their wishes and needs. Next to the two participants with children, In general, participants think that the municipality is a great place for children to grow up.

Facilities such as libraries are still present in both the town and multiple villages, and initiatives like an experience garden are also mentioned by participants from multiple stadia of life. The qualities of playgrounds and green environments are mentioned by all participants from stadia 1 and 2. Diane (2) specifically states that there is a playground association in her village. However, certain playgrounds need some upgrading, and Raven (1) mentions a lack of playgrounds around the town centre. Interestingly, some general statements are made that there would also be differences between town and village children, regarding their manners and activities. Both Emmy (4) en Bernhard (5) also highlight that in certain areas, less fortune children would grow up with difficult living conditions.

Regarding education, the participants are in general positive regarding the education chances in the region. There is a wide range of primary schools available in the town of Coevorden, and every village also has one primary school. The two parents from stadia 2 highlight that they are positive about the quality of the primary schools their children attend. Iris also states that the municipality arranges the needed help truly well. Regarding middle schools, there is a sufficient offer, which are centred in larger settlements. The town of Coevorden has one middle school, and other middle schools are easily reachable by train, if necessary. Diane, however, as a village inhabitant, dislikes that her children have to cycle far to attend middle school. Priscilla and Yorick (3) are dissatisfied by certain characteristics from middle schools. Yorick mentions that children were told that people with practical education were less important, while Priscilla mentions that certain promises were not kept regarding educational path options. After middle school, many opportunities and facilities for higher education in Zwolle and Emmen, which is doable by public transport. For students wanting to study in Groningen, it gets much harder to attend university.

For aspects related to talent, multiple respondents from different stadia of life mentioned the closure of the local music school, which is seen as a loss for people's chances to learn to play an instrument. Jessica (2) mentions that there is an alternative, as in public building de Raveleijn children are able to learn a music instrument or some other kind of art for half a year, which is free for everyone. In villages this is also compensated, as Piet mentions that his village has its own music association and Diane states that bottom-up associations are doing activities regarding talent and culture. The opinions about the museums are opposed to each other. Some are proud while others find it lacking. However, the theatre's return is positively received. Next to this, some cultural activities are being organized thorough the year, which are also differently received.

4.3 Comparison between results

There are many occasions where participants from different stadia of life relate to one another, in regards to their liveability. However, as mentioned earlier, this study is not about providing hard facts. Results here should be considered as how twelve participants from different stadia of life perceived their liveability, to find leads for how perceptions and policies relate to one another. When the results are compared, however, interesting similarities and differences between participants from stadia of life, and its relation towards aspects from regional and municipal legislation are found.

Demographic decline was not perceived by any participant. However, there was a division that participants from stadia 1, 2 and 3 were more likely to hesitate with rejecting demographic decline, while participants from stadia 4 and 5 rejected the possibility completely. This is in line with the more recent policy documents, where a shift from possible shrinkage to a focus on small growth in population is estimated. The municipality highlights that people are moving into the municipality, and there needs to be enough room for the current inhabitants too. Characteristic is the mention from younger stadiums of life that youth would move away from Coevorden, while other people would replace them. Some of the older participants contradict this, by stating that younger inhabitants stay or come back to the municipality. The municipality, however, focuses on holding onto young people, and having a fair distribution of both the youth and new westerners. As relocation of younger inhabitants towards more vibrant locations is a main cause for shrinkage (Gieling & Haartsen, 2017; Dieleman, 2016; Nefs et al., 2013; Rijksoverheid, n.d.), this is seen as a fitting course of action. This suggests that the municipality is giving attention towards possible future estimators of shrinkage, by making the environment as attractive as possible for younger inhabitants.

Survivability gets attention by housing conditions, economic position and safety. Interesting is how participants from different stadia of life reflect on the position of the youth on the housing market, while younger participants mentioned elderly homes in their stories about liveability. The municipality mentions housing all age groups, and encompasses innovative types of dwellings, youth- and elderly homes, and stimulation of the housing market as key items. Both the participants and the legislation relate to aspects regarding affordability and social rent. The difference in sentiment towards the fitting job offers between younger and older participants is also remarkable, where participants from the younger stadia of life are generally less positive, when compared to the more elderly participants. Both regional and municipal legislation puts emphasize in improving working conditions, which relates more to the perceptions from younger participants. Regarding safety, the participants from stadia 2 and 3 were more concerned in regards to safety aspects related to drugs, which could also be related to the fact that having children living at home is more common. Other participants were more focused on physical aspects, and asylum policies.

For the town of Coevorden, a general positive sentiment towards de redevelopment of historical sites and the market area is mentioned, while new buildings and some other spatial developments are received more negatively. Multiple participants also highlight spatial aspects that relate to less liveability for certain target groups, such as disabled people. Core values expressed in regional legislation is that everyone should be able to participate in society, which means that further research to this quality would be recommended. Furthermore, it is interesting how the quality of the buildings were commonly mentioned by participants from older stadia of life, where younger participants did not react to it that much. Most of the respondents from both settlement types highlight the peacefulness of their living environment. This is in line with the work from Nefs et al. (2013), who states that aspects such as green and peacefulness are important to elderly liveability. However, participants from younger stadia of life also saw this as strengths.

I would argue that the policies and interviews corelate with each other, as the elements from both results chapters are focused on the same subjects and sentiments. Other aspects that were perceived by the older stadiums of life, related to tensions between citizens, is also perceived by regional legislation as point of attention.

Associations contribute to social connectivity in both the villages and the town. However, participants from stadia 3 to 5, mentioned more negative examples of how social structures in the municipality would influence their day to day life, relating to concepts as individualism and othering. The participants from these stadia also had more experience with doing voluntary work, which is seen as important in both regional and municipal policies. In this chapter, the notion of a cultural tensions between villagers and townsfolk, together with communication with the municipality, is also mentioned. Cultural tensions here could be influenced by different urban and rural liveability standards (De Haan et al., 2014). I would argue that the municipality is aware of this phenomenon, as the new environmental visions do divide the municipality in multiple regions, to give more attention to the rural regions, instead of generalizing legislation for a shared vision. Next to this, the municipality stresses the importance of creating more connection between citizens, companies and the municipality.

The daily facility needs are met for all participants. No relation between different age related perceptions was hinted, with the small exception that retired participants were all content with the offer of stores. However, participants from stadia 1 to 3 mention traveling towards large settlements for their shopping. What was interesting to note, is that participants from stadia 2 to 4 all cared about the younger generation having good entertainment venues, next to facilities for themselves. Much emphasize is put on the public transport by most participants from stadia 1 to 4, while the retired participants mostly focus on car connectivity. However, most other participants also mention car connectivity and cycling. Parking is also an item mentioned by multiple townsfolk participants. When comparing the interview results with the policy analysis, what is most remarkable is the lack of specific attention to youth facilities, such as facilities for nightlife and fun activities for the older children. This is a recurring theme in the interview results, from multiple age groups, and did not get specific attention in municipal and regional legislation. This would be wise to reflect upon, as unattractive environments increase the shrinking of the region (Nefs et al., 2013), and youthful inhabitants could already be leaving the region.

Regarding health and wellbeing, more generic answers are given by participants from all stadia of life. The main facility for healthcare is positively received in general, and healthcare options in villages are also in place, which is in line with statements from both regional and municipal policies. This is interesting to note, as regional legislation states that healthcare facilities should be improved. For sports, many participants highlight the kinds of sports that have a place in the municipality, which are mostly situated in the town of Coevorden. This could be a point of attention for the municipality, as they do state that sports associations are an important estimator for social connectivity in rural regions. Healthy behavior, like cycling, is mentioned by the participants too, and the policies did put focus on stimulating this.

For personal development, both participants from stadia 2 clearly stressed the importance of aspects that are important to children growing up, which can be related to them being parents. Playgrounds are also severely mentioned by the two youngest stadiums of life. Regarding education and talent, participants in general mentioned the quality, proximity and availability of facilities related to these concepts.

Primary schools are well received, while middle schools have remarks on their quality and proximity. Higher education in Zwolle and Emmen also gained positive remarks. These aspects are largely considered in both regional and municipal legislation too. The return of the theatre and the loss of the music school are well mentioned aspects. As the municipality states that fitting cultural institutions should be in place, the municipality could reflect upon their positionality regarding stimulating existing musical associations more.

Interesting is how this study suggests that liveability is both a personal, as well as a social concept. The participants showed that they cared for aspects that were not relevant for themselves, but for other stadia of life within the municipality. The position for youth on the housing market, elderly homes and facilities for nightlife are mentioned by participants from different stadia of life, who did not need these aspects for their own liveability. Other examples are how Raven stressed the safety of blind people in the shared space, Emmy's notion of non-inclusive street designs for handicapped people, and Bernhards concerns for the othering of international children. As liveability is about answering certain needs that the residents ask of their living environment (Dieleman, 2016; De Haan et al., 2014; Ruth & Franklin, 2014; Werner, 2005), the findings from this study suggests that it is not only the needs of the resident in perspective, but also about other people's needs. Werner (2005) did stress that liveability is about the relation between people too, which in that sense underlines this statement. Therefore, this is an example of how liveability is not completely focused on the individual, but also on the connection between people.

Altogether, I would argue that municipal and regional legislation is quite reflective and inclusive when it is compared to the interview results. The aspects from the liveability framework that were relevant to the policy analysis were mostly topics that have been commented on during the interviews. The main aspect that could use extra attention by the municipality, if these twelve opinions are to be considered, is that structurally something missing for the younger generations, regarding their housing needs, nightlife and other activities. Participants from other stadia of life would also like to see more of this. As this aspect is less relevant in the existing policies, this could be an advise to consider in new legislations. A further reflection on this could contribute to better liveability conditions, which decreases the chance of demographic decline.

5. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have researched the question: <u>How do people from different stadia of life perceive their future liveability in a region that is expected to decline in population, and how do these different perceptions align to municipal and regional policies?</u> I studied this by researching the relevant of liveability, demographic decline and stadia of life, followed by a case study. In this case study, a policy analysis was conducted, and a first exploration was executed towards perceptions on liveability by participants who lived in the municipality.

By studying literature, I find that liveability is hard to define (Paul & Sen, 2020; Leby & Hashim, 2014) and difficult to measure, as scholars important their own values into their liveability definitions (Paul & Sen, 2020; Ruth & Franklin, 2014). Therefore, to limit personal bias, I created a framework for liveability by studying several academic works. This framework was based on the principles that liveability is about the relation between human and environment, in present and presumably future context, and it would be measurable by researching multiple related elements, aspects or needs. The framework contains six liveability pillars, namely survivability, environmental aspects, relations and culture, facilities and accessibility, health and wellbeing, and personal development.

In this study, I find that liveability is both a personal and a social concept. Participant do not only relate to their specific personal needs, but needs for other people living in the municipality were also stressed. This was done for other stadia of life, disabled people and inhabitants with a lesser economic position. This was also suggested by Warner (2005), and is relevant for future liveability studies. Even though it was not possible to learn about characteristics from groups of stadia of life, the liveability framework did help with finding interesting relations between participants that need further research.

Demographic decline was not estimated by any participant, while younger and older participants had conflicting statements about decline in specifically youthful inhabitants. However, youth leaving is a phenomenon that happens in shrinking and anticipation regions (Gieling & Haartsen, 2017; Dieleman, 2016; Nefs et al., 2013; Rijksoverheid, n.d.). The participants also highlight the phenomenon of older, mostly western people moving into the region, which relates to the work from Nefs et al. (2013), and this would counter shrinkage. The municipality states that they focus on creating a fitting environment for both target groups. However, multiple participants from different stadia of life also stress how there is structurally something missing for the younger generations, regarding their nightlife and activities. Other age groups would also like more of these activities, and as this aspect is less relevant in the existing policies, this could be an advise to consider in new legislations. It is important for the municipality to keep monitoring this, as holding onto the younger generations should reduce the chances of demographic decline.

The answers given by the participants mostly related to the regional and municipal legislation. Therefore, the municipal and regional legislation are perceived as quite reflective and inclusive when it is compared to the answers from the participants. The aspects from the liveability framework that were relevant to the policy analysis were mostly topics that also got attention during the interviews.

This study also suggests that the workfield is less received by younger participants, suggesting that the current sector should research if it is fitting for all stadia of life. Drug usage was mentioned by participants from stadiums of life 2 and 3. The reason why is unclear, but could be related to them having children at home. Participants from older stadia of life were also more critical regarding relations and culture, as they perceived hardships in communication and voluntary work. A struggle between values of the town of Coevorden and the villages surrounding is also mentioned, and there is some resistance against the municipal way of communication too. These characteristics might play a role for the liveability of certain stadia of life, and the municipality is suggested to focus on these aspects more in their legislation.

How Van der Plas et al. (2015) relates that elderly relate their liveability to the direct living environment and neighbourhood environment, I do not find the same results in this study. What Van der Plas et al. (2015) consider as direct home environment liveability, are not that explicitly mentioned by the elderly participants from this study. This might be due to secondary aspects, for example economic position. This is, however, an assumption as no hard results from this study occur. However, components from the neighbourhood environment liveability came back in this study as relevant. Relations and culture, together with facilities and accessibility were components that are important to the participants of this study, which is also highlighted by Van der Plas et al. (2015). Healthcare was mentioned several times by the elderly participants. Foglia et al. (2023) highlighted that the proximity of facilities, and accessibility, together with social cohesion were important for elderly liveability, which is in line with the perceptions from the retired stadia of life. I would also argue that this study is in line with Mensinga (2021), who states that liveability for young adults relates to the social components, housing and accessibility, and other physical components are important for the stimulation of social contact.

Therefore, I conclude that the research question can be answered, by stating that participants are in general perceiving their liveability well. Differences and agreements exists between different stadia of life, regarding how they perceive their liveability. What is most intriguing is that liveability is also a social concept, as people stress the needs of others too. No demographic decline is estimated directly by participants, but mainly younger participants do note a decrease in younger inhabitants. The regional and municipal policies are largely covering the aspects mentioned during the interviews, but advise is to study possibilities for stimulating fitting entertainment facilities, to keep younger people in the municipality.

For further research, I advise to study the concept of shared liveability deeper, to look out for both personal liveability aspects, and ones that are shared or specifically wished for someone else. I would also advise to execute a study for children specifically, as this age group is not taken into account in this study. It is assumed that they look different upon their living environments than adults do. I also recommend to distinguish younger children and teenagers in such a study, because of their difference in development. Next to this, it would be recommended to execute such a study in a shrinking region, to look at if demographic decline is still experienced there, and if and how these results differ from the ones in this thesis.

5.1 Discussion

To discuss the content of this study, I want to address certain choices that were made in this thesis. First, even though I took multiple demographic factors into consideration when recruiting respondents, I consider some characteristics of the participants as not completely inclusive. The majority of the respondents were women, and for some stadia of life, no participants lived in a village. This was a result from the methodology I chose. As random sampling and snowball sampling were used as strategies, the focus was less on these aspects, and more on finding participants that were connected to the municipality. This could not completely be corrected at the end. Therefore, it is questionable if the answers from these participants align completely with municipal legislation, but this was not the goal of this study.

Second, as was stated in the methodology, it can be argued that a quantitative approach was more desirable to find hard answers. I did not choose to do so, because of the fact that I wanted qualitative answers, how people felt and what their drives were. I argue that, if I had chosen a quantitative approach, the social dimension to liveability, caring about other groups, would not have come to light. The information that was found in this study can be used for further research too, because they do suggest certain patterns.

Lastly, the interview guide, and mainly the second part of it, could be interpret as too structured. With the questions from the second round, people were giving leads on aspects that were relevant for municipal legislation. I stress that the first round of questions was of greater importance, to first highlight the most important personal information of the respondent. However, due to liveability being such a large and broad concept, it was chosen to do a more structured second round. This gave some new insights into certain aspects, that helped with understanding certain core aspects of liveability.

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Appendix 1: Overarching themes regarding liveability

Overarching themes	Global Liveability Index (Paul & Sen, 2020)	De Haan et al. (2014)	Namazi-Rad et al. (2012)	Leby & Hashim (2010)	Vergunst (2003)	Kevin Lynch (1998) + Balsas (2004, cited in Leby & Hashim, 2010)
Survivability	Stability	Sustenance & livelihood Shelter Safety	Job House Services	Employment opportunities Number of crime Number of accidents	Local economy	Essential human-related physical restrictions and demands Vitality (Sustenance and safety) Fit Viability
Environmental aspects	Culture and environment	Beauty & Pleasure Comfort & Convenience	House Entertainment Neighbour-hood	Environmental quality Open spaces Maintenance of built environment	Physical environment	Essential human-related physical restrictions and demands Vitality (Safety & consonance) Sense (quality of space, identity) Fit Access Control
relations and culture	Culture and environment	Interaction & social cohesion Culture & Identity	Neighbour-hood	Behaviour of neighbours Community life and social contact Sense of place	Local citizens Cohesion	Culture of the place Sense (experience through culture and personal aspects)
Facilities and accessibility	Infrastructure	Comfort & Convenience	Services Transport Entertainment	Availability and proximity Accessibility	Facilities	Access Fit
Health and wellbeing	Healthcare	Health Security Ecological health Comfort & Convenience	Services Entertainment	Feeling of safety	-	Control
Personal development	Education	Knowledge & beliefs Purpose & expression Influence & respect Freedom & autonomy	Services	-	-	-

Appendix 2: Interview guide

Welkom

  I.   Doel van het gesprek uitleggen.
  II. Uitleg werkwijze (half uur als uitgangspunt) en ondertekenen toestemmingsforumlier.
       a. Vragen of je het gesprek mag opnemen vanaf hier.
       b. Meldt dat diegene volledig anoniem zal blijven, op zijn of haar leeftijdsgroep na, en dat de opname achteraf zal worden verwijderd.

Eerste ronde: Persoonlijke introductie

  I.   Zou je wat over jezelf willen vertellen?
       a. Ben je geboren in de regio?
       b. Hoe lang woon je al in de gemeente Coevorden?
       c. Wat doe je zoal in het dagelijks leven?
       d. Werk je hier in de buurt?

Tweede ronde: Hoofdvragen

  II. Wat komt als eerste bij je op bij het begrip leefbaarheid?
  III. Hoe is het om in de gemeente Coevorden te wonen?
       a. Wat zie je als kwaliteiten van Coevorden?
       b. Wat vind je mindere aspecten van Coevorden?
       c. Is dit verandert met de tijd dat je hier in de gemeente woont?
  IV. Speelt bevolkingskrimp voor jouw gevoel een rol in de gemeente?
       a. Verwacht je dat deze krimp een invloed heeft op de leefbaarheid?

Derde ronde: Aanvullende vragen (Deze worden gesteld als het aspect niet in de reflectie van de geïnterviewde voorkomt)

  I.   Overleven
       a. Wat vind je van de werkgelegenheid in de gemeente?
           i. Hoe zijn de economische kansen voor mensen in de gemeente?
       b. Woon je prettig in Coevorden?
           i. Wat vind je van het huizenaanbod in de gemeente?
       c. Voel je je veilig op straat?
           i. Wat vind je van de veiligheid in de gemeente?

  II. Gebiedsaspecten
       a. Wat vind je van de openbare ruimte in (Coevorden/naam van dorp)?
       b. Wat vind je van de natuur buiten de stad/het dorp?
       c. Wat vindt u van de gebouwen in de omgeving?

III. Relaties en cultuur
    a. Ben je betrokken met je buren o andere mensen in Coevorden?
    b. Hoe is het sociaal contact met bewoners?
    c. Hoe verbonden voel je je met de gemeente Coevorden?
    d. Bestaat er iets als een typische Coevordenaar?

IV. Faciliteiten en bereikbaarheid
    a. In hoeverre zijn de voorzieningen passend bij jouw wensen?
    b. Hoe is de verbinding met de fiets, auto, met het openbaar vervoer of wandelend in de gemeente?
    c. Hoe vind je dat de regio, digitaal en infrastructureel, verbonden is met andere gemeenten en verder?

V. Zorg en welzijn
    a. Hoe vind je het aanbod van sport in de regio?
    b. Hoe vind je de voorzieningen voor zorg en welzijn in de regio?

VI. Persoonlijke ontwikkeling
    a. Hoe vind je het onderwijs in de regio?
    b. Wat vind je van het talent in de regio?
    c. Hoe vind je dat het gaat met de kinderen in de regio?

* U heeft dit aspect niet meegenomen in uw originele kijk op leefbaarheid. Wat is de reden hiervoor?

    a. Is dit anders dan vroeger? Hoe ontwikkelt zich dat voor jouw gevoel in de toekomst?

Ronde vier: Navraag:

VII. Heb je nog iets toe te voegen?
VIII. Heb je nog vragen?

Appendix 3: Coding scheme

	ONDERDEEL	UITLEG	GERELATEERDE CODES
OVERLEVEN **(1)**	Woonomstandigheid	De respondent praat over zaken die relateren aan de eigen woonsituatie, of die van een andere doelgroep uit Coevorden.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Economische positie	De respondent praat over zaken die relateren aan de eigen economische positie, of die van een andere doelgroep uit Coevorden.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Veiligheid	De respondent praat over of diegene zich veilig voelt op straat, gebeurtenissen die iemand in gevaar brachten of juist hebben geholpen om iemand veilig te houden.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Verandering met de tijd	De respondent praat over hoe een bepaald aspect met de tijd is verandert, of hoe deze mogelijk verder gaat/ zou moeten veranderen.	
GEBIEDS-ASPECTEN **(2)**	Openbare ruimte	De respondent haalt kenmerken van een openbaar gebied in de eigen kern aan, die van belang voor hem of haar zijn. Dit kunnen zowel positieve als negatieve kenmerken zijn.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Natuur	De respondent haalt kenmerken van een openbaar gebied buiten de eigen kern aan, bestempeld met een landschappelijk karakter, die van belang voor hem of haar zijn. Dit kunnen zowel positieve als negatieve kenmerken zijn.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Gebouwen	De respondent haalt kenmerken van gebouwen in de eigen kern aan, die van belang voor hem of haar zijn. Dit kunnen zowel positieve als negatieve kenmerken zijn.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Verandering met de tijd	De respondent praat over hoe een bepaald aspect met de tijd is verandert, of hoe deze mogelijk verder gaat/ zou moeten veranderen.	
RELATIES EN CULTUUR **(3)**	Betrokkenheid	De respondent geeft aan zich in te zetten voor de eigen straat, kern of de hele gemeente, of dat diegene veel waarde hecht aan mensen die dit doen.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Sociaal contact	De respondent praat over de manier hoe men met elkaar omgaat in de kern of gemeente, hoe het dagelijks.	• positief • neutraal • negatief

	Identiteit	De respondent geeft aan zich een onderdeel te voelen van de gemeente. Uitspraken worden gedaan over dat ze er al lang wonen, veel hebben meegemaakt en echt een onderdeel vormen van de maatschappij in de gemeente.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Verandering met de tijd	De respondent praat over hoe een bepaald aspect met de tijd is verandert, of hoe deze mogelijk verder gaat/ zou moeten veranderen.	
FACILITEITEN EN BEREIK-BAARHEID (4)	Voorzieningen	De respondent praat over de faciliteiten die aanwezig zijn in de woonkern en omgeving, en/of geeft hier een mening over.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Transportmiddelen	De respondent geeft voorbeelden hoe het vervoer met verschillende middelen van transport binnen de gemeente en omgeving wordt ervaren.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Digitaal	De respondent geeft voorbeelden hoe met de internetconnectie of andere technische bereikbaarheid is.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Infrastructuur	De respondent geeft voorbeelden hoe infrastructuur binnen de gemeente en de connecties met elders buiten de gemeente wordt ervaren.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Verandering met de tijd	De respondent praat over hoe een bepaald aspect met de tijd is verandert, of hoe deze mogelijk verder gaat/ zou moeten veranderen.	
ZORG EN WELZIJN (5)	Sport	De respondent heeft het over zelf sporten bij bepaalde voorzieningen, en geeft hier een mening over. De respondent kan ook praten over sportfaciliteiten over het algemeen, en hoe deze worden ervaren.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Gezondheidszorg	De respondent heeft het over gezondheidsvoorzieningen binnen de gemeente, of elders toegankelijk. De respondent geeft hier zijn of haar mening over.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Verandering met de tijd	De respondent praat over hoe een bepaald aspect met de tijd is verandert, of hoe deze mogelijk verder gaat/ zou moeten veranderen.	
PERSOONLIJKE ONTWIKKELING (6)	Onderwijs	De respondent praat over hoe het onderwijs binnen de gemeente is geregeld, en geeft hier een mening over.	• positief • neutraal • negatief

	Talent	De respondent praat over hoe talent (denk aan muziek, kunst en andere vormen van cultuur) zich binnen de gemeente ontwikkelt, en geeft hier een mening over.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Opgroeien	De respondent praat over aspecten die van belang voor specifiek kinderen zijn om, buiten het onderwijs om, gezond en wel op te groeien en wat en geven hier een mening over.	• positief • neutraal • negatief
	Verandering met de tijd	De respondent praat over hoe een bepaald aspect met de tijd is verandert, of hoe deze mogelijk verder gaat/ zou moeten veranderen.	
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS *(7)*	Bevolkingskrimp	De respondent geeft antwoord op de hoofdvraag hoe hij of zij mogelijke bevolkingskrimp in de regio ervaart.	• Positief • Neutraal • Negatief
	Verhuisstromen van en naar Coevorden	De respondent merkt uit zichzelf aan dat er bepaalde verhuisstromen spelen rondom de demografische ontwikkelingen van de gemeente.	
	Spanningen tussen stad Coevorden en platteland	De respondent merkt op dat er verschillen zijn tussen stad en platteland, en dat dit spanningen oplevert bij bepaalde besluitvormingstrajecten.	
	Specifieke doelgroep wordt genoemd	Er wordt een fenomeen gerelateerd aan een specifieke doelgroep genoemd.	

Toestemmingsformulier thesisonderzoek naar de kijk op leefbaarheid in Coevorden bij vier leeftijdsgroepen

Voor mijn thesis onderzoek ik verschillende interpretaties over leefbaarheid, in een regio die in het verleden is bestempeld als een regio waar afname in het aantal inwoners kan plaatsvinden. Mijn doel is om te onderzoeken of en hoe de mening verschilt bij verschillende leeftijdsgroepen, wat hun kijk is op de huidige en toekomstige leefbaarheid van de gemeente Coevorden. Hiervoor houd ik interviews met een even groot aantal deelnemers voor vier leeftijdsgroepen. De antwoorden van de vier leeftijdsgroepen worden met elkaar vergeleken, en daarnaast ook met beleidsdocumenten van onder andere de gemeente Coevorden.

De interviews zullen worden verwerkt in tekst, en hierbij wordt rekening gehouden met het anoniem houden van de persoonlijke gegevens. De antwoorden uit het interview zullen zodanig worden verwerkt, dat deze niet meer naar jou te herleiden zijn. Er zal gebruik worden gemaakt van een pseudoniem voor jouw naam, als het ware een schuilnaam, en persoonlijke informatie die tijdens het interview wordt gegeven zal onherleidbaar worden gemaakt. Ook zullen de interviewopnames na het verwerken in tekst worden verwijderd.

Als onderdeel van het onderzoek zou ik jou graag interviewen. Het is bij (wetenschappelijk) onderzoek gebruikelijk om een toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen. Je kunt hieronder aangeven waar je wel of niet mee instemt. De output van het interview zal worden gebruikt voor mijn master thesis, wat inhoudt dat het zal worden gepubliceerd door de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. Daarnaast worden de resultaten ook gepresenteerd.

Ik ga ermee akkoord om deel te nemen aan dit interview o JA o NEE

Ik geef toestemming voor het opnemen van het interview o JA o NEE

Ik behoor tot de leeftijdsgroep o 19-34

o 35-49

o 50-65

o 66+

Datum:

Naam + handtekening deelnemer   **Naam + handtekening interviewer**

Appendix 5: Liveability pillars mentioned in policy analysis

	Survivability	*Environmental aspects*	*Relations and culture*	*Facilities and accessibility*	*Health and wellbeing*	*Personal development*
Regio Deal Zuid- en oost Drenthe	Non-fitting jobs; high un-employment; Inheritable poverty; Reduced housing prices; Traditional industry; Dated living conditions; High ownership; Improving economy; Low-cost housing; sustainable improvements.	Popular living environments.	Leisure activities.	Reduction in amenities; Accessibility for healthcare; Less facilities ; More travel; Improvements for accessibility; Digitalization in recreational economy.	Less healthy population; Increased needs healthcare; Improvements for fitting amenities for healthcare; Well-educated professional organization; Reduction for youth services.	Less high educated people; Hold onto talented people; Re-education; Children above average IQ restrained from following higher education.
Visie op krimp en leefbaarheid 2016-2020	Economic power; Work capabilities; Joblessness; Income; Future Proof housing.	People less willing to invest in neighborhood liveability; Reduced region attractiveness; Quality living environment;	Reduced community feeling; Changing demographics; More elderly; More refugees; Plead for equal participation; Social dichotomy; Social detachment.	Accessibility; Accessible amenities; Healthcare accessibility;	Health and sports capabilities; Bad health; Increasing general health and vitality; Availability and quality healthcare; Movement; Accessible and qualitative sport activities.	Education grades; Education quality; Literacy; Connection with and accessibility towards work field; Anticipation on shrinkage.
Uitvoeringsagenda krimp en leefbaarheid 2019 Drenthe	Quality of dwellings; Demolishment; Renewal; Sustainable adjustments; Lower worth of existing houses; No fitting work; Need for better economy and living conditions; Need for fitting economic environment; Manufacturing industry.	Attractive environment; Qualities of public spaces; Demolishment; Renewal; Focus on multifunctional locations	Inclusivity; Same chances.	Accessibility; Amenities; Multifunctional locations; Physical and digital accessibility; National and international connectivity.	Average bad health; Fitting healthcare; Sports.	Equal chances; Educational opportunities.
Hoofdlijnen-document Omgevingsvisie Coevorden 2020	Reduction in youthful inhabitants; Creating fitting dwellings; Life-cycle resistant dwelling;	Pleasant living area; Peacefulness; Having enough space; Being clean; Being safe to use;	Loneliness; Bottom-up community feeling; Stimulating to meet;	Appropriate scale; Most important facilities in direct environment;	Healthy aging; Movement; Healthcare compatibility; Living independently;	Children's development; Fitting schools; Fitting sports associations; Fitting cultural institutions.

	Housing all age groups; Safety; Safe living environments; Safe traffic; Maakindustrie; Recreational sector jobs.	Aesthetically nice villages; Well-maintained villages; Greenery; New aesthetically fitting dwellings; Agrarian region; Empty buildings; Compact city centre.	Opportunities for working together; Rootedness; Attachment.	Preservation of existing offer No division between amenities and inhabitants; Accessibility; Car traffic; Public transport; Limited travel delays; New ways of travel; Unmotorized travel; National and international accessibility; Experience of city centre.	Living in personal living environment.	
Woonvisie Coevorden 2021	More people moving into the municipality; Affordability; Housing needs; Redistribution of social rent; Relocating outsiders; Offering sufficient housing to existing residents.	Area-specific approach; New neighbourhoods that invite meeting, sporting and healthy behaviour.	Stimulate social contact.	-	Living and healthcare; Stimulate healthy behaviour.	Personal growth.
Omgevingsvisie Coevorden 2023: Vision	Dwellings: - Lacking existing offer - Focus on creating new dwellings - Fitting - Available - Minimum 750 new homes - Both purchase and rent - Affordability - Stimulating flow in housing market - Innovative dwellings Economy: - Strong regional position - National and international collaborations - Work chances - Good settlement conditions for companies - Industry	Rural area: - Preserving historically important cultural landscape and quality of nature - Adapting into new biodiverse environment - Agricultural activity that attract tourists - Sustainable agricultural companies - Mix of farms, living, recreation, climate and energy Built environment: - Live in green environment - Heat stress - Preservation of the identity of the town, neighborhoods and villages	- Encouraging a community feeling - Preservation of existing traditions - A high sense of community to tackle loneliness - Segregation of the different age groups not aspired - Importance of meeting places in every village. - Traditions and meetings - Peoples' identity and rootedness - Connection between citizens, companies and municipality	Facilities: - Basic facilities nearby -Grocery stores part of liveable neighbour-hood - Main facilities grouped in larger centres - Town centre of Coevorden as main hub - Reducing vacancy - Catering industry around market, - Facilities for visitors Modes of transport - Public transport, car, walking and cycling connectivity - Connections safe, fast and qualitatively high	Healthcare: - General practitioner available for every citizen - Refurbishing empty farms to healthcare locations Healthy lifestyle: - Sports associations and accom-modations - Developing the walking and cycle network - Research to external effects on health	Children's development: - Accepting everyone - Education - Schools in liveable neighbour-hoods - School routes coordinated safely - Playgrounds important Talent: - Attention for museums and cultural projects

	- Recreational sector important Safety: - Traffic safety; - Criminality in rural area - New function for empty farms	The centre of Coevorden; - facilities - historical value - From shopping towards recreation - Refurbished train station		- New train connections towards Groningen and Germany - Improving public transport between larger and smaller settlements, by train and bus Infrastructure - Good cycle, walking paths and roads within municipality, and towards partner municipalities		
Omgevingsvisie Coevorden 2023: Area compasses	Working chances: - Manu-facturing industry Logistics - Recreation - Expansion of business parks through municipality - Using strengths of recreation sector, - Initiatives of agricultural recreation - Connecting catering facilities with new bicycle network - Boosting larger regional recreational landmarks Fitting dwellings: - Building new - Adapting the existing offer - Specific settlements chosen to expand - Only small developments within current boundaries for other villages - Largest expansion for Coevorden to improve image and regional position	Public space and buildings: - History key in town and rural redevelopment - The quality to reside in a place - Historical elements refurbished to increase attractiveness - Development shopping streets, train station, market and harbour - Different building periods neighbour-hoods Green: - Flora and fauna, water and earth - Vital neighbourhoods clean, pleasant, and green - Important green structures protected - Green areas used for playgrounds and recreation - Increase user and aesthetical quality - Protection and development of separation between nature and agriculture - Agriculture important for	Social contact: - The amount of community in certain villages and neighbourhoods - Club life contributes to rural social connectivity In town, the centre for social interact and a feel welcome - Collaboration with people Identity: - Stimulate sense of belonging by positioning personal qualities of the towns appearance Connectedness: - Diverse neighbourhoods where people are less connected - Providing services to improve social cohesion	Facilities: - Facility settlements - Primary focus on Coevorden - Troublesome condition in recent past - Collaboration between municipality, entrepreneurs and property owners - Mix of functions for town and rural area Modes of connectivity: - Bicycle accessibility - The cycling network and distance - Walking and cycling get priority over car in town. - Attention for car accessibility - Stimulating traffic flows for safety - New and improved infrastructure for better accessibility - Significant large roads, and their importance towards regional accessibility	Sports: - Health promotion by sports in open air - Redeveloping a lakeside nearby town - Fitting environments for sports in new green areas. Healthcare: - Facilities part of new vital neighbour-hoods	Personal development: - schools. - Education important - Focus on schools within the town of Coevorden - Stimulation of education and culture accessibility in neighbourhoods - Attention for less fortunate children Talent: - Museums - Cultural activities - In Dalen, activities contribute to its popularity and position

- Rebuilding former stores in town centre into fitting dwellings - building houses in connected villages for town's demand - Focus for youth dwellings exists and elderly homes - Municipality indent with stagnating plans - Attention for equal spread of less fortunate inhabitants in existing neighbour-hoods Safety: - Traffic safety	cultural landscape - The natural qualities important by settlement expansion