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NETHERLANDS

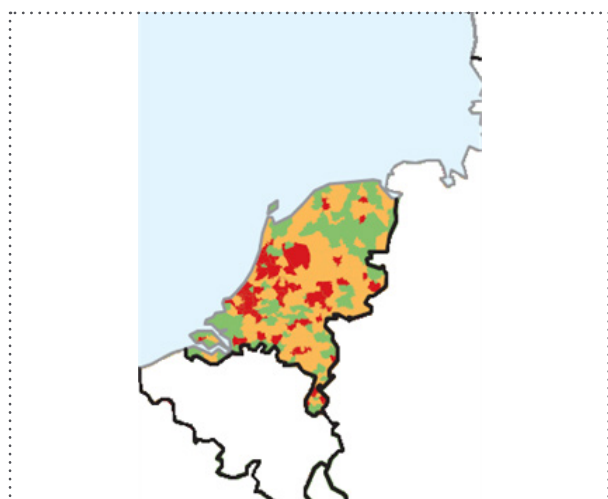
INSIGHT PAPER

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RURALITY (1)

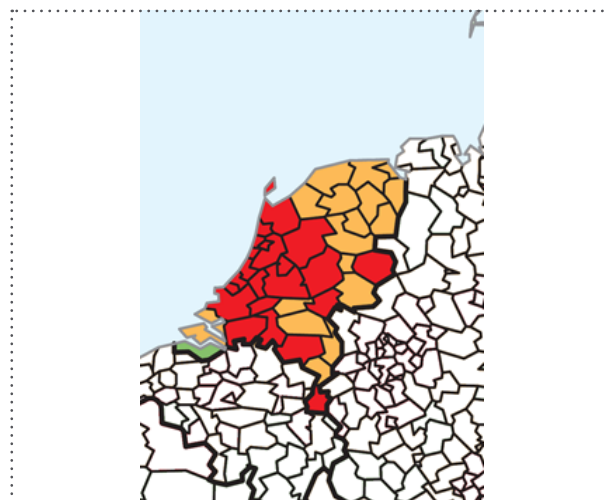
Degree of urbanisation for local administrative units level 2 (LAU2)



- Cities
- Towns and suburbs
- Rural Areas
- Data not available

Source: Eurostat, JRC and European Commission Directorate-General for Regional Policy, May 2016

Urban-rural typology for NUTS level 3 regions



- **Predominantly urban regions**
(rural population is less than 20% of the total population)
- **Intermediate regions**
(rural population is between 20% and 50% of the total population)
- **Predominantly rural regions**
(rural population is 50% or more of the total population)
- **Data not available**

Source: Eurostat, JRC, EFGS, REGIO-GIS, December 2016

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

56,1%

Share of people living in cities

34,1%

Share of people living in towns and suburbs

9,8%

Share of people living in rural areas

Source: Eurostat, 2017

GEOGRAPHY

The Netherlands is a country located mainly in North-western Europe. Together with three island territories in the Caribbean, it forms a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The European portion of the Netherlands consists of twelve provinces and borders Germany to the east, Belgium to the south, and the North Sea to the northwest, sharing maritime borders in the North Sea with Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Germany. The five largest cities in the Netherlands are Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Eindhoven. 'Netherlands' literally means 'lower countries', referring to its low land and flat geography, with only about 50% of its land exceeding 1 metre above sea level.

Most of the areas below sea level are the result of land reclamation beginning in the 16th century, resulting in large areas known as *polders* that amount to nearly 17% of the country's territory. With a population of 17.25 million living within a total area of roughly 41.500 square kilometres, of which the land area is 33.700 square kilometres, the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Key challenges are restructuring traditional state functions, the shift to a sustainable economy, and finding a balance between identity politics and globalization.

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RURALITY (2)

13%

Share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in rural areas, 2017

0.1%

Share of people aged 16 and over who reported unmet needs for health care in the previous 12 months due to expense, distance to travel or length of waiting list in rural areas, 2017

3.8%

Unemployment rate, persons aged 15–64, in rural areas, 2017

5.9%

Share of young people aged 18–24 neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) in rural areas, 2017

Source: Eurostat

NATIONAL POLICIES RELATING TO RURAL MOBILITY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

There is not a national mobility plan that sets quantitative objectives for the Dutch mobility system. Most mobility plans are made at the level of the provinces, there are plans available to reduce impact of the transport system. This mainly implies quantitative objectives concerning modal shift and or climate neutrality.

There is however a national vision document on public transport (PT) *"Contouren Toekomstbeeld 2040"*. This document has been made with the national Ministry, the different provinces and federations of transport providers. The text is now for approval in the Parliament. The vision is built around three themes, the power of PT, seamless from door to door and safe, sustainable and efficient PT. There is only little attention for rural public transport. The challenge of rural transport is recognised. Rural transport will be organised via multimodal and flexible transport.

There is some financing for rural mobility at the Dutch national or European level. The management of these programs is always done at lower administrative levels. They often concern regional trains and buses and/or kinds of demand responsive transport. National responsibility concerns only the main railway lines directly.

There are furthermore national plans or strategies that have an indirect impact on (rural) mobility; the national climate plan and the national policy strategy for infrastructure and spatial planning.

The **climate plan** contains an important chapter on mobility. The most important decisions of this plan are: From 2030 on, only zero emission passenger cars will be sold. Different measures to make this possible have been taken or are in preparation like the reinforcement of the electric network or a rethinking of the tax system. Also, for the transport of goods, the objective is to introduce zero emission vehicles.

Concerning PT, the sector agreement on zero emission vehicles has been integrated into the climate plan. From 2025 on, new buses will be only zero emission. From 2030 on, only zero emission buses will be in use. The climate plan still needs the approval of the Parliament.

The **objectives of the national policy strategy for infrastructure and spatial planning** is to make the Netherlands competitive, accessible and safe.

Concerning accessibility (in terms of the effort, expressed in time and costs per kilometer, that users have to make to travel from door to door) the general policy outline states that current accessibility is inadequate. The future mobility system will be robust and comprehensive. Therefore, it will feature multimodal hubs, offer more choice and have sufficient capacity to deal with projected increases in mobility in the medium (2028) and longer term (2040). User-driven growth in mobility will be facilitated. Here, too, the plan aims at adopting a comprehensive approach that enables tackling increasing mobility with spatial development.

The plan's ambition is for users to enjoy optimum co-modality by 2040, with good connections between the various networks via multimodal hubs (for passengers and freight), and close coordination of infrastructure and spatial development.

Another aim of this national strategy is to put spatial policy powers as much as possible at lower administrative levels, this means provinces and municipalities to introduce flexibility in spatial planning decisions.

The **national health service** foresees specific reimbursements for people with reduced mobility of regional taxi services. Often these services are integrated in a demand responsive transport with different prices for people benefiting from an intervention from the national health service compared with other users.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The national administration takes care of the national railways, the main railway lines. The provinces take care of all other kinds of public transport, regional trains and other PT with the exception of the large metropolitan regions, Amsterdam and The Hague/Rotterdam.

In most cases, the Province organises public transport. This can be done in three manners:

- On its own
- Delegated to a municipality. (This is only the case for Almere and Lelystad in the province of Flevoland.)

- Collaboration with an agency that manages the PT, an “OV bureau”. The agency is a public organisation created by the Province.

Provinces do not take care of collective demand responsive transport with mini buses like shared taxis. Municipalities take care of this kind of transport. These kinds of services are not considered PT in the Dutch law of transport of persons. Municipalities can gather their efforts into a supra-municipal organisation to offer these kinds of services.

ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Provinces organise the PT concessions following modalities that seem best to them. A province can split its territory in different concessions or merge its territory with another province (Groningen and Drenthe). Concessions can be multimodal (local train, tram, bus, ferry) or unimodal.

The province or its delegated agency grants the contract to an operator for a specified time frame. For local trains this is generally longer than for buses. Nearly all operators are private operators especially concerning rural transport. Exceptions are the large urban areas of Amsterdam and The Hague/Rotterdam. Those areas still have their internal operator.

Generally speaking, the operator provides buses, drivers and operational management. In most cases, they will take care of the development function in their concession. Very often they will also take care of it in a dialogue with the Province or its delegated agency.

Dutch provincial PT network usually makes a distinction between

- Railways;
- High quality lines, express lines, that are competitive with car on journey time;
- Regional lines/Local lines;
- Collective, demand responsive transport.

In rural areas, different kinds of creative solutions have been implemented, especially after budget cuts in the national PT budgets around 2010.

These are most of the time a kind of “collective demand responsive transport” like local taxi services, volunteer services, etc.

The servicing of rural areas is most of the time imposed by the concession specifications. Friesland, a northern Dutch province, has for example a system of shared taxi, “De Opstapper”, with 267 start places and payable with the national OV chipcard that brings you to a regular PT busstop. The Netherlands has furthermore 212 volunteer service buslines. Volunteer services are organised by an association regrouping 40 to 50 citizens. The minibus is provided by the concession holder.

There is a tendency towards working with one central call centre per concession for the “collective, demand responsive transport” integrating all types of transport for specific target groups. Previously, this was often (or still is) organised separately for each specific target group (schoolchildren with specific needs, wheelchair users, WMO (social support), accessibility low density regions...). The integration in one call centre is not a generality yet. These types of shared taxis can connect to a PT stop. However, it can also be organised between home and school for example depending on origin and destination of the journey.

In general people need to reserve their trip one hour in advance. This can often be done via an online application. Depending on the terms of reference for operating in the concession the required hours of service can be allocated between rural and urban regions or it can be left to the appreciation of the operator. In the latter case it is probable that they will give priority to bus lines in more densely populated areas.

The OV shared bicycles (“OV fiets”) are very popular in combination with railways. These can also be installed at large PT hubs or at park and ride (P+R) locations.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Regulatory instrument:

Public transport is organised by the law transport of persons ("wet personenvervoer") from the year 2000.

The law determines:

- What is classified as PT, i.e. train, metro, tram and bus are PT; taxi, cycle, carpool,... are not PT (according to the law)
- Who can provide a PT licence

Indirect difference between rural and urban framework

There is no distinction in the law between rural and urban areas. However, as mobility services can be quite different in urban and rural areas they can be treated by different kinds of regulation. In rural areas, the mobility services will be very often treated by services that are rather (shared) taxi services than PT with large buses.

These shared taxis can operate as a subcontractor of a PT company or can be directly contracted by a municipality. Working under another regulatory framework than the PT framework has the advantage that it can be more flexible. Working conditions for the taxi sector are for example more flexible than those of the PT sector. This can be quite interesting and even necessary in the organisation of rural mobility services.

Freedom to enter the market;

There is freedom to enter the market, for the PT sector as for other sectors like the taxi or sharing services sector. The operator needs nevertheless always an operating licence. Only Amsterdam, Rotterdam/The Hague still work with an internal operator.



FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

Subsidy and user contribution

PT is financed by the national authority through a yearly subsidy and by the users through the ticket price. This is not different for urban or rural areas. The cost coverage for PT is around 50%. Also, demand responsive taxi services can reach cost coverage of up to 50% (see good practice Texelhopper).

The subsidy is generated at the national level, and allocated by the province. There is no earmarking for the allocated budgets. The subsidy can be used for public transport, for building transport infrastructure, but also for any other public expense.

Some subsidies come from other sources. Each PT authority receives for example also a compensation from the National administration for students that can use public transport for free.

OTHER INFORMATION

- Tarification is at least to some extent arranged at national level within the framework of the OV chipcard. There are however always still local forms of tarification possible.
- In the concession Groningen Drenthe, in the North East of The Netherlands, all municipalities created a separate agency to manage the "collectif shared taxis". The agency is called "Publiek Vervoer". It organises these taxi services in contracts with different taxicompanies. "Publiek vervoer" manages the "buurtbuses" operated by volunteers, city buses operated by cities. Besides these also hubtaxis are operated. All these are small sized mini buses.
- The framework for the provision of local mobility services is generally less strict as that for regular transport services. However, most of the time the concessions are also provided via public tendering for a certain period of time. There is also a tendency to increase the size of the concessions so that these are not limited to the borders of a municipality.
- Local (mini)bus services (buurtbus) operated by volunteers are relatively common in The Netherlands. These buses are operated by an association of volunteers. Most of the time the (mini) bus operational and (mini) bus investment costs are covered by the Province. They drive a low frequent fixed line.



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The hubtaxi brings people to hubs of PT. People get a subsidised tariff for distances between 3 and 15 km that is still 2.5 times the official "OV chipcard" tariff. Below or above that distance, the normal taxi tariff is applicable. "OV chipcard" is the national smartcard that enables people to pay all PT in the Netherlands. Linked to this card, there are national tariff and tariff rules applicable, "OV chipcard tariff".

- The "OV-Fiets" is an annual bike rental membership scheme run by the Dutch national train company NS (Nederlandse Spoorwegen). It offers basic bikes for rent at around 300 locations in the Netherlands for just under 4 euros per time.
- No particular rules are in place for shared mobility schemes. The collective shared taxis are a very widespread mobility service in The Netherlands.
- The Netherlands has a very good real-time information system. All PT operators send real time information to the NDOV (national database public transport). This is a not for profit agency that treats the data and make them available for all people that want to use those. These are also sent back to the PT vehicles all over the country. Shared taxis are generally not part of the system as those are demand responsive services and come to you when you call.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND MINISTRIES ADDRESSING RURAL AREAS

TITLE	ROLE
Ministerie van verkeer en waterstaat	Subsidizing administration
Provinces	PT organizing entity, except for national railways and local mobility
Municipalities	Organizing local mobility services like shared taxis
KNV	Association of professional transport of persons
NS	Nederlandse Spoorwegen = National Railways

LINKS TO WEBSITES

- www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-infrastructuur-en-waterstaat
- www.ovbureau.nl
- www.publiekvervoer.nl

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Interviews with:

- Nieuwstraten Bram, vervoerregio Amsterdam – discussion
- Molendijk Florien, Newbility.nl – phone interview
- Smetz Stephan OVbureau Groningen Drenthe – phone interview and proofreading
- Van Kesteren Gerard, SMOV – phone interview