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Navigating Highly Skilled Migration in Brainport Eindhoven: Public-private interactions between municipal representatives and high-tech firms on high-skilled migration in Brainport Eindhoven

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Citation

Koreman, R. (2025). *Navigating Highly Skilled Migration in Brainport Eindhoven: Public-private interactions between municipal representatives and high-tech firms on high-skilled migration in Brainport Eindhoven*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Navigating Highly Skilled Migration in Brainport Eindhoven

Public-private interactions between municipal representatives and high-tech firms on high-skilled migration in Brainport Eindhoven



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Supervisor:	Dr. Zeynep Balcioglu Tasma
Type of document:	Master Thesis
Title:	Navigating Highly Skilled Migration in Brainport Eindhoven
Subtitle:	Public-private interactions between municipal representatives and high-tech firms on high-skilled migration in Brainport Eindhoven
Date:	3 rd of January 2025
Language:	English
University:	Leiden University
Faculty:	Governance and Global Affairs
Study:	Public Administration (MSc)
Specialization:	Economics & Governance
Word Count (Excluding Appendices):	16.222

Abstract

This study explores the collaboration between municipalities and high-tech companies in shaping policies and practices around high-skilled migration in Brainport Eindhoven, a region with a high demand for skilled workers. Using qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from local municipalities and large high-tech companies such as ASML and NXP, the research focus on the dynamics of these interactions and highlights major challenges, opportunities and possible future conflicts. Findings show that while both municipalities and businesses acknowledge the importance of high-skilled migration, their approaches differ: municipalities focus on balancing economic development with community issues like housing and social cohesion, while high-tech companies focus on attracting international talent to sustain growth, contributing to societal issues primarily to serve strategic goals like talent attraction and regional stability.

Key challenges include differences in decision-making speed, unclear roles, and fragmentation within the government. Effective collaboration requires clearly defined roles, the development of joint strategic agendas, and a steady base in transparency and trust. The research points out that municipalities must balance high-tech sector growth with support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and highlights the increasing importance of a solid way to collaborate between high-tech companies and rural municipalities for sustainable regional development. These findings offer useful lessons for Brainport Eindhoven and other regions dealing with the same issues of high-skilled migration and economic growth.

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1. Introduction

In November 2023, The Netherlands held its general elections, resulting in a significant political shift within the House of Representatives, which has a total of 150 seats: the right-wing conservative Party for Freedom (PVV) increased its seats from 17 to 37, while the newly established New Social Contract (NSC) secured 20 seats immediately upon entering the political landscape (Politico Research, 2023).

Both the New Social Contract and the Party for Freedom are outspokenly critical of immigration, including the attraction of highly skilled labour migrants (RTL Nieuws, 2023; PVV election program, 2023, p. 7). The political shift within the House of Representatives has raised significant concerns among large companies that are to some extent dependent on highly skilled migrants (Rösken, 2024).

ASML, the high-tech company with the largest market capitalization of all Dutch companies, has responded deeply concerned to the election results. CEO Peter Wennink fears economic repercussions without foreign talent (Tankus, 2023). Furthermore, Wennink is worried about the different mindsets between politics and businesses (NOS, 2024a). ASML already threatened to leave The Netherlands if hiring highly skilled migrants becomes too difficult. Restricting the inflow of highly skilled migrants contradicts growth ambitions as ASML and the entire high-tech sector partially depend on these migrants (Rösken, 2024). In addition, high-tech company NXP believes that the business climate in the Netherlands has been deteriorating for some time. NXP is concerned about the current political climate, where tax benefits for expats may be tightened, and more universities are required to offer programs in Dutch instead of English (NOS, 2024b).

On the other hand, voters have clearly indicated a direction. The Dutch population has become increasingly critical of immigration and its drawbacks, as evidenced by the election results. Moreover, research by Newcom shows that 6 out of 10 people in the Brabant region are concerned about housing prices due to ASML's expansion plans (Van Son, 2024b). Immigration places greater pressure on the housing market and increases competition in the labour market. While this may be advantageous for businesses, it can also lead to heightened competition and reduced social cohesion in neighbourhoods, which may be perceived as a threat to certain groups of Dutch citizens (Boeri et al., 2012).

Businesses collaborate with local municipalities to ensure the development of sufficient housing. Some municipalities with a high number of highly skilled migrants are hesitant. For example, the municipality of Veldhoven, where ASML is headquartered. The hesitation is obvious in the following statement by Veldhoven's housing alderman. "Van Brakel is proud of ASML's global impact; however, she is also concerned about the rising housing prices in the municipality." "In general, expats earn high salaries in Veldhoven and benefit from tax advantages, which gives them slightly more spending power. However, this does lead to some displacement." (van Gameren, 2023).

Given these developments and increased tensions, it is particularly interesting to examine how companies with a strong demand for highly skilled migrants collaborate with the government. What are the preferences of the stakeholders involved, and how do their interactions unfold? What lessons can be drawn from this? How do conflicts manifest? This research uses Brainport Eindhoven as a case study, as it hosts numerous high-tech companies with a significant need for labour migrants.

1.1 Background of the problem

The total number of inhabitants in the Netherlands is strongly influenced by immigration and emigration. Since 2008, net migration (the number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants) has been positive every year. In 2023, the net migration was +141.895, which represents nearly 0.8% of the total Dutch population (Statistics Netherlands, 2024). According to Statistics Netherlands, in 2021, 22% of overall migration was driven by labour migration, and over 15% was due to education (Statistics Netherlands, 2024).

Positive net migration presents both major advantages and disadvantages. Well-known advantages include economic growth, skill acquisition, and addressing demographic challenges, while common disadvantages involve pressure on infrastructure, integration challenges, and labour market competition. Countries compete to attract high-skilled migrants, who can fill gaps in national economies (Boeri et al., 2012). In some regions, the demand for high-skilled migrants is exceptionally high, necessitating many workers from abroad to sustain growth (Tankus, 2023).

The constant positive number of net migration is commonly discussed in Dutch politics. Moreover, research from the Dutch poll I&O research has shown that migration and the housing market were two of the four most important topics among voters during the last elections in November 2023 (Nibbering & Nieuwkerk, 2023). The housing market is correlated to the number of positive net migration. Thus, these topics are directly related.

Several political parties in The Netherlands are skeptical about high skill migration in The Netherlands. Some of them want stricter policies for high skilled labour migration. The results of the recent elections made this topic even more actual.

The winner of the last Dutch general elections in 2023 (PVV) with 37 of 150 seats in The House of representatives is very critical about high skilled migration. In the party manifesto is stated that the PVV wants a strong reduction of both labour and student migration. Moreover, the PVV want to curb student migration by offering bachelor programmes only in the Dutch language (PVV election program, 2023, p. 7).

Another very successful political party during the last elections is the NSC with 20 of the 150 seats in The House of representatives. It points out the negative effects of high skilled migration in its party manifesto and in interviews and debates. The leader of NSC (Pieter Omtzigt) proposed a maximum

positive net migration of 50.000 including labour migrants (RTL Nieuws, 2023). Furthermore, NSC wants to phase out the tax advantages for highly educated expats. This is an example of a policy aimed at attracting high-skilled labour migrants. Currently, highly educated expats do not pay tax on the last 30 percent of their income during the first five years of their contract (Cuppen, 2023).

The PVV and NSC have formed a coalition with the BBB and VVD. This coalition is expected to significantly impact Dutch policies concerning high-skilled migration (DutchNews, 2024). In May 2024, PVV, NSC, VVD, and BBB presented their Outline Agreement (Kabinetsformatie, 2024). With respect to high-skilled labour migration, the coalition emphasized the need to better manage the influx of migrant workers. Employers of non-Dutch residents will be held responsible for any disturbances and costs caused by these workers. They will be required to collaborate with local municipalities to arrange short- and mid-term accommodations. Additionally, for long-term stays, employers must ensure that migrant workers receive Dutch language training to facilitate integration (Kabinetsformatie, 2024).

The Dutch company with by far the highest market cap is High-Tech company ASML. ASML is one of the 10 largest employers in The Netherlands (Van der Woude, 2024). The company has expressed concern regarding the election outcomes as the major victors, Geert Wilders (PVV) and Pieter Omtzigt (NSC), stressed reducing labour migration during the campaign. ASML believes that limiting knowledge workers and international students is undesirable. CEO Peter Wennink fears economic repercussions without foreign talent (Tankus, 2023). Phasing out tax advantages and English-language programs at universities would deteriorate the Dutch business climate, thereby limiting competition to attract high-skilled migrants (NOS, 2024b).

A growing Dutch economy requires an increasing number of high-skilled labour migrants. The high-tech sector, in particular, needs more qualified employees from abroad to meet its growth ambitions (NOS, 2024a). Other high-tech companies also face challenges in attracting a sufficient number of qualified employees. Across the Brainport Eindhoven region, there is a strong demand for high-skilled labour migrants (Steegman, 2022).

Local municipalities, such as Veldhoven (where ASML is located), are also concerned about the political debate surrounding high-skilled migration (ANP Nieuws, 2024). Nevertheless, within these municipalities, opinions on the attraction of high-skilled labour migrants vary.

The population growth and increased competition in the housing market are not the only issues. ASML has also been purchasing properties within the municipality for its operations. "In the past year, ASML acquired 38 properties within the municipality, including a series of thirteen residential houses." According to Wessel Mandos, party leader of PvdA/GroenLinks in Veldhoven, the municipality should develop a future vision for ASML to ensure that local residents do not become victims of its growth (Van Son, 2024a).

1.2 Research goal and research question

The research aims to point out (divergent) preferences of policymakers regarding high-skilled labour migration and how they interact to bring their preferences into action. It focuses on the preferences of municipal representatives and employers. The study focuses on how municipal representatives and employers think about the same issue and how these agents interact. The study aims to point out how these agents (businesses and municipalities) work together and how their clashes play out in real life. The research uses Brainport Eindhoven as a case study region.

The Brainport Eindhoven region is home to many tech companies with a high demand for highly skilled migrants. The large number and high demand for highly skilled migrants puts additional pressure on local services and the housing market. Meanwhile, national politics is becoming increasingly critical of labour migration, creating significant challenges for municipalities and businesses in the Brainport region. Given these developments and challenges, it is particularly interesting to examine how companies with a strong demand for highly skilled migrants collaborate with the government.

The following questions arise: What are the preferences of the stakeholders involved, and how do they interact? How do their interactions unfold? What is the best allocation of roles and tasks? How do conflicts manifest? What do the companies and municipalities aim for, and more importantly, how do they collaborate? What comes out of this interaction? Where does the conflict of interest occur? How do they navigate these conflicts? What lessons can other regions learn from this?

This research uses Brainport Eindhoven as a case study, as it hosts numerous high-tech companies with a significant need for labour migrants.

The region is well-known for its high demand for highly skilled migrants. More regions in Europe share this need. At the same time, there are emerging political parties with a critical perspective on labour migration. Other regions could, therefore, learn from both the positive and negative effects of the chosen collaboration and interactions.

The research focuses on housing, and to a lesser extent, on public services and labour market shortages. The municipality controls housing market policy and collaborates with businesses on this matter, making this topic particularly interesting. Moreover, more than half of Brainport inhabitants express concerns about rising housing prices (Van Son, 2024b). Therefore, it is a sensitive topic.

Research question:

"How do public and private sector agents interact to shape policies and practices around high-skilled migration in Brainport Eindhoven's high-tech sector, and what lessons can be drawn from these interactions?"

The research question is descriptive. Therefore, it is not focussed on why we see discrepancy between policymakers. The study aims to address how policymakers (municipal and employers) work together and how their possible divergent preferences play out in real life.

Some follow-up questions that this thesis also inquires are:

Q1: Do policymakers think differently in respect of high-skilled labour migrants? Or do they have similar opinions? How different are the preferences of municipal policymakers and employers in the high-tech sector?

Q2: What role/ tasks do municipalities play, and what role do businesses play? Have there been any noticeable changes in these roles in recent years?

Q3: How do political actors with different and similar interests interact, and what comes out of these interactions?

Q4: Where does the conflict of interest occur and how do they navigate these conflicts, and what conflicts could arise in the future?

Scope:

As migration is a broad topic, focus areas are chosen to narrow down a feasible research outline:

- Specific type of immigrants: High-Skilled labour migrants.
- Specific type of companies: High-Tech companies
- Specific type of government: Municipalities
- Specific region: Brainport Eindhoven
- Specific focus areas: Housing, labour market, infrastructure and social cohesion

Summary of main findings:

The findings of this research explain how public and private sector agents in Brainport Eindhoven interact to shape policies and practices around high-skilled migration. Their collaboration focuses on major problems like housing, infrastructure, and social cohesion. High-tech companies like ASML and NXP, while strongly advocating for open migration policies to sustain operations and growth, also understand the need to help tackle community issues. However, their contributions are often driven by strategic interests, such as attracting talent and protecting regional stability. Municipalities, on the other hand, aim to balance economic needs with wider community concerns like inclusivity and social cohesion.

Divergent preferences between companies and municipalities do appear, particularly around priorities and approaches. Companies tend to focus on speed and expansion, while municipalities focus on long-term planning and public participation. Two key challenges define this collaboration. First, differences

in pace create friction, as high-tech companies require rapid decision-making, while municipalities are constrained by bureaucratic processes and public participation requirements. Second, blurring of roles raises questions about the division of responsibilities, with companies sometimes stepping into areas traditionally managed by local governments, like housing and community development. While these efforts reflect corporate responsibility, they also risk undermining governmental autonomy if boundaries are not clearly defined.

Even with these challenges, the collaboration between high-tech companies and municipalities, structured through the triple helix model, is generally effective. Frequent, high-quality, face-to-face interactions and a shared agenda guarantee alignment on strategic goals, though fragmentation within the government makes collaboration more complicated. Urban municipalities like Eindhoven and Veldhoven take the lead in these partnerships, while rural municipalities remain less involved, a gap that requires attention as the region continues to grow.

In summary, this research demonstrates how public and private agents navigate divergent preferences and procedural challenges, offering important lessons for developing sustainable collaborations that balance economic growth with societal well-being.

1.3 Academic and societal relevance

The interaction between public and private agents regarding high-skilled migration in the high-tech sector is a critical issue, particularly in Brainport Eindhoven. Companies depend on skilled migrants to innovate, while municipalities aim to balance economic growth with community needs. This study points out the roles of municipalities and high-tech companies, their interactions, and how conflicts of interest are managed.

Academically, extensive research has been conducted on the effects of high-skilled migration and successful collaboration strategies between public and private sectors. For instance, Kennedy (2019) and Boeri et al. (2012) show that attracting highly skilled migrants increases national welfare. However, these studies also reveal that certain groups, particularly those in lower-income groups, benefit less from migration and may even face disadvantageous effects (Lee & Clarke, 2019). Similarly, in Brainport Eindhoven, Tilburg University and Newcom (2024) found that while many residents benefit from the region's growth, over 12% feel overlooked compared to others (Wilthagen et al., 2024). These results highlight the need for good public-private collaboration in addressing such disparities, yet little research exists on how these partnerships work in local contexts.

Existing studies on public-private partnerships identify key success factors, such as involving all stakeholders and defining clear roles (Smith & Thomasson, 2016). While some of these findings apply to Brainport Eindhoven, Smith and Thomasson (2016) also highlight the short-term focus of national governments, driven by re-election cycles. This issue is less pronounced at the municipal level, which

shows the importance of studying local collaborations. Moreover, studies on high-skilled migration often overlook the unique dynamics of Dutch municipalities, which have specific roles compared to provinces or national governments.

Despite the growing importance of local-level collaborations, most studies focus on national or international dynamics, leaving a critical gap in understanding how municipalities and businesses work together in accommodating highly skilled migrants. In Brainport Eindhoven, where economic growth is directly tied to high-skilled migration, this gap is especially important. Municipalities are responsible for addressing housing shortages and strengthening social cohesion, which are two areas of growing concern among residents (Wilthagen et al., 2024). Tackling these issues requires effective collaboration with high-tech companies, as public-private partnerships are increasingly seen as essential for tackling local issues. The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) highlights that since 2015, such collaborations have steadily increased, helping municipalities address policy challenges more effectively (VNG, 2024).

This study bridges this gap by analysing local-level interactions between municipalities and businesses, providing insights into effective collaboration strategies, housing and social cohesion challenges, and ways to navigate conflicts. These findings hold significant societal relevance for Brainport Eindhoven and other regions facing similar dynamics. While governmental structures vary across countries, the lessons, challenges, and success factors identified here can inform public-private partnerships on a wider scale. By providing a deeper understanding of these dynamics, this research aims to contribute scientific value and offer policymakers practical guidance on navigating the complexities of high-skilled migration.

The trade-off:

Policy makers opinions or attitudes shape barriers and these preferences therefore influence the future of businesses and citizens. Politicians, citizens and businesses arguing over the question: to what extent is further growth desirable in the region? Their preferences influence this trade-off.

In the Brainport region, there is a trade-off between the demand for highly skilled labour migrants to fill tech jobs and the pressure on local housing and social services. While more migrants are essential for boosting the economy, their influx can negatively impact social cohesion and strain existing infrastructure. Restrictions on labour migration could harm the Dutch economy, risking the departure of tech companies and job losses. Conversely, unrestricted migration may exacerbate housing shortages and public services. Thus, finding a balance between economic needs and community well-being remains a tough issue to address.

The rapid growth in Brainport Eindhoven has led companies to hire skilled foreign workers due to local shortages, increasing population and housing demand in the region. This demand heightens the

existing housing shortage in the Netherlands, pushing prices higher and creating challenges for local residents. Many of the foreign workers are highly paid and receive tax incentives, which make housing competition tougher, disadvantaging local residents with fewer financial resources. While attracting skilled migrants benefits the national economy, it also heat up housing market inequalities. This situation shows the difficulties of balancing economic growth, housing accessibility, and social equity, as national gains from migration do not always benefit local communities equally (Lee & Clarke, 2019).

1.4 Research outline

This study focuses on the interaction between public and private actors concerning high-skilled migration in the Brainport Eindhoven region. In particular, regarding high-tech companies and municipalities. The aim is to point out the preferences of policymakers at the municipal and business level and look at how their interactions unfold.

The central research question is:

"How do public and private sector agents interact to shape policies and practices around high-skilled migration in Brainport Eindhoven's high-tech sector, and what lessons can be drawn from these interactions?"

By mapping the preferences, roles, interactions, potential conflicts, and their resolutions between employers and the local government, valuable lessons can be drawn for future collaborations . These insights will benefit not only policymakers and employers within Brainport Eindhoven but also other regions with a strong demand for highly skilled migrants. Studying how local political actors with similar and different interest interact could contribute to better collaborations in the future and hence more innovation and sustainable growth.

2. Literature Review

The second chapter of this research presents a literature review on theories regarding attracting highly skilled immigrants, policymakers' attitudes towards highly skilled immigration, and high-tech companies' influence on public policies. Before exploring these theories, this chapter begins with a brief explanation of the concept of highly skilled migrants and their growing numbers.

Highly skilled migrants:

Immigration has been a consistent phenomenon throughout human history, driven by economic, political, socio-cultural, safety, and family reunification motives (Niedomysl, 2011). Governmental policies regarding immigration vary widely across countries and regions and often differ based on the type of migrant (Cohen et al., 2015). For instance, while some countries adopt strict policies for political or safety migrants, they may be more welcoming towards economic migrants or vice versa.

A commonly discussed category of migrants are those with an economic migration motive. The European Commission defines economic migrants as individuals who leave their country of origin for reasons such as job or educational opportunities, primarily to earn more or improve living standards (European Commission, 2024). They can be divided into two groups: highly skilled migrants and low-to middle-skilled migrants.

Highly skilled migrants are characterized by their advanced education or specialized skills needed to meet labour market demands (Weinar & Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020). Although definitions of highly skilled migrants may vary depending on the research focus and national contexts, they generally align on the idea of "highly educated" individuals (Cohen et al., 2015). The OECD provides a widely accepted definition, describing highly skilled individuals as those with a university degree or extensive equivalent experience in a given field (Salt, 1997).

Increasing number of highly skilled migrants:

In recent decades, the number of highly skilled migrants has increased significantly, and the last few decades can be described as high-skilled migration eras (Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2014). This growth is driven by rising demand for high-skilled labour and the implementation of selective migration policies (Parsons et al., 2018). OECD countries, particularly English-speaking ones, have actively developed skill-selective policies to attract such migrants, often referred to as the "battle of brains" (Boeri et al., 2012). High-skilled migrants are recognized for their contributions to economic growth, innovation, and addressing labour market shortages. To attract these migrants, countries implement measures such as tax incentives, and streamlined visa processes. While policies toward highly skilled migrants vary across countries and regions, there is some consensus on prioritizing them over low- or middle-skilled migrants (De Haas, Natter, & Vezzoli, 2018).

Benefits and disadvantages of attracting highly skilled migrants:

In the academic discourse, much has been written about the advantages and disadvantages of attracting highly skilled labour migrants. There is a notable consensus in these studies regarding the following advantages and disadvantages.

The primary advantages of highly skilled migration on destination countries include addressing labour market shortages, enhancing economic growth, promoting innovation, increasing tax revenues (both income and corporate), improving global competitiveness, and contributing to diversity and cultural enrichment (Parsons et al., 2018).

In nearly all OECD countries, the demand for highly skilled labour migrants is expected to increase further. This trend is partly driven by demographic changes, as the number of native workers leaving the labour market annually exceeds the number entering it in many OECD countries. Consequently, labour shortages can be addressed by attracting labour migrants (Chaloff & Lemaître, 2009).

According to Bosetti, Cattaneo, and Verdolini (2015), highly skilled migrants make a significant contribution to knowledge creation. Their study of 20 European countries reveals that the larger the pool of highly skilled migrants, the more knowledge is generated in the respective country. For instance, countries with a higher number of highly skilled migrants produce more patent applications, and their published scientific articles are cited more frequently (Bosetti et al., 2015). These findings align with Niebuhr's (2010) research, which demonstrates that ethnic diversity strongly contributes to innovation (Niebuhr, 2010). An open policy towards highly skilled migrants, therefore, has a positive effect on innovation and knowledge creation in destination countries.

Furthermore, numerous studies have examined the effects of highly skilled migration on economic growth and global competitiveness. For example, Oliinyk, Bilan, Mishchuk, Akimov, and Vasa (2021) highlight a strong relationship between high-skilled migration and economic growth and competitiveness in OECD countries. Their research also shows that an increase in the number of highly skilled migrants significantly boosts the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (Oliinyk et al., 2021). In addition, Orefice (2010) also highlights the added value of highly skilled migration on economic performance. Nevertheless, these effects are less pronounced and, according to Orefice (2010), may not be strong enough to offset the disruptive effects of highly skilled migration.

When it is relatively easy for companies to attract highly skilled migrants (open liberalized policy) a country, companies and (some) individuals can benefit from these advantages. In addition, open policies contribute to a favourable business climate, encouraging more companies to establish themselves in the country and reducing their possible tendency to leave, resulting in even more economic growth, innovation and tax revenues (Parsons et al., 2018).

Despite the advantages of highly skilled migration, there are often disadvantages associated with an open policy. Those who experience the drawbacks of such policies will logically tend to advocate for stricter policies (Collier, 2018). These drawbacks could be a lack of adequate housing or excessively high housing prices, a tightened labour market for local workers due to heightened competition, fears of job loss, fears of dumping wages and sectoral imbalances, such as shortages of healthcare professionals and teachers due to the influx of highly skilled migrants (Skeldon, 2018).

Overly selective migration policies may unintentionally neglect essential public services. A key concern of favouring high-skilled migrants is that an increase in such workers also raises demand for low-skilled roles, such as cleaners, waiters, and bus drivers (Skeldon, 2018).

Another potential disadvantage of highly skilled migration could be: reduced social cohesion in neighbourhoods and communities, sometimes resulting from increased polarization and inequality. In regions with a high concentration of highly skilled migrants, the gap between higher and lower incomes can widen (Lee & Clarke, 2019). Figure 1 (below) presents two types of income distribution across a group of individuals (Esteban & Ray, 1994). The second chart shows a high level of polarization, as the middle class diminishes, and the number of both high and low-income individuals increases. This is a potential risk of high-skilled migration. As high-skilled migrants tend to earn high incomes and generate additional low-skill jobs (Lee & Clarke, 2019). This imposes a risk of a shrinking middle-income group, leading to more (income) polarization and potentially a decline in social cohesion (Wiesel et al., 2023).

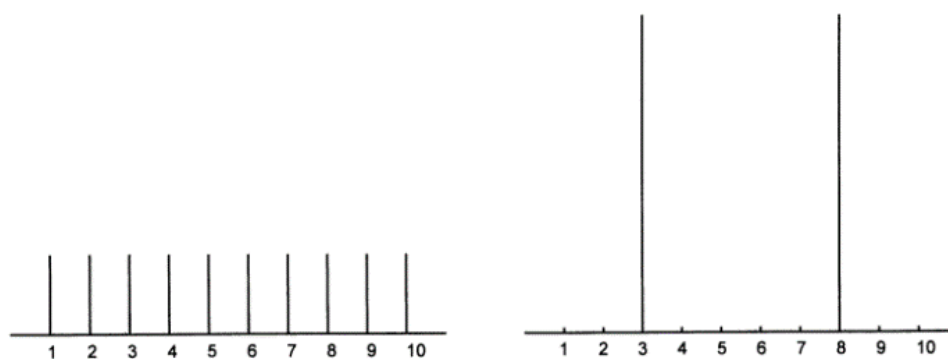


Figure 1: Two types of income distribution over a group of individuals (Esteban & Ray, 1994)

Overall, studies suggest that countries generally benefit from open policies regarding highly skilled migrants, as total wealth tends to increase as a result (Boeri et al., 2012). However, in recent years, more research has been conducted on the broader economic impacts of highly skilled migration, revealing that some native workers benefit less or even are negatively affected despite the overall increase in national wealth (Nathan, 2014). A major contributing factor is the significant pressure on certain cities, which drives up housing prices (Peri et al., 2015). Some economists advocate for an open policy framework in which individuals who gain less or are adversely impacted by highly skilled migration are compensated through governmental policies (Collier, 2018).

Governmental preferences regarding highly skilled migration:

Research predominantly shows that highly skilled migration has a positive effect on a destination country's economy and prosperity (Boeri et al., 2012; Oliinyk et al., 2021). Nevertheless, policies regarding high-skilled labour migration vary widely over time and across European countries, with approaches to attracting high-skilled migrants differing partially based on economic needs, demographic trends, and political climate (Cerna, 2016). A crisis can also influence policy; for instance, in response to the economic crisis, more European countries have become critical of skilled migration to protect national jobs (Cerna, 2018).

However, demographic and economic arguments alone are insufficient to ensure open policies regarding high-skilled labour migration. Both market and non-market factors influence governmental policies (Kolbe, 2020). Market factors include labour unions, employer associations, and companies themselves. The power and influence of these parties often impact policy decisions. Non-market factors, on the other hand, refer to elements outside the labour market, such as public opinion and the presence of united citizen groups, which influence governmental preferences and, consequently, governmental policies (Kolbe, 2020).

The interplay between employers and the government, along with the lobbying power of employers and the political climate, determines the degree to which countries adopt more or less restrictive policies regarding highly skilled migrants (De Haas, Natter, & Vezzoli, 2018). Moreover, public opinion plays a particularly significant role, shaping the policy preferences of politicians and policymakers at both national and local levels. This influence often complicates the development of consistent labour migration policies due to its strong impact on political discourse (Cerna, 2018).

Most importantly, for this research, is the role of market factors, particularly the influence of large companies and their power to shape policies regarding highly skilled migrants. Specifically, major tech and engineering firms are seen as the strongest advocates for open policies on highly skilled migration (Cerna, 2016). The following paragraphs will elaborate on the policy preferences and influence of employers.

Employers preferences regarding highly skilled migration:

High skilled migration policies are largely influenced by market and non-market factors (Kolbe, 2020). While different politicians, citizens, policymakers, and labour unions often have widely differing policy preferences, employers tend to have much more harmonized preferences. In essence, large employers and employer associations aim to minimize restrictions on attracting/hiring foreign talents and workers (Kolbe, 2020). Furthermore, employers are regarded as the primary stakeholders in advocating for more open policies (Kennedy, 2019). "Especially employers in high-tech and engineering sectors have pressured governments for more open HSI policies." (Cerna, 2016, p. 16).

Employers and employer associations actively strive to influence policy and aim to create favourable conditions for attracting highly skilled migrants. For certain sectors, these conditions are especially critical due to significant variations in demand across industries. The tech and engineering industries, in particular, are highly reliant on highly skilled migrants. These sectors face substantial demand for skilled workers and often experience rapid growth (Lee & Clarke, 2019).

The potential growth of tech companies is thus contingent upon policies regarding highly skilled migrants. For this reason, these companies aim to forge a strong lobbying presence to alter these policies (Bank et al., 2021).

High-tech employers' power in influencing politics:

The high-tech sector is the largest spender on lobbying activities in the EU. In total, the sector invests over €97 million per year in lobbying EU institutions, surpassing other sectors such as the pharmaceutical industry and fossil fuel industries. These expenditures lead to increasing power and more favourable conditions (Bank et al., 2021).

According to Khanal et al. (2024), the influence of high-tech companies in policymaking has significantly increased in recent years. This development is largely attributed to the considerable economic power held by major high-tech corporations. These companies can allocate substantial resources to lobbying efforts, enabling them not only to influence policy but also to shape the agenda by prioritizing certain issues (Khanal et al., 2024). Furthermore, given their substantial impact on national economies, governments may be more inclined to support high-tech companies (Khanal et al., 2024).

Kingdon (2014) argues that a policy issue is set on the agenda when the problem, politics and policy stream come together at the same time. In that case, we refer to it as a policy window. Policy entrepreneurs are trying to use policy windows to achieve their goals (Kingdon, 2014).

Research by Khanal et al. (2024) highlights that the substantial power of tech companies allows them to influence not only the politics stream but also the problem stream, including defining what constitutes a problem. Furthermore, these high-tech companies possess enough power to strategically time focusing events, thereby creating policy windows. Consequently, major players in the high-tech sector are often described as 'super policy entrepreneurs' (Khanal et al., 2024).

Simultaneously, having the largest lobbying expenditures does not necessarily mean that all politicians will support these plans (Cerna, 2016). Moreover, such significant expenditures can even create a sense of distrust among politicians and voters (Heermann, 2023). However, groups or companies with substantial lobbying budgets and close relationships with the government tend to have far more influence on skilled migration policymaking compared to other parties with fewer financial resources and weaker governmental connections (Facchini, Mayda & Mishra, 2011).

Public-private collaboration:

The preceding paragraphs focused on the influence of employers in the high-tech sector on skilled migration policies. Lobbying is a method of wielding influence, serving as a tool to challenge and change the status quo of policies (Baumgartner et al., 2009).

Beyond these lobbying activities, governments and employers frequently collaborate, particularly in sectors like high-tech, where several challenges exist (Lee & Clarke, 2019). In contrast to lobbying, collaboration aims to create mutual benefits through joint efforts (Smith & Thomasson, 2016).

Extensive research on public-private collaborations has examined various structures, offering multiple ideas about task allocation, roles, and interactions.

According to Ansell & Gash (2007), public-private collaboration is characterized by a government bringing together key stakeholders to collectively establish a shared agenda. Both parties collaborate to match their policy preferences. In these collaborations, face-to-face interactions are important for building trust. Moreover, commitment to the collaboration process and the willingness of both parties to push the collaboration forward is key to achieve more effective collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2007).

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methods used to obtain the results of this research, focusing on the Metropolitan Region Brainport Eindhoven as a case study. It details the research design, data collection methods, validity and reliability considerations, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and limitations.

3.1 Case Selection: the Metropole region Brainport Eindhoven

Employers in the high-tech sector across Europe require large numbers of highly skilled migrants to address labour shortages and support further economic growth. Brainport Eindhoven is a prominent high-tech cluster with a particularly high demand for highly skilled migrants. At the same time, the Netherlands is experiencing a rise in critical views on migration among various societal groups, potentially complicating the future arrival of skilled migrants. This makes the Brainport Eindhoven region an especially suitable case for examining the collaboration and interactions between employers (private) and the government (public), given the intersection of high demand for skilled labour and increasing negative sentiment toward migration.

In particular, it is interesting to understand how employers collaborate with local governments (municipalities). Due to decentralization trends of governmental power in The Netherlands, the importance of Dutch municipalities increased. Regional economic policies, housing policies, and infrastructure are within the tasks of regional governments (provinces & municipalities). In total, 21 municipalities are part of Metropole Region Brainport Eindhoven (Ortega et al., 2013).

Metropole Region Brainport Eindhoven is one of the most fundamentally important clusters for the Dutch Economy (Ortega et al., 2013). In 1956, Eindhoven University of Technology was founded by the industry, government, and academia, a triple helix collaboration (Eindhoven University of Technology, 2024). Moreover, Philips established the High-Tech campus for national R&D activities. Nowadays, the campus is a central R&D hotspot for many technological businesses (High Tech Campus Eindhoven, 2024). Which is an opportunity for high tech companies to benefit from knowledge sharing and knowledge spillovers. The establishment of a technological university and open centralized R&D hotspots in Brainport Eindhoven contributed to the current High-Tech cluster and to the collaboration structures in Brainport Eindhoven (Ortega et al., 2013).

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the collaboration in Brainport Eindhoven is characterized by the triple helix structure. Characteristics of the triple helix are collaborations between industries, governments, and universities as drivers for innovation (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1995). Universities play a central role in the Triple Helix by providing industry-specific knowledge and educating large numbers of students, which businesses can draw upon to enhance competitiveness (Etzkowitz, 2012). Businesses also benefit from knowledge sharing, spillovers, and favourable conditions provided by governments, such as funding, infrastructure improvements, and tax incentives. In return, governments

gain from innovation, economic growth, and increased tax revenues (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1995). A key aspect of the Triple Helix structure is the need for joint decision-making, where no single actor acts autonomously. Instead, the structure is built on the premise of equal positions and balanced collaboration among industrial, academic, and governmental actors (Romme, 2022).

The Dutch economy greatly benefits from Brainport companies like Philips, ASML, and NXP. These companies are important in achieving economic growth and technological innovation, which increase the Dutch total welfare (Romme, 2022). In 2021, the industry in Brainport Eindhoven accounted for over 12.5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Brainport Eindhoven Monitor, 2022).

The triple helix structure in the region contributed to innovation, economic growth, knowledge sharing, and multiple new start-ups. The innovation of the region is underlined by the following recognitions. Firstly, Brainport Eindhoven was named as the smartest region in the world by the American think tank Intelligent Communities Forum in 2011 (Bronneberg et al., 2023). Secondly, Brainport Eindhoven won an award for best regional cooperation by Eurocities in 2015 (Bronneberg et al., 2023). Finally and more recently, Brainport Eindhoven was named second in the list of most liveable European cities for highly skilled migrants (ECA International, 2024).

The significant successes and strong growth of the region have resulted in the need for a large number of new highly skilled employees. The estimated number of additional full-time jobs in Brainport Eindhoven is around 70.000 in 10 to 15 years (Aalders et al., 2022), which cannot be filled with Dutch nationals only due to shortages in the Dutch labour market for both junior and senior engineers (Romme, 2022). Romme quotes, “This implies the Eindhoven region today is almost entirely dependent on foreign talent for filling the growing number of vacancies” (Romme, 2022).

Besides the advantages of growth and innovation in Brainport Eindhoven, multiple scholars discuss some major disadvantages. They emphasize the downsides of fast growing economic clusters like Brainport. Collier (2018) draws attention to, on the one hand, the positive net effect (increasing welfare) of rapid growth and innovation, and on the other hand, the negative consequences for individuals who feel left behind, face rising housing costs, and perceive a decline in social cohesion in their neighbourhoods. This is evidenced by the fact that nearly 100,000 of the approximately 800,000 residents report feeling disadvantaged compared to others Brainport citizens (Wiltshagen et al., 2024).

Research has shown that residents in the Brainport region are particularly concerned about rising housing prices. Six out of ten Brainport residents worry about increasing housing costs driven by the region’s growth ambitions. Additionally, some residents are concerned about the added pressure on public services, such as healthcare and education. Four out of ten believe it will become more challenging to find a general practitioner. At the same time, more than half of the residents express pride in having a high-tech company like ASML in their region (Stadszaken, 2024).

The findings of the research indicate that a significant portion of Brainport residents have concerns. This could lead some of them to vote for parties with a more critical stance on migration, which, in turn, could result in stricter policies (Collier, 2018). It is therefore important for employers to address and alleviate these concerns. Policymakers can also play a role in alleviating residents' concerns. In general, high-skilled migration tends to increase overall prosperity (the "size of the pie"). However, it is essential that individuals are not adversely affected by this migration. Therefore, those disadvantaged by high-skilled migration should be compensated through fair policies (the "allocation of the pie") (Barr, 2020).

3.2 Research Design

This research aims to gain insights into the interactions between municipalities and employers. To this end, a qualitative descriptive method has been selected. This approach is well-suited for thoroughly exploring processes, dynamics, and interactions in detail.

Qualitative research is also appropriate because no predetermined hypotheses are being tested. The aim of this study is to map out preferences, roles, and interactions. In particular, it is necessary to gather in-depth information on the interactions, as this can support future collaborations and potentially inform partnerships in other regions. The findings may, at a later stage, contribute to the development of new theories. Therefore, this research has an inductive character (Bryman, 2012).

3.2.1 Data collection methods

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with key stakeholders, including employers in the high-tech sector and municipal policymakers, to gather insights on their preferences and mutual interactions.

The interviewees were sampled using a variety of methods. First, quota sampling was utilized to select at least three candidates from both the public and private sectors. Purposeful sampling was then applied to identify candidates based on their relevant positions related to highly skilled migration and interactions with local governments or employers (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, snowball sampling was employed on a limited basis, with only one candidate referred by an existing interviewee. This multi-faceted approach ensured a representative and relevant group for the research on the interactions between municipal policymakers and employers regarding highly skilled migrants (Bryman, 2012).

During the interviews, a conscious choice was made to adopt a semi-structured format, as described by Bryman (2012). This approach involved the preparation of several topics to be covered in each interview, as these subjects are highly relevant to answering the research question. However, additional questions were posed that were not initially planned. For instance, some interviewees provided information that proved to be very pertinent to the study's outcomes. By actively listening and asking follow-up questions, significant information was elicited. Consequently, the decision was

made to record the interviews, allowing for a focus on listening and probing while ensuring that the predetermined important topics were not overlooked (Bryman, 2012).

All interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. A significant advantage of this method over telephone interviews is the ability to capture some non-verbal communication cues. The data collection took place between April 16, 2024, and November 15, 2024, with each interview lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes on average and all interviews were conducted in Dutch language. Despite the advantages of using Microsoft Teams, conducting all interviews in person would have further enhanced the reliability of the data collected (Bryman, 2012).

Finding the right interviewees for this study was not always straightforward. While identifying representatives from Brainport municipalities and high-tech companies was relatively manageable, the main challenge lay in ensuring that the respondents had substantial experience collaborating with their counterparts—municipalities or high-tech firms (on topics related to highly skilled migration), respectively. This criterion was crucial to obtain relevant insights into the quality and dynamics of their interactions.

To address this challenge, more agents were initially contacted than the final number of seven interviews conducted. Some potential participants indicated that their contact with high-tech companies or municipalities was too limited to provide meaningful input on the collaboration's quality and interactions. By thoroughly communicating the research objectives and expectations in advance, less efficient interviews were successfully avoided, ensuring that all discussions contributed significantly to the study.

There was significant willingness among both municipal and high-tech representatives to participate in the research. None of the contacted candidates declined to take part in the study. However, one interviewee requested to remain anonymous, and several others expressed concerns about the public accessibility of the research findings after its completion (for which mutual agreements were made with the respondents, as described in the ethical considerations). These concerns highlight the sensitivity of the topics discussed, particularly the evaluation of collaborations, interactions, and specific conflicts, but did not result in participants refusing to take part in the research. Of course, this sensitivity could have influenced the data and findings, but this will be addressed later in the discussion.

During the interviews, it was occasionally challenging to stay closely aligned with the research objectives. Interviewees often had extensive knowledge they were eager to share, but not all of this information directly relates to the study's focus. For example, participants frequently discussed national collaborations (instead of local) or themes beyond the research scope. By guiding the conversation carefully, the interviews still yielded highly relevant data specific to the research question and sub-questions. The semi-structured format, allowed for some flexibility, which resulted

in valuable insights that are not directly linked to the research. Balancing the need to remain focused while also giving participants room to elaborate required careful coordination, and was sometimes difficult, but maintaining control over the interviews ensured the collection of rich and targeted data.

3.2.2 List of interviewees

Name of interviewee	Organization	Position
[REDACTED]	Municipality of Veldhoven	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	Municipality of Veldhoven	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	Municipality of Veldhoven	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	Municipality of Eindhoven	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	ASML	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	ASML	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	NXP Semiconductors	[REDACTED]

3.2.3 Data analysis techniques

Thematic Analysis: This method is used to identify and analyse patterns within qualitative data, focusing on themes related to preferences, roles, and interactions. Data are categorized into key themes to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder dynamics. Summarized the data is categorized in key themes, allowing for a structured overview of the information (Bryman, 2012).

Using Framework for Bryman's Disney study

Theme: Ideological critique				
	Class critique	Ethnicity critique	Gender critique	Nationality critique
Interviewee 1				
Interviewee 2				
Interviewee 3				
Interviewee 4		'saw plenty of black Americans' in MK 'but few if any in that World Showcase'. 'Little mention of black history' (Q14)		World Showcase 'only really representative of the developed world' (Q14)
Interviewee 5				

Figure 2: Thematic Analysis framework (Bryman, 2012).

The significant advantage of this method is that it allows for the examination of information from different interviewees for each core theme. This facilitates the identification of differences and patterns across various interviews. These patterns and differences constitute an important component of the final analysis (Bryman, 2012).

3.2.4 Ethical considerations

This paragraph has been included in the methodology because the findings are largely derived from using semi-structured interviews with respondents. Interpersonal interactions may be considered sensitive information; therefore, agreements were made with all respondents beforehand. All interviewees were approached by email with a clear description of the study. Additionally, it was agreed with each interviewee that the interviews would be recorded to yield highly accurate transcriptions. This approach lowers the chance of collecting inaccurate information. After each interview, the transcribed interviews were shared with the interviewees. In cases where any inaccuracies were detected, the interviewee had the opportunity to notify the researcher. This process makes sure that both the interviewees and the researcher are protected from incorrect information.

3.2.5 Member checking and effects on reliability and validity

Returning the transcribed interviews to participants for verification, a process known as member checking, improves the reliability of the study. By doing this there is greater certainty that the information in the transcribed interviews matches the actual truth. This step allows participants to confirm that their responses were transcribed correctly, minimising the chance of errors or misinterpretations. In terms of internal validity, this practice helps ensure that the data truly reflects the participants' intended meaning, rather than being influenced by researcher bias or misunderstanding. Additionally, member checking can indirectly support external validity by improving the generalisability of findings, as accurate participant feedback may lead to more representative data. Finally, this process promotes transparency ethical standards, as it respects participants' contributions and allows them to correct any inaccuracies.

3.2.6 Limitations of methodology

1. **Limited Sample Size:** Although key stakeholders were interviewed, including more participants could make the findings stronger and offer a wider perspective.
2. **Generalizability:** Findings may be context-specific to the interactions with the Dutch governmental system, which could make them less applicable to other regions or countries.
3. **Social Desirability Bias:** Participants may provide socially desirable responses, particularly municipal policymakers who serve diverse resident interests. This caution may inhibit open critique of existing interactions, potentially obscuring certain outcomes.
4. **Reluctance to Critique:** Both employers and municipalities may hesitate to express criticisms or concerns openly to avoid jeopardizing future collaborations. Both companies and municipalities may be cautious in expressing criticisms or concerns, possibly preferring not to speak openly for fear of damaging future collaboration. As a result, certain outcomes may be less impactful or even entirely overlooked.

4. Findings and analysis

In the fourth chapter of this study, the results are presented in depth. This chapter offers a detailed overview of the policy preferences concerning highly skilled migrants as expressed by public and private agents. It explores how these preferences manifest in practice. Moreover, particular attention is given to the collaborations, interactions, and potential conflicts between the Brainport municipalities and Brainport high-tech companies regarding issues related to highly skilled migrants.

All results, as outlined in the methodology, are based on data derived from the semi-structured interviews. During these interviews, various themes were discussed, and clear patterns emerged. All findings are explained below, organized by theme. Recurrent and frequently cited opinions and perspectives have served as the basis for the selection of the chosen themes. Themes that are characterized by greater ambiguity or less consensus have also been thoroughly addressed. These findings could provide helpful guidance for future research.

In some paragraphs, quotes have been included to reinforce the argumentation. These quotes are exclusively sourced from the list of interviewees, who have been assigned numbers for reference. At the end of each quote, the interview number is cited instead of the interviewee's surname.

Number	Name of interviewee	Organization	Position
████████	██████████	Mun. Veldhoven	████████████████████
████████	██████████████████	Mun. Veldhoven	████████████████████ ██████
████████	██████████████████	Mun. Veldhoven	████████████████████ ██████████████████
████████	██████████████████	Mun. Eindhoven	████████████████████
████████	██████████	ASML	████████████████████
████████	██████████████	ASML	████████████████████ ██████████████████
████████	██████████	NXP Semiconductors	██████████████-

4.1 Preferences related to high-skilled migration

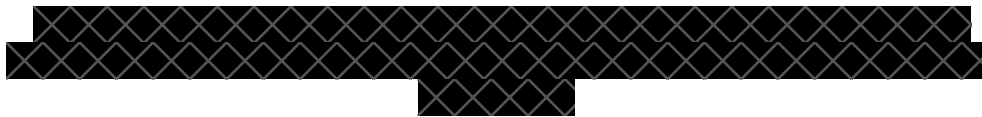
This section examines the preferences of Brainport high-tech companies and municipalities regarding highly skilled migration. The policy preferences are explained, as well as the willingness or preference of high-tech firms to contribute to issues influenced by labour migration, such as housing and social cohesion (sub-question Q1)

4.1.1 Preferences of high-tech firms

Both ASML's and NXP's growth potential depend on open policies for attracting highly skilled migrants. Both companies are therefore willing to cooperate with municipalities in addressing various policy issues.

Highly skilled migrants are vital to the operations of NXP and ASML, two key players in the Dutch high-tech sector. At NXP, 50–70% of newly recruited R&D employees are highly skilled migrants, making access to a large talent pool essential. Negative sentiments or stricter policies on migration, particularly highly skilled migration, raise concerns. NXP emphasizes the societal and economic costs of reducing the influx of skilled migrants, warning that such measures could also discourage talent from coming to the Netherlands due to negative sentiments surrounding migration.

Stricter policies on international students and foreign workers would impact NXP by shrinking the talent steam from Dutch universities, which currently provide approximately half of its skilled migrants, and limiting access to international expertise. According to NXP, this demand for high-skilled labour does not displace local talent, as the high-tech sector requires both domestic and foreign specialists to meet its need.



Similarly, highly skilled migrants are critical for ASML, which has even threatened to change location over concerns about migration restrictions (Hijink, 2024). This pressure led to the Beethoven Plan, a government initiative to improve the business climate for the Brainport Eindhoven chip sector. The plan includes investments in infrastructure, housing, and talent development to address a regional shortage of 50,000 skilled specialists, of which only 20,000 are currently available inside The Netherlands.

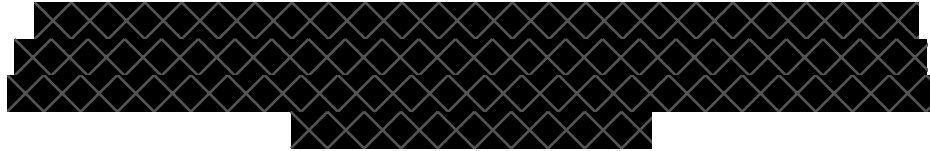
Both companies share a strong policy preference for open migration policies to ensure access to international expertise, which is needed for sustaining growth and maintaining their contributions to the Dutch economy.

4.1.2 Willingness of high-tech firms to contribute to community

High-tech companies NXP and ASML collaborate with Brainport municipalities on essential societal issues such as housing, infrastructure, and social cohesion, highlighting how important these factors are for attracting highly skilled migrants. Both companies see their involvement as part of their corporate responsibility, though their approaches differ in scope and intensity.

NXP illustrates its commitment to infrastructure by contributing to projects like the expansion of Eindhoven's ring road. When municipalities lacked urgency and funding, NXP partially financed the

project, demonstrating its willingness to support initiatives that work with NXP's goals. However, NXP maintains a strict boundary, making it clear that governmental responsibilities remain with the government. While the company collaborates on housing initiatives, it does not engage in building houses. NXP views itself as a partner providing added value without replacing government roles.



In contrast, ASML takes a more active approach, with a team of over 25 employees focused on community engagement and making a difference in the society. ASML operates a non-profit housing program to promote affordable housing in the region, collaborating with municipalities, developers, and housing corporations to rescue at-risk projects. These actions look to create a fair housing market and support the availability of affordable rental and owned homes. Internal research by ASML highlights housing as a primary concern among Brainport residents, who expect the company to contribute. ASML tries to meet these expectations by planning to build thousands of affordable homes to reduce its impact on the region.



While both companies collaborate with municipalities, NXP adopts a more reserved role, focusing on funding specific initiatives with clear added value. In contrast, ASML's extensive community engagement reflects a broader effort to neutralize the impact of its operations, collaborating intensively on various themes. This distinction highlights the different ways high-tech companies deal with local community challenges.

4.1.3 Preferences of municipalities

The policy preferences of Brainport municipalities regarding issues related to highly skilled migration, such as housing and social cohesion, are less uniform than those of high-tech companies. On average, municipalities are positive and supportive of the region's further growth. However, municipal policymakers also mention problems related to this growth. Their policy preferences are therefore more cautious but predominantly in favour of attracting more highly skilled migrants.

The preferences of Veldhoven municipality will be addressed first. As home to ASML, the Netherlands' most valuable company and a key driver of Brainport Eindhoven's growth, Veldhoven faces specific difficulties. Policymakers acknowledge that ASML's reliance on specialized expertise often unavailable domestically makes the influx of highly skilled migrants inevitable. However, the municipality's role is to manage this growth effectively while finding the right balance in supporting

large high-tech companies, protecting smaller businesses, preserving social cohesion, and guarantee adequate housing for residents.

[REDACTED]

The municipality of Veldhoven aims to achieve a nuanced balance by keeping social cohesion strong. This is in particular highly valued by political parties in Veldhoven. One strategy to support this goal is the implementation of programs that help highly skilled migrants learn Dutch. Additionally, Veldhoven actively supports associations such as football clubs, which are important for integration and strengthening social cohesion. These associations provide spaces for people from different backgrounds to connect and interact. Furthermore, to maintain a nuanced balance, it is beneficial for Veldhoven when ASML considers locations outside the municipality for its expansions. The rapid growth of ASML has significantly increased pressure in Veldhoven, and expansion into surrounding municipalities helps reduce this pressure on the municipality.

[REDACTED]

Housing is a cornerstone of Veldhoven's policies. To accommodate a 20–25% population increase over the next 10–15 years, the municipality plans to construct 400 housing units annually. With limited space, this growth prioritizes densification through high-rise buildings and the redevelopment of industrial sites into mixed-use areas. Affordability and inclusivity are emphasized, given the pressures created by high-income migrants.

The pressure on housing is significant across the Netherlands. Many municipalities are facing shrinking household sizes and population growth, leading to a demand that exceeds supply. In Veldhoven, this challenge is further exacerbated by the relatively limited space available for expansion. Finally, the growth of Brainport companies in Veldhoven further intensifies the pressure on the housing market.

[REDACTED]

The municipality collaborates closely with high-tech companies like ASML to ensure local infrastructure and housing meet workforce needs, while maintaining autonomy and balancing corporate demands with broader community interests. It recognizes the ripple effects of growth on sectors like education, healthcare, and public services and aims to attract people with different background and different careers. Preserving social cohesion is essential, with participatory approaches involving residents in planning to balance growth with community acceptance. Policies

aim to coordinate housing growth with improved public services and transport to maintain residents' quality of life.

The municipality of Eindhoven views highly skilled labour migration as essential to the region's success. Joint efforts between businesses, governments, and educational institutions since the 1990s have turned Eindhoven into a high-tech hub, boosting the economy and benefiting the Brainport region and the Netherlands. While the focus was initially economic, the municipality has shifted to incorporate wider community considerations, aiming for inclusivity and ensuring all residents can participate in Brainport's success.



Besides from this clear policy shift, the policy in Eindhoven regarding highly skilled migrants and the subsequent growth has remained highly consistent. Eindhoven's political landscape is characterized by its focus on the political middle ground, where central policies and social liberal values are important. This centrist approach has resulted in a balance between economic development and its effects on society. However, some political factions argue that large high-tech companies, despite contributions like those of ASML, should take on greater societal responsibilities.



Housing remains a challenge, with pressures heightened by highly skilled migration and a broader national crisis. Eindhoven collaborates with companies like ASML to develop housing and ensure regional responsibility is shared among neighbouring municipalities. There is also a policy emphasis on promoting Dutch language proficiency among migrants to improve social cohesion, with employers playing an important part in supporting these efforts. The focus of the municipality's policy remains on facilitating favourable conditions for highly skilled migrants and encouraging further growth. At the same time, the social component is becoming increasingly important.

Overall, Eindhoven is more positive about highly skilled migrants and growth, while in Veldhoven, the emphasis was slightly more on the drawbacks. Policymakers indicated that smaller and more rural municipalities show somewhat more resistance to growth and labour migration, although a minority still supports these ambitions.


4.2 Collaboration & Interactions

This section examines the collaboration between high-tech firms and municipalities, focusing on how policy preferences are put into action. It outlines the structure and frequency of collaboration, evaluates the partnership, points out main concerns and successes, and explores its development and future expectations. This analysis also looks at the roles of municipalities and businesses (sub-question Q2), showing recent shifts in responsibilities, and examines how actors with differing or similar interests interact to shape outcomes (sub-question Q3).


4.2.1 Structure of collaboration

The collaboration between Brainport high-tech companies and municipalities follows a triple helix structure, involving government, businesses, and knowledge institutions. Through the triple helix, the thematic agenda is developed, enabling municipalities and high-tech companies to put their policy preferences into action. Together, they create a strategic agenda outlining collective agreements, ensuring alignment and broad support for the strategic direction.

Effective collaboration between tech companies and municipalities is essential. While tech companies stress the need for local action on housing and infrastructure to support growth and attract skilled migrants, municipalities emphasize the growing pressure on housing and social services, showing how important business sector support is to work on these challenges.



All 21 Brainport municipalities are part of the Metropole Region Eindhoven (MRE), forming a network to improve connections with businesses and knowledge institutions. This partnership produces a shared agenda addressing several themes. Beyond the MRE, other collaborations exist, such as the Eindhoven urban area, which includes nine more urbanized municipalities. Furthermore, Veldhoven, Eindhoven, and Helmond engage in extensive and active collaboration.



4.2.2 Differences in interaction frequency between urban and rural municipalities

The frequency and intensity of interactions between Brainport municipalities and high-tech companies vary between urban and rural areas. Urban municipalities like Eindhoven, Veldhoven, and Helmond experience greater urgency and have more frequent and direct contact with high-tech companies such as ASML. These municipalities are often more appealing to businesses due to their capacity to support large-scale projects and their access to specialized expertise, which supports proactive collaboration. In contrast, smaller, rural municipalities often rely on indirect collaboration through the MRE

partnership. As a result, urban municipalities play a more prominent role in the collaboration with high-tech companies.

Moreover, Urban municipalities' policy preferences match more closely with those of high-tech companies, whereas the broader Brainport region shows greater variation. Rural municipalities have fewer interactions, making their collaboration less significant for analysis.

4.2.3 Quality of interactions

The quality of collaboration between high-tech companies and municipalities in Brainport Eindhoven reflect a dynamic and evolving partnership shaped by shared regional goals and individual organizational interests. The collaboration is characterized by frequent interactions and varying levels of intensity, depending on the specific challenges addressed. Municipalities, such as Eindhoven and Veldhoven maintain regular and structured contact with high-tech companies. For instance, the municipality of Veldhoven reports near-daily contact with ASML, evidencing the strong and intensive partnership in addressing strategic regional challenges like housing and infrastructure.

The municipality of Eindhoven also emphasizes the strong ties between the municipality and the high-tech industry, with the mayor of Eindhoven taking an important role as chairman of the Brainport collaboration. The municipality regularly engages in discussions with executives from major companies, often complemented by more informal settings.

These visions from the municipalities are also shared by the high-tech companies, as evidenced by this quote:

These short communication lines are frequently cited as successful element of the collaboration. The efficient communication lines make sure that high-tech companies and municipalities can coordinate quickly. Municipalities also acknowledge that large high-tech companies often receive strong support from municipalities, given their economic contributions.

[REDACTED]

Differing views and preferences arise despite the collaboration. However, these are limited. This is mainly because Brainport municipalities and high-tech companies jointly establish an agenda with shared goals. When disagreements occur, the plan is to tackle these disagreements together, ideally through face-to-face interactions.

In recent years, significant effort has been made to strengthen the relationship between certain high-tech companies and Brainport municipalities. Previously, these relationships were primarily transactional in nature. As both parties increasingly recognized their shared interests, the relationship changed, becoming more collaborative and personal. ASML pointed out the importance of face-to-face interactions.

[REDACTED]

Collaborating in frequent dialogue and maintaining honesty are frequently mentioned by both the public and private sectors, with both mentioning the high level of transparency between the parties. Nonetheless, the municipality of Veldhoven notes that ASML does not always reveal its full intentions.

[REDACTED]

Overall, the municipality of Veldhoven is highly satisfied with the collaboration and the sense of responsibility demonstrated by ASML. The company is responsive to the impacts of its operations and actively invests in societal initiatives, including its housing program, infrastructure, building maintenance, and contributions to local sports associations. In this way, ASML takes responsibility for its corporate operations, a perspective shared by both the municipality and ASML. The only difference lies in their perspective on ASML's motivation: ASML presents these investments as intrinsic commitment, while Veldhoven views them as primarily intended to support the company's future growth.

[REDACTED]

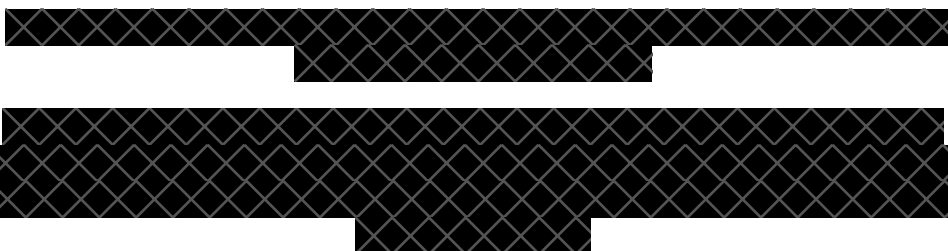
In the division of roles between the municipality and high-tech companies, many stakeholders emphasize the importance of remaining within their respective roles. Municipalities, in particular, aim to maintain their autonomy and take responsibility for core governmental duties. These boundaries serve as a key foundation for the collaboration.

An important part of the collaboration is the mutual sense of goodwill between companies and municipalities. For instance, tech companies occasionally take on tasks that are traditionally municipal responsibilities. While these tasks correspond with the interests of the tech companies, their involvement remains unusual. In return, municipalities actively support these companies, exemplified by aiding their lobbying efforts toward the national government.



A defining aspect of the collaboration is that most agreements are not formally structured. For example, the Municipality of Eindhoven encourages large companies with high numbers of highly skilled migrants to provide opportunities for these migrants to learn some Dutch language skills, facilitating easier integration. However, this is not mandated; instead, the focus is on mentioning the shared interest in successful integration and improved language proficiency.

Finally, both ASML and NXP indicate that they experience some differences in perspective with the Brainport municipalities they collaborate with (mainly the urban ones). When such differences do arise, both parties address them together through frequent face-to-face interactions.



Overall, the collaboration between high-tech companies and municipalities in Brainport Eindhoven is marked by frequent and generally high-quality interactions. Companies like ASML and NXP appreciate the proactive role of municipalities, while municipalities value the strategic contributions of high-tech firms in addressing regional challenges. However, keeping this balance requires ongoing effort to align diverse priorities and make sure that growth benefits both the industry and the community.

The primary source of conflicts and potential future problems lies in differences in working methods rather than contrasting policy preferences. These conflicts are explored in the following paragraph.


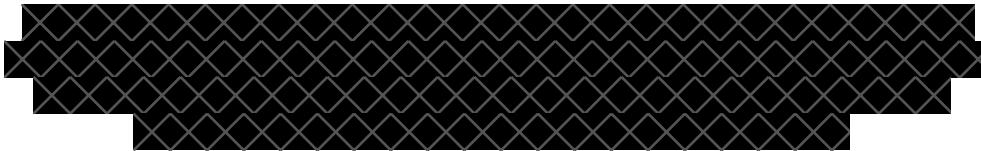
4.2.4 Conflict of interest: present challenges and future risks

This section focuses specifically on the conflicts or challenges that arise between the two parties. Key challenges are identified to ensure the collaboration remains effective and can potentially improve. Furthermore, potential future conflicts or difficulties are also examined (sub-question Q4).


Key challenge 1 – Differences in pace

The most frequently mentioned challenge in the current collaboration between high-tech companies and municipalities is the stark difference in pace. High-tech companies like ASML and NXP, driven by global competitiveness, require rapid decision-making and implementation. In contrast, municipalities operate within a slower decision making process, due to bureaucracy, public participation requirements, and long-term planning horizons. This mismatch has led to frustration and friction on both sides.


ASML has explicitly expressed concerns over delays in implementing previously agreed-upon projects, such as P+R hubs. Despite plans being made five years ago, not even locations have been selected. ASML described this as a breakdown of trust and questioned municipalities' ability to deliver.



From the municipalities' perspective, efforts to plan for horizons of 10 to 15 years are often challenged by the fast-changing priorities of businesses. While municipalities prioritize stability and long-term planning, large high-tech companies struggle with internal uncertainties and fast changes in direction driven by market dynamics.



This discrepancy in pace also impacts the quality of outcomes. Municipalities recognize the need for fast decision-making but emphasize their responsibility to ensure comprehensive and responsible decisions. Municipalities are required to organize public participation processes, and certain proposals must also be presented to the municipal council. These procedures are time-intensive.



Municipalities acknowledge the frustration expressed by businesses but emphasize their responsibility to ensure thorough and well-considered decision-making.

Addressing this challenge requires a balance between the adaptability of high-tech companies and the structured processes of municipalities.

Key challenge 2 – Clear boundaries between roles (Avoid blurring boundaries)

The boundary between municipal and corporate responsibilities is another point of tension. While companies like ASML actively support public initiatives, such as housing projects and sports facilities, municipalities mention the importance to keep oversight. Over-reliance on corporate initiatives could lead to blurred responsibilities and loss of autonomy.

Interviewees do not currently view this as a significant problem; however, there are increasing examples that approach the boundaries of a clear governmental responsibility. An example of blurred boundaries is ASML's donation of a synthetic football field to Veldhoven football clubs. While the gesture was appreciated, it sparked discussions about whether this action infringed upon responsibilities typically managed by the municipality.



ASML aims to give back to the community, recognizing that many employees or their children play football in Veldhoven. By donating the synthetic field, ASML hopes to cut down the wait times for new members. However, the municipality draw attention to the importance of clear expectations and communication regarding such boundary cases to avoid possible conflict in the future.

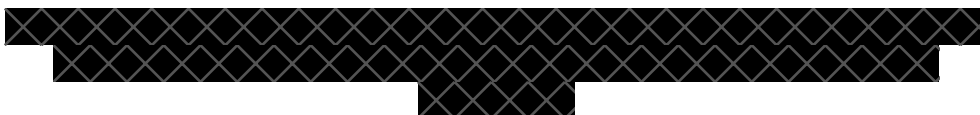
Another example involves language programs for highly skilled migrants. Currently, both municipalities and companies encourage employees to acquire basic knowledge of the Dutch language, due to its importance for integration into local communities. However, no formal responsibilities have been agreed on, framing this as more of a shared goal. Consequently, there is no clear accountability if these efforts fail.



It is important that companies contribute to public initiatives in a way that respects municipal autonomy and avoids interfering on governmental responsibilities (Role clarity).

Key challenge 3 – Fragmentation within government

The fragmented nature of governance in the Netherlands makes the collaboration more difficult. High-tech companies experience frustration due to the fragmentated structure. Responsibilities are divided across municipalities, provinces, and the national government, leading to inefficiencies



Interviewees explained the ambition to further improve the collaboration, aiming for greater efficiency. Currently, companies need to coordinate with numerous governmental entities.

[REDACTED]

Key challenge 4 – Serving diverse interests

Municipalities face the difficulties of balancing the interests of high-tech companies, smaller businesses, and local residents. High-tech companies often push for fast action to meet their growth targets, while smaller businesses and residents prioritize maintaining social cohesion and affordability. Particularly in areas dealing with housing shortages, residents may feel overlooked, which shows the need for inclusive planning processes to build trust and take care of concerns. Achieving this balance requires municipalities to equitably serve the interests of all citizens and businesses, from small enterprises to major high-tech companies.

This is an area where tension can arise in the collaboration. For example, the municipality of Veldhoven acknowledges that they sometimes struggle to find the right balance between supporting large high-tech companies and providing adequate support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The municipality notes that while a company like ASML is not above the law, it does receive advantaged treatment. At the same time, ASML also supports the municipality by contributing to municipal responsibilities. However, there are concerns within the municipality about whether SMEs receive sufficient support, despite their vital importance to the local community.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The municipality highlights that rapid growth is driving up costs and making land increasingly scarce, which creates challenges for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Unlike larger corporations, SMEs have fewer resources to adapt to these changes, despite their critical importance to the local economy. Furthermore, SMEs are essential for the community, particularly in supporting local associations. A shrinking SME sector could negatively impact these associations, which are important for integration and social cohesion. This presents a clear risk that needs careful attention.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Key challenge 5 – Transparency and trust

Almost all interviewees indicate that there is significant trust between municipalities and high-tech companies. Additionally, both parties mention that they operate with full transparency. However, this is not always perceived true. Focusing even more on transparency and trust could improve the quality of the collaboration, although it does not appear to be a major issue at this moment.

The following two quotes illustrate that there is a difference in perception:

[Redacted quote]

Potential future conflicts

This paragraph focus on potential future conflicts. Some are tied to rapid growth, while others focus more on the dynamics of collaboration.

Economic growth has brought Brainport Eindhoven significant prosperity, but municipalities and businesses are increasingly aware of its negative side effects. Policymakers in Veldhoven emphasize the strain on local infrastructure and services, including housing, healthcare, and education.

[Redacted quote]

Firstly, the municipality of Veldhoven has observed an increase in the number of objections raised. This trend may reflect a shifting public opinion, which, in turn, influences the political climate of the region. For the collaboration between municipalities and high-tech companies regarding highly skilled migrants, keep the public opinion predominantly in favour is beneficial and even needed. Therefore, it is important to be aware of this and tackle this issue early on.

[Redacted quote]

Furthermore, the municipality of Eindhoven highlights the widening gap (disparity) between certain groups within the community. Highly educated individuals tend to benefit significantly more from the growth than those with lower levels of education, potentially exacerbating income disparities. This growing inequality could lead to polarization and a decline in social cohesion.

[Redacted quote]

Additionally, the growing pressure on education, healthcare, and community organizations has been frequently highlighted. This could potentially change public opinion, which could impact the collaboration.

It is also important to enhance better collaboration between high-tech companies and smaller rural Brainport municipalities. In recent years, the relationship between urban municipalities and high-tech companies has developed, because of the need to manage current challenges. With the Brainport region anticipating further growth, rural municipalities are expected to face a larger range of issues. Establishing even better partnerships will be key in managing the influx of highly skilled migrants in a good way, and guarantee sustainable development. With the ongoing expansions, rural municipalities will play an increasingly important role in the future.

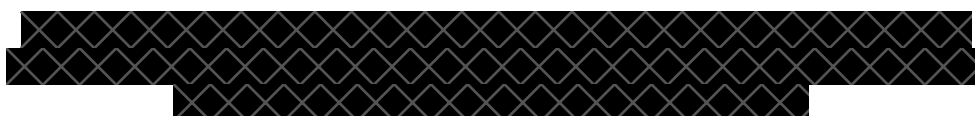
Several factors could influence the collaboration in the future. First, ASML clearly stands out as a frontrunner in community engagement, with both policymakers and ASML itself acknowledging the uniqueness of its contributions. Other major high-tech companies in the region currently play a less active role, benefiting indirectly from ASML's efforts. Should ASML shift its strategies or other companies fail to step up, tensions could arise.

Moreover, high-tech companies appear to have large influence in the collaboration with (local) governments. They report easy access to policymakers who can shape policy in their favour. This access is more difficult for other sectors and SMEs. This disparity brings up questions about whether these tech giants hold too much power, a concern previously pointed out by other researchers.

4.2.5 Development of roles, tasks, and the collaboration

Over the years, the collaboration between Brainport municipalities and high-tech companies has grown and changed. What started as a primarily economic partnership has expanded to include social challenges like housing, infrastructure, and community development. An early step towards a different and closer way of collaborating was improving Veldhoven's regional accessibility, where businesses contributed both financially and with expertise.

Today, companies like ASML play a key role in helping solve regional issues, investing in housing and public services, and helping reduce local resistance. This reflects a greater awareness of their impact on society and a stronger sense of responsibility compared to the past. NXP, while less focused on social initiatives, maintains close relationships with policymakers and uses its network to influence regional strategies.



The relationship has evolved from being transactional to one based on trust and shared goals. Municipalities focus on balancing societal needs with regional growth, while high-tech companies align their economic interests with community support. This collaboration now combines strategic and social objectives, creating a stronger partnership that benefits the entire region.

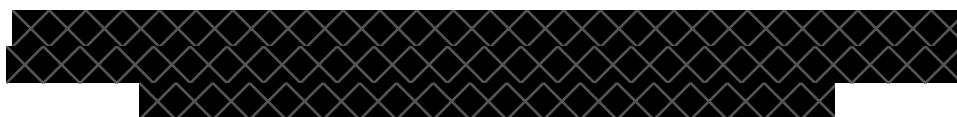
4.2.6 Lessons for other regions

The research also studied lessons for other regions facing a strong demand for highly skilled migrants. What lessons can these regions learn from the collaboration in Brainport, and what challenges should they be cautious of?

Key success factors include the collaborative development of an agenda based on shared goals, encouraging unity and focus. This way of collaborating makes sure that both parties collectively work towards common goals. Additionally, the importance of keeping short communication lines is frequently mentioned, allowing high-tech companies to engage quickly with government authorities. Finally, the added value of face-to-face interactions is mentioned several times. Face-to-face interactions have helped to create deeper, more meaningful relationships.

At the same time, it becomes evident that both parties must remain aware of the differences in pace and collaboratively explore ways to diminish this challenge. Additionally, it is important to create clear agreements and boundaries. Public-private partnerships operate within a sensitive framework, demanding a strong and sustainable foundation to ensure accountability in balancing economic and societal needs, which is necessary to keep the public opinion in favour of highly skilled migration.

Interestingly, the municipality of Veldhoven highlights the difference in pace between government and business as both a strength and a key lesson for other regions. The municipality notes that its collaboration with the private sector has led to increased efficiency.



The municipality of Eindhoven remarks that many visitors come to learn from their collaboration. However, this partnership emerged from numerous past developments, making it difficult to replicate.



NXP emphasizes that other regions must develop well-structured plans to be entitled to funding. These plans should clearly outline the potential costs to governments if these companies are not supported, showing the added value for the total welfare.



5. Discussion & Conclusion

This chapter focuses on what the results of this research actually imply. First, the research question will be addressed, and the main findings that collectively answer the research question and the four sub-questions will be presented. Subsequently, attention will shift to how these findings relate to the existing theory on this topic. Following this, the scientific and societal implications of this research will be discussed, before concluding with the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Answering the research question and presenting main findings

The central research question during this study was: "How do municipalities and high-tech companies interact to shape policies and practices around high-skilled migration in Brainport Eindhoven's high-tech sector, and what lessons can be drawn from these interactions?" Through qualitative research, data was gathered from municipalities and high-tech companies to analyse their collaboration and identify key dynamics, challenges, and lessons in addressing high-skilled migration.

The findings indicate that both municipalities and high-tech companies in Brainport Eindhoven recognize the importance of high-skilled migration for the region's growth. High-tech companies, particularly ASML and NXP, strongly prefer open migration policies, as they rely heavily on international talent to continue operations. Municipalities, while generally supportive, take a more cautious stance, mentioning the importance of a balance between economic growth and societal considerations like housing, affordability, social cohesion and infrastructure demands. Both parties agree on the necessity of attracting high-skilled migrants, even though with differing priorities and approaches.

Collaboration follows a structured yet flexible model, organized through the triple helix framework. Urban municipalities, such as Eindhoven and Veldhoven, maintain frequent, high-quality interactions with high-tech companies, characterized by short communication lines and shared strategic agendas. This collaboration is marked by goodwill and commitment to align policy preferences. However, differences in pace, transparency concerns, and the need for clearer role definitions seem to be key challenges. These challenges are therefore focus areas.

Despite strong alignment in goals, conflicts arise primarily from procedural differences rather than conflicting policy preferences. High-tech companies push for fast decisions, while municipalities prioritize long-term planning and participation. This tension highlights the need for both parties to balance speed with carefulness. Additionally, it is important to keep clear boundaries to make sure municipalities retain autonomy while high-tech companies contribute responsibly. Furthermore, municipalities face the added challenge of balancing demands from high-tech companies with those of smaller businesses and residents, striving for equitable growth that benefits the broader community.

In conclusion, municipalities and high-tech companies in Brainport Eindhoven collaborate through structured partnerships to shape policies and practices around high-skilled migration. Their way of collaborating is characterized by mutual dependence, shared goals and commitment to address issues. While the collaboration effectively supports economic growth, challenges such as differences in pace and role clarity remain. These interactions show how important it is to build trust, keep communication open and align interests to guarantee a sustainable partnership. This study points out lessons for other regions, including bringing together public and private interests, keep efficient communication, and developing clear agreements to balance economic and societal needs.

Alignment main results with existing theories

The research findings largely align with existing theories on highly skilled migration. Firstly, the Brainport region has a high demand for highly skilled migration, which contributes to economic growth. Companies like ASML and NXP are expanding, boosting the Brainport economy. However, the Brainport region also faces drawbacks, such as a widening gap between highly educated and less-educated groups. Municipal representatives express concerns about these growing disparities, social cohesion, and rising housing prices.

Lee & Clarke (2019) similarly show that some people benefit less or are even disadvantaged by the arrival of large numbers of highly skilled migrants. These concerns are also evident in Brainport, and it seems that high-tech companies share these worries too. For instance, ASML increasingly takes on roles traditionally handled by the municipality to make sure most people benefit from the region's growth. This is in line with Collier's (2018) theory, which states that globalization and highly skilled migration are beneficial to the economy, but that those who benefit less or are negatively affected must be compensated. Collier (2018), however, argues that governments should address this with governmental policies. The Brainport municipalities also take this approach but do so in close collaboration with the high-tech sector, with major tech companies taking a main role in this process. Strengthening this collaboration further is essential to be certain that more people can benefit from the growth.

The research offers an understanding of how the collaboration functions, which aspects can be improved, and what should be maintained. By addressing current and potential future risks, the drawbacks of highly skilled migration can be managed more effectively. This, in turn, helps to continue the arrival of highly skilled migrants, which is important for further economic development.

Furthermore, the results show a clear alignment between the policy preferences of employers and the government and those outlined in existing theory. Employers favour open and liberalized policies, while perspectives within governments are more diverse (Kolbe, 2020). However, the Brainport municipalities also express a very positive view toward highly skilled migration.

Finally, tech companies seem to hold a lot of influence on policy due to their strong connections with the government, their ability to quickly collaborate with policymakers, and their financial investments to support governmental efforts (Bank et al., 2021). According to the municipality of Veldhoven, this influence even drives them to make additional efforts for companies like ASML compared to others, which is in line with the argument of Khanal et al., (2024).

Scientific and societal implications

Scientific implications:

Firstly, This research builds upon theories about the pros and cons of highly skilled migration, the policy preferences of municipal policymakers and high-tech firms, and the influence of high-tech employers in shaping skilled migration policies in Brainport Eindhoven.

Moreover, this research tries to create a better understanding of public-private collaborations, especially in high-tech regions, through focus on how municipalities and businesses work together to manage highly skilled migration effectively. The study identifies important parts of the collaboration and tries to identify success factors and challenges. The goal is to create a reliable overview of the real world interactions. Therefore, this research adds value because current literature focus mostly on national and international contexts instead of the collaboration between governments and private actors in local context.

Although region-specific, the findings could help to develop new theories about this issue. By aggregating theories from comparable case studies, this research helps to understand the dynamics, tensions and strategies related to collaborations between municipalities and companies around high-skilled migration in local context.

Societal and policy implications:

This research helps policymakers and companies to successful manage and organize highly-skilled migration. For policymakers, it emphasize the importance of balancing economic growth with societal issues like housing affordability and social cohesion. For companies, it emphasizes the added value of understanding how municipalities and governmental processes work. Furthermore, it is beneficial for companies to connect their corporate actions to regional priorities.

The study acts as learning tool for employees in large companies, helping them better understand how the government works. At the same time, municipalities gain a clearer view of the perspectives of high-tech companies, making more effective collaboration possible. Other regions, companies, and local governments can draw lessons from Brainport Eindhoven's experiences, improving their collaborations.

Ultimately, this study shows ideas of public-private partnerships, offering a pathway for better collaborations in the future in region that deal with a high demand for highly skilled migrants.

Key takeaways for public and private stakeholders:

- Clear roles and responsibilities: Clearly define who is responsible for specific tasks, such as providing housing, improving infrastructure, or supporting integration. This ensures that municipalities maintain autonomy while businesses play an active role, avoiding overlaps or miscommunication in their collaboration.
- Address differences in pace: Municipalities should aim to speed-up their decision-making processes without lowering quality, while businesses can support municipalities by showing understanding of the necessary timelines of municipalities and helping them where feasible. Businesses can do this by offering resources or expertise to simplify implementation challenges.
- Joint strategic agendas: Develop shared strategic agendas to align municipal and business priorities. This collaboration ensures that regional economic growth is balanced with societal needs, creating a structure for harmonized efforts and collective advantages.
- Efficient communication: Focus on short communication lines and prioritizing face-to-face interactions. These approaches build trust, enhance mutual understanding, and enable faster resolutions to challenges, which could lead to more effective collaborations between public and private actors
- High-tech companies and rural municipalities are advised to start building mutual relationships. With the expected rapid growth, this collaboration will become increasingly important, while it is currently still limited and transactional.
- Consider the most effective role as a company in collaboration: particularly for large high-tech firms operating in regions with high demand for highly skilled migrants. These regions often deal with pressure on housing and social cohesion. Business support can take off some of the pressure and make it possible for municipalities to fulfil their role effectively. Facilitating sustainable partnerships between businesses and municipalities benefits all parties involved. It also helps to keep the public opinion in favour of migration. Companies can opt for a co-financing role, providing financial support for projects, or a co-operating role, actively contributing to government tasks. When municipal pressure becomes high, adopting a co-operating role may be better to guarantee the future arrival of highly skilled migrants.

Limitations of the research

The goal of this study has been to answer the following research question: "How do public and private sector agents interact to shape policies and practices around high-skilled migration in Brainport Eindhoven's high-tech sector, and what lessons can be drawn from these interactions?"

The approach of non-anonymous interviewing could have been reconsidered in reflection, as it may have influenced the openness of responses. Collaboration and interactions between municipalities and

high-tech companies appear to be sensitive topics, reflected in the careful phrasing used by interviewees, such as "what I can share" or "a point where there is consensus." This caution shows the importance of keeping good relationships, but it may have limited the depth of critique or discussion of more sensitive issues.

The sensitivity of the topic may have limited participants' openness, potentially influencing the richness and depth of the data collected. Moreover, critiques often followed a pattern of addressing no more than two points, such as pace differences and unclear roles in collaboration. Anonymous interviews might have encouraged participants to share more open, diverse, or robust perspectives, potentially offering a deeper understanding of the subject.

Social desirability bias likely influenced responses, especially for municipal policymakers who need to balance the interests of different inhabitants. This made it harder for them to openly criticize current interactions or policies. Similarly, both employers and municipalities may have avoided strong criticism to protect future collaborations. As a result, some issues may have been downplayed or missed completely.

Although many key stakeholders were interviewed, it remains challenging to assess the entire collaboration based on these interviews alone. Expanding the sample size could strengthen the robustness of the findings. This study focused in particular on how governments collaborate with large (high-tech) companies and the challenges they face. Obviously, the research is context-specific and not directly transferable to other regions. However, it provides ideas for governments and companies to think about in their collaboration. These ideas have been included in the societal relevance.

Other findings and suggestions for future research

While the collaboration between municipalities and high-tech companies in Brainport Eindhoven is generally assessed as positive, despite some conflicts, this partnership primarily exists between urban municipalities and high-tech companies. Currently, there is limited interaction between rural municipalities and high-tech companies, even though these municipalities are expected to play an increasingly important role in the future. Housing, infrastructure and social cohesion will be more important in more rural municipalities as well due to the region's growth. Strengthening these relationships with urgency seems important to supporting future growth and accommodating more highly skilled migrants.

High-tech companies can rapidly engage with policymakers, actively lobbying and influencing policy, which gives them a certain degree of power. However, there is a clear difference in the level of community engagement among these companies. Policymakers often highlight the same firms taking active roles in responding to pressures such as housing challenges. Greater involvement from other companies could help manage this pressure more effectively. Additionally, relying on just a few high-

tech companies contributions is a risk if these companies decide to reduce their support or exit the region.

Furthermore, it is important to reflect on the balance municipalities are struggling to keep. Many interviewees mentioned to worry about this balance. The strong growth of the dominant high-tech sector has raised worries about the space available for SMEs and the interests of citizens. There are also signs of a growing divide between groups as a result of high-skilled migration. Income polarization could weaken social cohesion. Here, the government plays a role in avoiding some people from falling behind as the region grows. Failing to do so could increase the chance of residents voting for anti-immigration parties, potentially jeopardizing the future arrival of high-skilled migrants and putting further growth at risk.

Returning to the space for SMEs, interviewees highlighted the key role these businesses play in supporting local associations. These associations are considered key pillars for the integration of high-skilled migrants and contribute significantly to social cohesion. A decline in SMEs could therefore negatively impact social cohesion, often referred to as the shrinking middle class.

This raises an interesting angle for further research: to what extent are SMEs under pressure in Brainport Eindhoven, what are the consequences, and how can this be mitigated?

Finally, an additional angle for future research concerns the importance of consistent policies in public-private collaboration. Policymakers emphasized how important policy consistency is for effective collaboration. Both in Veldhoven and Eindhoven, it was mentioned that their local policies are much more consistent than the national policies of the central government.

This consistency may contribute to the quality of collaboration between high-tech companies and municipalities. The role of consistent policies cannot be underestimated. It may even shape the positive view of collaboration. It is possible that the positive assessment of public-private partnerships in Brainport are influenced more by policy consistency than by the collaboration structure itself. In this sense, consistency in policy could act as a confounding factor that partially influences how well the collaboration is evaluated.

It would be interesting to conduct research in various regions to assess public-private collaboration and compare these findings with the level of policy consistency. For instance, this could involve analysing regions governed by similar political parties versus those with common political shifts. Such research could provide a better understanding of how policy consistency impacts the viewed success of public-private collaborations.

Overall, all these different types of research could be beneficial for collaborations between governments, businesses and society, making the most of the benefits of highly skilled migration while minimising the potential drawbacks.

6. Appendices

In this concluding section, all appendices of the research are presented. First, all references are listed in APA style. Next, a detailed account of all interview transcripts is provided in English. These transcripts have been translated as the interviews were conducted in Dutch. Finally, the fully detailed transcripts are also included in Dutch. These are the original transcripts, not translated versions, as the interviews were conducted in Dutch. Additionally, these Dutch transcripts were shared with the interviewees after the interviews to ensure that the information accurately reflects the content of the interviews.

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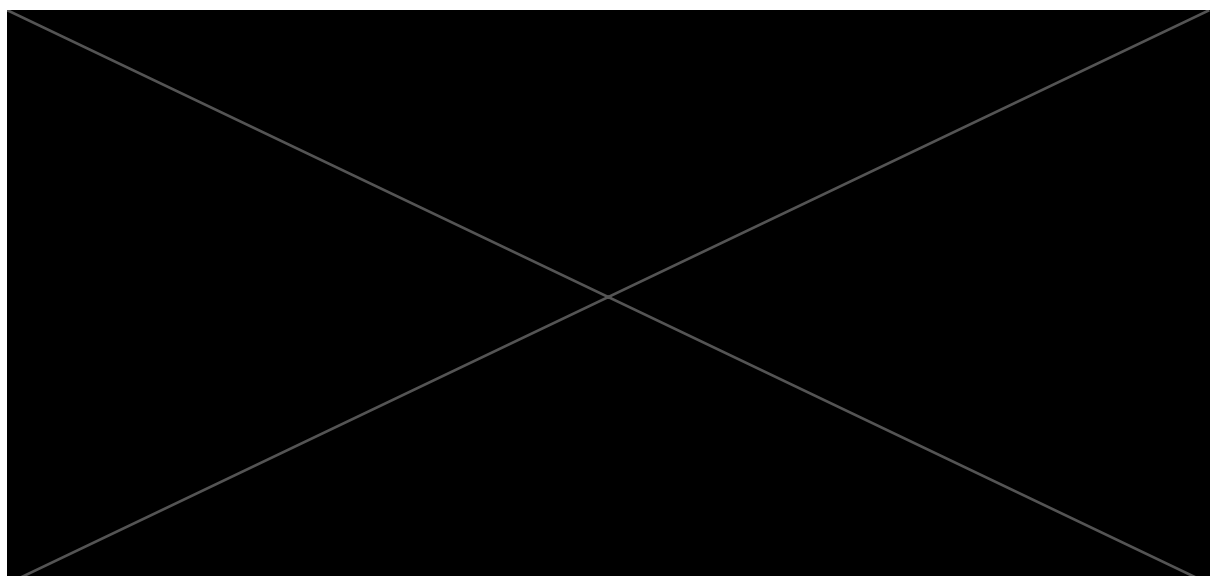
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6.2 Translated interviews in English

Not included in this version due to privacy concerns, these full transcripts are only available upon request to the supervisor and assessors of this thesis. Requests can be made via



All interviews have been translated into English. These interviews are presented in the same order as the numbering in the table below.



Interview list + Date:

- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

6.3 Detailed interviews in Dutch (as conducted)

Not included in this version due to privacy concerns, these full transcripts are only available upon request to the supervisor and assessors of this thesis. Requests can be made via

[REDACTED]

Below are the original Dutch interviews. The fully detailed transcripts are included in Dutch, representing the original versions rather than translations, as the interviews were conducted in Dutch. Additionally, these Dutch transcripts were shared with the interviewees after the interviews. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

