Integrating Cultural Heritage in Urban Planning

An interpretative analysis of Utrecht's long-term spatial vision: the Ruimtelijke Strategie
Utrecht 2040

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1 Introduction

Over the past three decades, the question of how cultural heritage can be integrated into urban planning has gradually turned into a recognition that heritage and development can no longer be treated as separate domains. Archaeology, traditionally understood as a discipline focused on reconstructing human development over time and space, can also offer valuable insights for contemporary and future challenges (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2013, p. 9). In the context of urban planning, this means that heritage is more than just a constraint to be managed; it is a source of information and inspirations that can actively inform spatial strategies and more. As UNESCO notes, "the different approaches – heritage, economic, environmental and sociocultural – do not conflict; they are complementary and their long-term success depends on being linked together" (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2013, p. 9).

This thesis follows that idea into practice. It takes Utrecht as a case study and a starting point to explore how heritage is understood and mobilized in the city's long-term planning vision, the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* (RSU 2040) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a). Adopted in 2021, this plan imagines Utrecht as a "ten-minute city", within a compact and inclusive urban model. By analyzing how heritage is represented in the plan's discourse and in its public debate, this research asks what it means, in practice, to integrate the past into the city's future. In tracing how Utrecht imagines its own future through its past, this thesis reflects on cultural heritage as a living framework through which we, as society, can rethink the kind of cities we want to live in.

1.1 Background and context of the research

Over the past few decades, the integration of heritage and development has emerged as both a theoretical and practical shift within planning and heritage fields. In the European context, the *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* (Valletta Convention) (Council of Europe, 1992) played a key role in institutionalizing the integration of archaeology into spatial planning (Bringmans, 2018, pp. 209–210). A few years later, the *European Landscape Convention* (Council of Europe, 2000) defined landscape as the result of the interaction between natural and cultural processes as perceived by people, thereby integrating materiality, perception, and use within a single conceptual framework. This meant, among other things, the need to move away from sector-based policies toward approaches grounded in specific places. Such integration requires considering how complex

our land, our landscapes, and our communities are, as well as the social values that shape them.

This perspective is well illustrated in UNESCO's New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained (2013, pp. 12–13). The "Layers of the City" diagram (Figure 1) visualizes how landforms, water systems, infrastructure, cultural practices, and social values overlap in continuous interaction. It shows the urban landscape not as something that is just there, but as a living place that shapes and is shaped by the everyday lives of the people who inhabit and visit it. The picture captures how complex urban heritage really is, with natural, cultural, social, and economic processes all closely woven together.
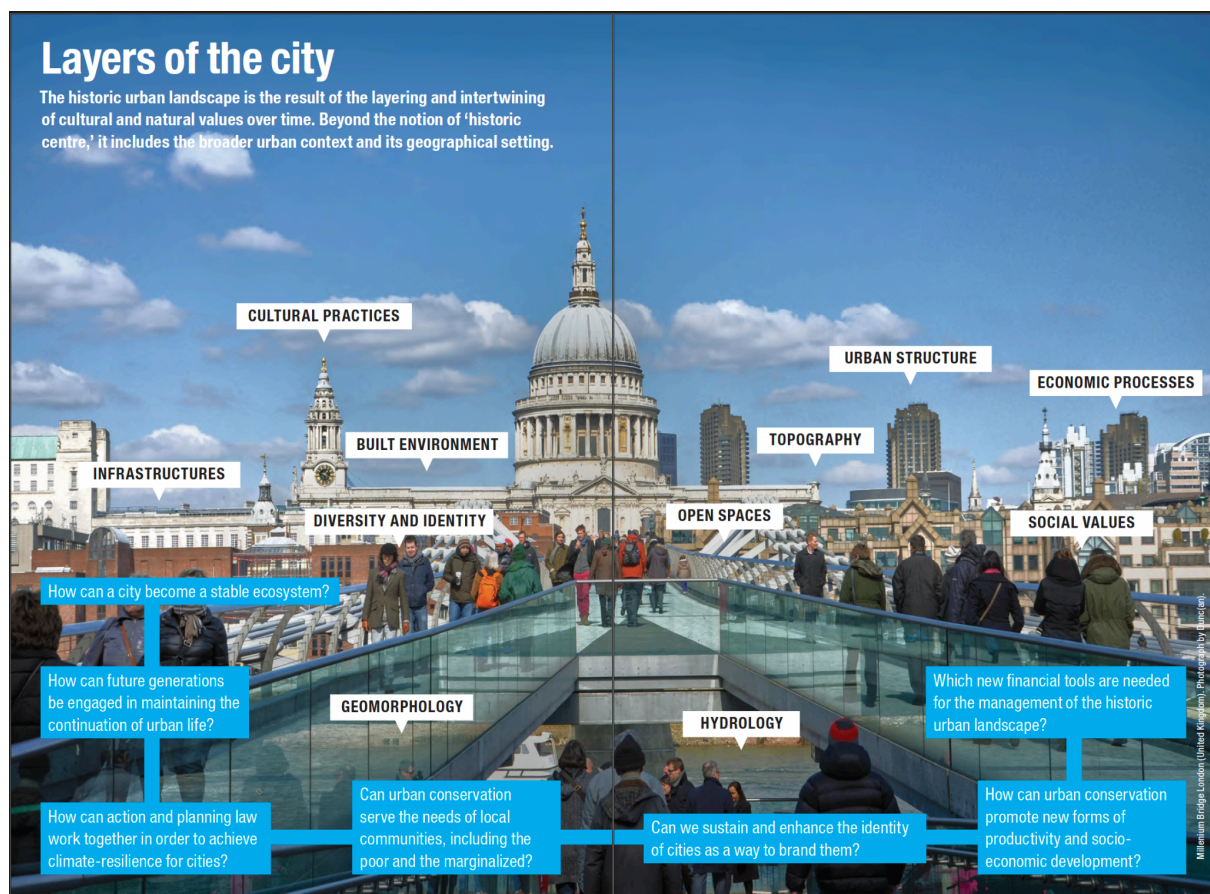
Figure 1.1 Layers of the City within the Historic Urban Landscape Approach. Source: UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2013, pp. 12–13), *New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained.*

For archaeologists, the idea of layers is more than a nice metaphor. In a way, they are the pages of the book we read, looking at the accumulated material traces of human history in the

soil. The archaeological practice is to interpret the palimpsest of lived environments that connects past and present.

Scholars such as Bloemers et al. (2010) have emphasized that heritage and landscape are not unchanging legacies but ongoing processes of transformation, constantly reinterpreted through planning and practice. From this view, heritage can no longer be understood simply as remains of the past. It is an evolving practice through which meanings and values are continuously negotiated and re-created. As McDermott and Nic Craith (2024, p. 2) summarize, drawing on Smith (2006, p. 11), heritage is "not so much a "thing" as a set of values and meanings." Other authors, such as Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge (2007, p. 3), have shown how conflicting interpretations of the same past coexist, while Lowenthal (2015, p. xv) reminds us that the past is continually reconstructed to serve present purposes. More recently, Holtorf and Högberg (2021, p. 5) have proposed a forward-looking approach in which heritage anticipates change rather than merely preserving stability. From this perspective, the past can be a resource that helps us to deal with the challenges of the present and imagining sustainable futures (McDermott & Nic Craith, 2024, p. 3).

This conceptual shift has also shaped international and national legislation. The 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention established the worldwide need to protect heritage, urging the states not only to conserve but to integrate heritage in planning and in community life (UNESCO, 1972, Art. 5). Later, the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005) also moved the European focus, this time from objects to values and community meanings. Its emphasis lies in the human and social significance of heritage, and its link to democracy, participation, and identity (Council of Europe, 2005, Art. 1, 5). Together, these conventions served as bridges between conceptual (re)definitions of heritage and their practical integration into law and policy.

In the Netherlands, these international debates have found their place within the national discussion as well. The *Belvedere Programma* (Belvedere Program, 1999–2009) (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen et al., 1999) was very important, encouraging planners to consider cultural history as a resource for spatial quality and promoting a shift from protecting individual monuments to recognising them as integrated part of their landscapes. The subsequent Dutch ratification of the Valletta Convention in 2001 (Council of Europe, 1992), also widely known as Malta Convention, gave archaeology a more formal role in the national planning law, requiring municipalities to account for archaeological values in development projects.

Still, despite indubitably significant progress, scholars continue to point out that integration remains partial. Janssen et al. (2014, pp. 621) and Tarrafa Silva et al. (2023, pp. 3–4) noted that integration often remains at the "information stage". This means that heritage is acknowledged in plans but easily undermined by other development goals, and there is a tendency to privilege tangible and object-oriented aspects, while broader cultural and social values receive less attention (Tarrafa Silva et al., 2023, pp. 3–4). Bloemers et al. (2010, pp. 11–15) described the challenge as the "heritage paradox," as an inherent tension between protection and development. The paradox lies in the need to protect heritage precisely by allowing it to evolve, an idea captured in the Dutch principle of "*conservation through development*", the motto of the *Belvedere Memorandum*: "By seeking new uses, old landscapes and buildings can be saved. However, it is just as much a question of *'development through conservation.'* By using our cultural heritage in a frugal and responsible manner, we are investing in the development and strengthening of our identity, knowledge, comfort, business climate, and potential for tourism" (Bloemers et al., 2010, pp. 7–8).

More recently, Fatorić and Biesbroek (2020, p. 309) also show that similar barriers continue to shape policy innovation: even in climate-adaptation efforts, a matter very much on the agenda in the present, institutional fragmentation and short-term priorities limit the translation of heritage principles into practice. The challenge lies not in the absence of frameworks but in the difficulty of integrating them in practice and across domains of governance and planning.

These challenges are particularly notable in fast-growing cities like Utrecht, where urban growth coincides with questions and debates about identity and heritage. In order to understand how these tensions are addressed in the municipality's long-term planning framework, particularly in the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040, it is necessary to outline the legal and policy frameworks in which they are framed.

1.2 Heritage and Planning Policy in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the governance of cultural and archaeological heritage is organized through a multi-level framework that combines international commitments, national legislation, and local implementation. Accordingly, the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* cannot be read only as a local vision but it is necessarily an expression of broader principles

articulated in the Dutch policy framework. The following section outlines the main heritage-related national framework of the last decades with their international influence.

Dutch heritage policy and spatial planning had separate origins but gradually became increasingly interrelated over the twentieth century, as the state involved more in the landscape reorganization (Janssen, 2014, p. 623). This convergence reflected social movements, international frameworks and long-term shifts in governance in a general sense.

Janssen et al. (2014) recall that in the early twentieth century, "the first initiatives to protect built heritage were undertaken by the wealthy middle class . . . [and] private associations" (Janssen et al., 2014, p. 3). And from the second half of the century, "heritage protection developed impetus through legislation; the most important milestone being the Monuments and Historic Buildings Act of 1961" (Janssen, 2014, p. 623). In this post-war context, conservation was largely government-driven, focusing on assembling national collections through the official listing of monuments. At this stage, heritage was protected in an isolated manner, with the emphasis placed on individual sites and their physical features or their historical attributes. The historic buildings were "to be protected for its [their] own sake rather than to perform any wider social or economic role" (Janssen, 2014, p. 623).

This conception of heritage was gradually challenged from the 1970s onwards (Janssen, 2014, p. 623). Community-based urban renewal movements and resistance to modernist redevelopment brought greater attention to the urban context of monuments. And in the 1980s and 1990s, heritage acquired a new profile as liberalisation reshaped the planning agenda. Urban regeneration projects revealed the economic potential of heritage, turning it into a negotiable factor in development schemes (Janssen, 2014, p. 623).

In this period, globalisation also intensified international competition among cities and regions, creating "the opportunity, and the need, to redefine regional and local identities" (Janssen et. at., 2014, p. 6). Within the European context, "the Netherlands was neither unique nor innovative in linking material heritage with broader social, cultural and spatial developments in towns and regions." (Janssen et al., 2014, p. 6). Only in 1992, after large years of discussion in the matter, the Netherlands ratified the UNESCO World Heritage Convention from 1972, therefore recognizing "the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage." (UNESCO, 1972, Art. 4). That same year, the evolving context in the continent had its expression in the European Convention on the Protection of the

Archaeological Heritage, commonly known as the Valletta Convention (Council of Europe, 1992).

This Convention aimed to protect archaeological heritage "as a source of European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study" (Council of Europe, 1992, Art. 1). It introduced the principle of preventive archaeological management, requiring that archaeological concerns be integrated into planning and development policies from the earliest stages (Council of Europe, 1992, Art. 5.i). The treaty also stipulated systematic consultation between archaeologists and planners (Council of Europe, 1992, Art. 5.ii), the inclusion of archaeological considerations in environmental impact assessments (Council of Europe, 1992, Art. 5.iii), and prioritised *in situ* conservation wherever feasible (Council of Europe, 1992, Art. 5.iv).

Although the Netherlands signed the treaty in 1992, it was only ratified in 1997. In this sense, for most of that decade, "all archaeological research was generally carried out in the so-called 'spirit of Malta', but formally still within the old legal framework" (Van Os et al., 2016, p. 209, as cited in Willems, 2006, p. 45). The full implementation came later, through amendments to the *Monumentenwet 1988* (Monuments Act 1988) (Staatsblad 2006, nr. 575) and the adoption of the *Wet op de Archeologische Monumentenzorg* (Archaeological Heritage Management Act, WAMZ). Entering into force in 2007, the WAMZ provided the legal framework for preventive archaeology, complemented by secondary regulations in its implementation decree, the *Besluit Archeologische Monumentenzorg* (Decree on Archaeological Heritage Management) (Bringmans, 2018, p. 210). This reform, following the principles of the Valletta Convention (Council of Europe, 1992), embedded archaeology within spatial planning, introduced the "*polluter pays*" principle, and opened the field to commercial archaeological companies. As Bringmans (2018, p. 210) explains, "the implementation of the 'polluter pays principle', which means that the developer who disturbs the soil is also responsible for the costs of the archaeological research (= archaeological liability) . . . changed the whole archaeological sector from government-based funding to a commercial, market-based system" (Bringmans, 2018, p. 211).

The Dutch implementation of the Valletta Convention, soon followed by the national *Belvedere Memorandum* (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen et al., 1999), were consecutive steps in a broader reform process that reshaped national heritage policy. While the Valletta Convention framework focused mainly on the legal and procedural side of archaeology, embedding preventive archaeology into Dutch law, the *Belvedere Memorandum*

expanded this approach to include the cultural and spatial dimensions of planning. Its central principle was "*conservation through development*", emphasizing that heritage should not be treated as a constraint but as a contributor to spatial quality, introducing the idea that the future of heritage management depended on its integration with spatial planning, reframing heritage as a resource for development (Janssen, 2014, p. 623).

As Janssen (2014, p. 623) explains, the Memorandum pursues that "through the collaboration of cultural historians, architects, urban designers and planners, heritage should be strengthened and made self-evident in spatial planning". Belvedere also "advocated a more creative approach to finding new uses for historic buildings and landscapes" and "formed an important starting point for the modernisation of the national monuments policy" (Janssen, 2014, p. 624). In this way, Belvedere provided a national platform for integrating heritage into planning practice.

Moreover, the *Belvedere Programme* ran between 1999 and 2009, supporting subsidies, workshops, publications, and an interuniversity teaching network (Janssen et al., 2014, pp. 8–9). It designated specific Belvedere Areas and launched two national projects: the New Dutch Waterline and the Roman Limes (Janssen et al., 2014, p. 9). Notably, Belvedere promoted the broadening of the heritage concept to include intangible values such as memory and oral history (Janssen et al., 2014, p. 10), renewed attention to post-war modernism (Janssen et al., 2014, p. 11), and greater public participation with a "more social and cultural meaning than physical and spatial significance" (Janssen et al., 2014, p. 11).

In the year 2000, the *European Landscape Convention* (Council of Europe, 2000) meant a recognition of landscape in a wide perspective that could include both exception and ordinary landscape, but, more importantly, it recognized its dynamic character, as everyday lived spaces. As introduced, this Convention expanded understanding of landscape by defining it as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors," connecting cultural and natural heritage to sustainable territorial management (Council of Europe, 2000, Art. 5, Bloemers et al., 2010, p. 6). This gave a broader cultural perspective to the protection, management and planning promotion because it legitimised landscape as a living cultural process and gave place for " the participation of the public, local and regional authorities, and other stakeholders" (Council of Europe, 2000, Art. 5).

Also in the beginning of the century, in parallel with the Belvedere policy, the Dutch government also promoted a major scientific program that translated its principles into

research and planning practice. The *Protecting and Developing the Dutch Archaeological-Historical Landscape Programme* (PDL/BBO, 2000–2007), financed by the Netherlands organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and four ministries, aimed to connect archaeological and historical landscape knowledge with spatial planning process. Conceived as the scientific counterpart of Belvedere, it advanced the motto of "conservation through development" by fostering interdisciplinary cooperation between archaeology, geography, and planning. Conceptually, it introduced the notions of *landscape biography* and *action research* as tools to link knowledge and policy, promoting a shift from defensive protection toward a proactive understanding of heritage as a driver of spatial quality (Bloemers et al., 2010). Although not a formal policy instrument, the PDL/BBO laid the intellectual and methodological foundations that later informed heritage management and planning integration in the Netherlands.

Together, these instruments and programs, represent a progressive widening of scale and scope. The *Valletta Convention* addressed the archaeological layer in its legal and technical foundations. The *Belvedere Memorandum* added the spatial and cultural layer in policy planning and design. And the *European Landscape Convention* included the cultural dimension as an integral part of the landscape, with emphasis in the societal layer of participation, perception, and identity.

The end of the ten years of Belvedere policy in 2009 was coincident with the global banking crisis (Janssen et al. 2014, p. 14). Janssen et al. (2014, p.14) argue that this moment signalled a new phase of urbanization, with widening disparities between shrinking and growing regions and a shift of attention from peripheral expansion to the redevelopment of built-up areas. Veldpaus (2023) complements this ideas, arguing that heritage increasingly remained relevant in Europe only as far as it could prove to be useful as a commodity, particularly through its role in tourism, place branding, and attracting investment (Veldpaus 2023, pp. 336–337).

At the national scale, the *Archeologische Monumentenkaart van Nederland* (Archaeological Landscape Map of the Netherlands), developed by the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed) (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed [RCE], 2016), provides a methodological framework for mapping the archaeological-historical landscape of the Netherlands. It defines a typology of 26 landscape units and 39 zones that reflect both geomorphological and cultural processes (RCE, 2016, pp. 4–7) and adopts a process-oriented, landscape-biographical perspective in which

archaeological value comes from the long-term interaction between humans and the environment (RCE, 2016, p. 12). By translating these insights into a cartographic model, it provides a key reference for integrating archaeological knowledge into spatial planning and heritage management across the country (RCE, 2016, pp. 13–16).

Moreover, over the past decade, Dutch archaeological legislation has been progressively integrated into broader heritage and planning frameworks. Archaeological provisions were incorporated into the *Erfgoedwet* (Heritage Act, 2016), which includes historic buildings, museums, and collections. As Bringmans (2018, p. 210) notes, from 2019 preparations were already ongoing to merge all secondary legislation on archaeology and planning into a single comprehensive law, the *Omgevingswet* (Environmental and Planning Act, 2024).

With its entry into force at the beginning of 2024, it became the central instrument for safeguarding archaeological heritage in the Netherlands, integrating cultural, spatial, and environmental considerations into one comprehensive framework for the physical environment. According to the Environmental and Planning Act municipalities must consider key environmental principles such as precaution, prevention, and the "polluter pays" rule.

Moreover, the Act grants the municipalities a duty of care, enabling local authorities to prevent or mitigate developments that could negatively affect their environmental responsibilities (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 45). Municipalities must produce a single environmental plan themselves regulating land use, heritage, and environmental aspects together, while heritage is explicitly recognised as part of the physical environment to be protected (Bringmans, 2018, p. 210).

Although the *Omgevingswet* (Environmental and Planning Act) had not yet entered into force when Utrecht formulated the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040,* its introduction was widely anticipated. The *RSU 2040* was therefore developed within a transitional policy context, shaped by the emerging logic of integrated spatial and environmental planning. This anticipatory alignment positions the RSU not merely as a municipal strategy, but as a document situated at the intersection between older sectoral planning traditions and the new integrated framework promoted by national legislation.

A similar shift is reflected at the national level in the *Nationale Omgevingsvisie* (National Environmental Vision, NOVI), published in 2021 as part of the implementation of the *Omgevingswet*. The NOVI identifies areas of focus for systemic challenges that cannot be solved sectorally and a combined approach is needed (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed [RCE], 2011, p.83).

In short, Dutch heritage policy has evolved from protecting individual monuments to understanding heritage as part of the living landscape: from preservation to management, from objects to processes, and from expert control to shared responsibility. Within this evolving national framework, the *RSU 2040* offers a concrete local context in which to examine how cultural heritage is conceptualized and positioned within contemporary urban planning, and how these broader policy shifts are translated into strategic visions at the municipal level.

1.3 Problem Statement and case study justification

The *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* adopted in 2021, is the Municipality of Utrecht's main long-term spatial framework. It sets priorities for housing, mobility, green and public spaces, and social facilities, presenting urban growth "not as a threat, but as an opportunity to strengthen healthy urban living for all" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 9). The plan anticipates a population increase from 350,000 to 455,000 inhabitants by 2040 and proposes a vision of the "ten-minute city," where compact, mixed-use neighborhoods are supported by sustainable mobility and well-designed public spaces.

As a strategic vision, the *RSU 2040* does more than outline spatial interventions: it articulates a particular way of imagining Utrecht's future. This raises broader questions about how cultural-historical values are positioned within that vision for the future and whether opportunities for a more integrated understanding of heritage and development are being taken into account. The theme of study is not limited to the protection of monuments or areas, it also concerns what can be learned from the past and how historical continuities, practices, and meanings can inform spatial transformation.

Within heritage and planning scholarship, this tension can be described through the distinction between hard protection, referring to formal designations and legal instruments, and soft protection, which encompasses identity, memory, everyday experience, and less formalised values (Bloemers et al., 2010, pp. 7–8; Janssen et al., 2017, p. 19). Strategic planning documents are particularly relevant to examine how these dimensions coexist, interact, or remain disconnected, because they operate at a level where orientations are set without yet prescribing concrete interventions.

Methodologically, this research is structured as a sequential and cumulative analysis. It moves from regulatory and strategic frameworks toward interpretative and reflective engagement with planning practice.

The first part of the analysis situates cultural heritage within the Dutch planning and heritage framework, establishing the legislative and policy context in which the *RSU 2040* operates. Building on this, the core of the thesis examines the *RSU 2040* itself through a close reading of the document, focusing on how heritage is mentioned, framed, and positioned within the narrative. This document analysis is read alongside its public participation process, to consider the heritage-related concerns and values articulated by citizens and organizations within the strategic planning discourse.

After, a single semi-structured interview with a municipal officer involved in heritage and planning is introduced as a dialogical moment within the research. The interview provides an informed perspective through which the partial findings of the document and participation analysis can be reflected upon from within planning practice.

Finally, the thesis moves beyond the *RSU 2040* as a document to consider its positioning within the current Dutch planning framework and its potential implications for the integration of cultural heritage in urban development practice. This step opens the discussion from analysis toward reflection, connecting the empirical findings to broader questions about heritage, planning instruments, and policy orientation.

The analysis is theoretically informed by the cultural biography of landscapes (Kolen & Witte, 2007; Kolen & Renes, 2015) and the concept of conservation through development advanced in the Belvedere policy (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen et al., 1999). Both frameworks emphasize continuity, transformation, and the negotiation of meaning across time.

Utrecht provides a particularly relevant case study. As the Netherlands' fastest-growing city (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 9), it faces the challenge of accommodating population growth while preserving environmental and cultural quality. With a long history of settlement, Utrecht holds a rich archaeological record. The municipality also has a well-established archaeological management system, including a dedicated municipal archaeology service, detailed value maps, and a comprehensive *Erfgoednota* (Heritage Policy Note, 2021). Within this framework, the *RSU 2040* forms part of the city's broader *Omgevingsvisie* (Environmental Vision, 2020), developed in line with the *Nationale Omgevingswet*. This positioning makes the *RSU 2040* a suitable lens through which to examine how cultural-historical values are conceptualized and mobilized at the strategic level of contemporary spatial planning.

1.4 Research Objectives & Questions

The main objective of this research is to critically examine how cultural and archaeological heritage is positioned within Utrecht's urban planning and to understand how tensions between preservation and growth are conceptualized and negotiated by different actors within planning discourse, practice and strategic frameworks.

The thesis pursues a central research question: How is cultural and archaeological heritage positioned within Utrecht's urban planning, and how are tensions between preservation and growth conceptualized and negotiated by different actors within planning discourse, practice and strategic frameworks?

Four sub-questions guide the analysis: (i) How is heritage represented in the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*? (ii) How do the actors involved in the public participation process articulate cultural heritage in relation to urban development within Utrecht's Spatial Strategy Plan? (iii) How are the conceptualizations of cultural heritage in the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* reflected upon through insights from planning practice? (iv) How does the positioning of cultural heritage in the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* relate to the current Dutch planning and heritage framework, and what does this suggest for future spatial planning practice?

1.5 Thesis Structure

The thesis is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic, significance, research design and situates the research within the Dutch and European policy context. Chapter 2 develops the theoretical and methodological framework, defining key concepts and outlining the qualitative methods used. Chapter 3 describes the local heritage regulatory framework and introduces the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* document. Chapter 4 analyzes how heritage is represented in the *RSU 2040*, identifying discursive presences and silences. Chapter 5 explores the public consultation process within the *RSU 2040,* tracing how different actors voiced their views. Chapter 6 introduces a single semi-structured interview with a municipal officer involved in heritage and planning; this chapter functions as a dialogical reflection on the preceding analyzes, bringing an informed practitioner's perspective into conversation. Finally, Chapter 7 moves beyond the *RSU 2040* as a document to reflect on its positioning within the current Dutch planning framework and on its potential relevance for thinking about the integration of cultural heritage in future spatial governance.

Finally, Chapter 8 synthesizes the results and reflects on their broader implications for integrating heritage into complex urban environments.

2 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This chapter presents the theoretical and methodological framework that guides the study. It explains how key concepts are operationalized to analyze spatial strategy and planning process in Utrecht and explains how these are translated into an interpretive, qualitative research design. The first section defines the key theoretical notions used in the analysis: planning, heritage, cultural landscape biography, and explains how they are mobilized in this research to analyze the representations and silences surrounding cultural heritage in this case study. Building on this, the second section describes the methodological approach, the data sources, and the analytical procedure used to examine how these ideas are expressed in Utrecht's spatial strategies and public debates. The chapter closes with a reflection on ethical considerations and the researcher's position.

2.1 Theoretical and Analytical Framework

This section presents the theoretical and analytical framework used to interpret the case study. It introduces a set of concepts that are central to understanding how cultural heritage is conceptualized and mobilized within Utrecht's spatial strategy and that structure the analysis developed in this thesis.

This study approaches urban planning both as a legal and regulatory framework and as a process of negotiation shaped through discursive and cultural practices. Spatial planning is understood not merely as a technical or regulatory activity, but as a strategic practice through which meanings, priorities, and future orientations are constructed and negotiated. In contemporary planning contexts, spatial planning increasingly operates through vision-making and discursive coordination among actors rather than through direct regulatory control (Hajer & Zonneveld, 2000, p. 340). Planning documents therefore function as interpretive frameworks that frame spatial identity and legitimise particular imaginaries of urban development (Hajer et al., 2010, p. 4).

The emphasis on language, framing, and narrative in explaining how policy and planning construct meaning and reproduce relations of power has become widely accepted within planning scholarship (Hajer, 2005, p. 61), although this perspective is not always fully reflected in planning practice. From this standpoint, planning documents and regulatory frameworks can be understood as narrative instruments that articulate what a city is, what it is expected to become, and which pasts or futures are considered relevant within dominant urban imaginaries.

Plans in this sense, do not merely describe urban reality; as political instruments, they actively participate in producing it. This occurs not only through concrete interventions and decisions, but also through language, visual representations, and silence. Strategic planning visions operate as future-oriented interpretative frameworks in which historical knowledge and landscape meanings are selectively mobilized to guide transformation rather than to preserve the past as such (Kolen & Renes, 2015, p. 41).

In the Netherlands, spatial planning is often presented as a collaborative and context-aware practice, but when I observe its discursive dimension it is notable that it is also a site where values and meanings are continuously negotiated. Indeed, such processes are inherently political, because they determine who decides what is remembered, celebrated, or forgotten, and why. As Veldpaus (2023, p. 331) notes, planning "deals with a world full of context," constantly interacting with what is already there in material and social terms. From that point, the author argues that "all planning is heritage planning". Therefore, spatial planning does not merely regulate change but actively participates in the (re)production of heritage: it selects, defines, and mobilises particular pasts in order to shape the city's future.

In this study, heritage is understood as ""not just a "thing," but a process of (re)enacting and mobilising some past(s) in the present – whether in material or immaterial forms. Thus, planning is critical in heritage making (or breaking). Heritage in this understanding is operational, it is being produced, and it produces. It has agency, and it is a tool. It is a means to an end, in spatial planning, and beyond." (Veldpaus, 2023, p. 331). Heritage governance or, more broadly, urban governance, functions as an "arrangement of governing beyond the state" in which public, private, and civil-society actors possess changing degrees of influence within the planning assemblage (Veldpaus, 2023, p. 332).

From this perspective, planning can be seen as both a technical and narrative act, a way in which meanings are reproduced, but also a potential space for contestation and alternative imaginations of place. Reading the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* through this lens allows the identification of presences and absences that reveal how heritage and identity are framed as part of Utrecht's imagined urban futures. What is not articulated in planning process can be as analytically significant as what is made explicit, as heritage emerges at the intersection of knowledge, policy, and imagination, where selective interpretations and omissions shape how the past is mobilized in relation to future development (Bloemers et al., 2010, pp. 3).

Within this interpretive framework, the concept of landscape provides the spatial and experiential dimension that connects planning and heritage. The *European Landscape Convention* (Council of Europe, 2000) offers a widely accepted definition of landscape as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." This means that landscape emerges through human perception as it becomes meaningful when people interpret and construct it as such (Bloemers et al., 2010, p. 5), differentiating itself from the material environment and turning into landscape, a space both seen and imagined. Cultural landscapes, therefore, are inherently dynamic and "doubly cultural": they embody the traces of past human activity while continuously being reshaped by present social values and attitudes (Bloemers et al., 2010, p. 5). This understanding also aligns with a broader shift in heritage thinking, in which management is increasingly oriented toward future change rather than solely toward the protection of past material remains (Bloemers et al., 2010, p. 3), and with the *Belvedere*'s principle of "conservation through development," which frames heritage as an active resource within spatial transformation rather than as an obstacle to it (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen et al., 1999).

Therefore, landscape is not a static background but an evolving field where material traces, ecological systems, and cultural memories overlap. Its strength lies in its integrative character: it connects spatial dimensions with temporal ones, the material with the symbolic, and different disciplinary forms of knowledge. In an increasingly specialized world, this integrative capacity is key to ensuring quality management. Consequently, this study is situated within what Bloemers et al. (2010, p. 3) describe as "the interaction between knowledge, policy and imagination centred around the public representing the society we are part of."

These ideas are further developed within the landscape biography approach articulated by Kolen and Renes (2015). This approach conceptualizes landscape as a differentiated life world of human and non-human beings, shaped through continuous interaction over multiple temporal scales. Landscapes absorb traces of people's lives, work, and ideas, while simultaneously shaping social practices and identities, extending beyond individual human life cycles into longer historical trajectories (Kolen & Renes, 2015, pp. 21–22).

From a societal perspective, landscape biography explicitly seeks to reconnect historical landscape research with spatial planning, landscape design, and public participation in contemporary development processes (Kolen & Renes, 2015, p. 21). This orientation reflects

broader shifts in heritage practice, away from a "culture of loss" focused on safeguarding vulnerable objects and landscapes, toward more dynamic approaches in which heritage increasingly functions as a driver of socio-economic and spatial development (Kolen & Renes, 2015, pp. 41–42). Kolen and Renes stress that biographical approaches should not uncritically legitimise all forms of change, but instead provide historically grounded insights that can inform decision-making and support the transformation of landscapes into socially meaningful and resilient environments (Kolen & Renes, 2015, pp. 41–42).

This perspective resonates with UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape approach, which moves beyond the preservation of monuments and ensembles to address the wider human environment in its tangible and intangible dimensions, integrating heritage conservation within broader objectives of sustainable urban development (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2013, pp. 6, 14). Together, these frameworks combine a discursive understanding of planning with a biographical conception of landscape, enabling an analysis of how heritage is conceptualized, legitimised, and mobilized within long-term spatial strategies. In this thesis, they provide the analytical lens through which the positioning of cultural heritage in Utrecht's spatial strategy is examined.

Utrecht's urban and archaeological landscape can be understood as a palimpsest of physical, historical, and experiential layers that together shape how the city imagines its future. analyzing the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* through this lens allows for an examination of how planning discourse engages with these layers, determining which are foregrounded, which are transformed, and which remain marginal or invisible within successive narratives of urban growth.

As introduced, cultural heritage, in this study, is understood as an integrated part of the layered cultural landscape explained above. Heritage is approached as a social practice through which meanings of the past are continually produced, negotiated, and projected toward the future. In this view, heritage is a cultural process and a creative resource for identity, innovation, and sustainable growth, therefore engaged in change management (Smith, 2006; Holtorf and Högberg, 2021).

To operationalize these ideas within the analysis, this study distinguishes between different ways in which heritage appears in planning discourse. Here, hard protection refers to legal, regulatory, or physical mechanisms that safeguard tangible heritage. In this category, for example, I includelisted monuments, archaeological zones, or protected cityscapes. On the other hand, soft protection refers to the manners in which heritage operates through design,

narrative, or collective memory, informing how places are experienced and imagined. By using heritage in a responsible and imaginative way, cities can invest in strengthening identity, knowledge, comfort, and creativity (Bloemers et al., 2010, pp. 7–8). These distinctions are used as an analytical device to trace how different forms of heritage protection and mobilisation are articulated within strategic planning documents.

Beyond the document itself, the participation process will also be analyzed, since heritage is not only a subject of planning but also a space of participation and imagination where knowledge, policy, and collective values converge. As Bloemers et al. (2010, p. 3) note, protecting the historic environment requires collaboration beyond professional spheres of heritage, history, or management, involving multiple actors and translating expert knowledge into forms that are meaningful within policy and society.

In summary, this theoretical framework combines a discursive approach to planning with a cultural landscape perspective. Together, these perspectives enable an interpretive reading of Utrecht's spatial strategy, revealing how heritage is framed, legitimised, and negotiated across policy and practice. The following section outlines the methodological approach through which these concepts are operationalized in the analysis of the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* and related dialogue.

2.2 Methodological Framework

This study takes a qualitative and interpretative approach, informed by archaeological and heritage studies. The analysis comprehends planning as a discursive and negotiated practice, where meanings and values are created and recreated through interaction between actors, institutions, and documents. The research is organized as a single case study: Utrecht's *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040:* the ten-minutes city, complemented by the register of its participation process. This allows an examination of how cultural and archaeological heritage is articulated, legitimised, or marginalised within the specific planning framework. The analysis included a combination of legislation review, discourse analysis and a semi-structured interview. The first phase consisted of consulting the relevant legislation that frames the case study. Then, the analysis focused on the identification of all explicit and implicit references to heritage in the RSU 2040, in a broad sense. These references were based on the theoretical framework. These include hard and soft protection, presences and silences, and narrative versus operational dimensions. During this careful reading, I observed how these categories work together to produce particular representations of heritage.

The next moment of the analysis introduces the examination of the participation process of the same policy document. Because it is based on the written record, it is again a discourse analysis. This time different actors dialogue with the document and receive a response from the policymakers. An analysis of the themes that are in dispute is presented here.

The documentary corpus comprises the *RSU 2040* and related materials available through the Utrecht's municipality's open-access website (https://www.utrecht.nl/). All documents originally in Dutch were translated to English with the assistance of DeepL (https://www.deepl.com), an automated translation tool. All of those translations were manually reviewed and corrected by the researcher to ensure that the meaning of the original version was respected.

The validation relies on the combination between the document analysis, participatory materials and a dialogical engagement with institutional planning practice. The interpretative process involved several rounds of analysis in which categories and interpretations were refined to maintain conceptual coherence and remain faithful to the empirical material. In this way, the methodology aligns with the theoretical premise that planning and heritage are not fixed structures but dynamic processes of meaning-making, negotiation, and interpretation.

The empirical base combines the analysis of the planning document and participation records, with a semi-structured interview conducted with a municipal officer involved in planning and heritage.

2.3 Ethical and Reflexive Considerations

As this study follows a qualitative and interpretive approach, my own position will inevitably shape how knowledge is produced here. Therefore, the focus is on transparency regarding how interpretations are formed and not universal objective assumptions. My anthropological and archaeological disciplinary background and my external viewpoint on Utrecht's planning context will influence both access and understanding, but they also provided a useful degree of critical distance. I wrote everything with human and professional care and responsibility.

The interviewed participant took part voluntarily and gave consent after being informed about the purpose of this study. Anonymity and confidentiality are maintained throughout this thesis. Since the interview focused on professional experiences rather than personal or sensitive issues, no significant ethical risks were identified.

The main limitations of the research concern the use of a single interview, the scope of the policy documents reviewed, and the inherently partial nature of policy discourse itself. The

interview was not intended to generate additional empirical evidence, but to provide a dialogical space in which the partial findings of the document and participation analysis could be reflected upon from within planning practice. These limitations were addressed through a consistent analytical framework and a reflexive engagement with the empirical material.

3 Heritage and Spatial Planning in Utrecht

This chapter situates the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* within the broader institutional, legal, and policy framework governing heritage and spatial planning in the Netherlands and in the municipality of Utrecht. This chapter outlines the regulatory and governance context in which the vision was produced and operationalised. By doing so, it clarifies the position of the RSU as a strategic and orientative document, shaped by existing heritage legislation and planning instruments. An anticipation to subsequent implementation under evolving environmental and spatial governance frameworks is introduced as well.

3.1 Heritage Regulatory Framework in Utrecht

Since the implementation of the Valletta Convention, the archaeological management in the Netherlands has shifted from the national to the municipal level. The *Wet op de Archeologische Monumentenzorg* made local municipalities responsible for heritage care when issuing demolition or building permits —today incorporated into the *Omgevingsvergunningen* (Environmental Permits) (Bringmans, 2018, p. 210).

Heritage management in Utrecht therefore operates within the national legal framework and relies on specific municipal instruments that articulate the integration of cultural and archaeological values into local planning. These instruments differ in their degree of legal enforceability: some are binding regulations that impose concrete obligations, while others are non-binding policy frameworks that provide guidance, vision, and inspiration for spatial development.

A central pillar is the *Verordening Erfgoed Gemeente Utrecht* (Heritage Ordinance of the Municipality of Utrecht), which provides the framework for "designation of municipal monuments (built, ecclesiastical, green, or archaeological); the protection and maintenance obligations associated with municipal and municipal ecclesiastical monuments; and the designation of municipally protected townscapes and villagescapes" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023).[1] According to its explanatory notes, this ordinance derives its legal basis from both the

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[1] *De Verordening Erfgoed draagt bij aan het beschermen van de cultuurhistorische waarden binnen de gemeente Utrecht. Daarom worden in deze verordening de volgende onderwerpen geregeld: (1) de aanwijzing van gemeentelijk monumenten (gebouwd, kerkelijk, groen of archeologisch) (2) de bescherming en instandhoudingsplicht van gemeentelijk monumenten en gemeentelijk kerkelijke monumenten. (3) de aanwijzing van gemeentelijk beschermde stads- of dorpsgezichten.*

Heritage Act and the residual provisions of the Monuments and Historic Buildings Act 1988, which remain in force through transitional law during the introduction of the Environment and Planning Act (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023). The principles from the Valletta Convention remain the basis of the handlings with archaeology in the Heritage Act. The most important of these, is the protection of the archaeological heritage by preserving *in situ*.

Complementing this framework, the *Archeologische Waardenkaart* (Archaeological Values Map) was adopted in 2021 and formally integrated into the *Omgevingsplan* (Environmental Plan) in 2025, as part of the ongoing transition from earlier zoning plans. The map functions as a planning instrument that makes visible zones of established archaeological value and zones of archaeological expectation. It also indicates where permits are required for earthworks in order to safeguard archaeological resources (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021b). Alongside these instruments, individual *Aanwijzingsbesluiten* (designation decisions) for monuments and protected townscapes establish direct legal obligations, while the broader system of *Omgevingsvergunningen*, administered locally under national law, regulates interventions on heritage sites. Taken together, these instruments form a multi-layered system of binding measures, currently operating under transitional provisions that still connect the municipal ordinance with elements of the *Monumentenwet 1988*, until the full implementation of the national *Omgevingswet*.

In addition to binding regulations, heritage governance is also shaped by a range of non-binding policy documents that articulate the cultural-historical significance of the city and its landscape. National guidelines inform these frameworks, while provincial instruments give them territorial specificity. From the provincial level, the *Cultuurhistorische Atlas Utrecht* (Cultural-Historical Atlas Utrecht, CHAT) visualizes historic landscapes, infrastructural relics, and settlement patterns, making visible the cultural-historical layers that must be considered in spatial development (Gemeente Utrecht, 2024). It is used alongside the *Kwaliteitsgids Utrechtse Landschappen* (Quality Guide Utrecht Landscapes, Provincie Utrecht, 2011), which defines the province's five heritage priorities (military heritage, castles and country estates, agricultural cultural landscape, historic infrastructure, and archaeology) and maps areas of provincial significance (Provincie Utrecht, 2011). Large sections of the Utrecht portion of the Groene Hart hold special status under these themes, including the former Roman Frontier of Limes, the New Dutch Waterline, the Vecht and Angstel estates, and the peat meadow areas of the Lopikerwaard. These frameworks guide spatial quality and encourage design that builds on existing landscape values (RCE, 2011, p. 95).

Other tools, such as the *Kernrandzones Toolkit* (Urban Fringe Zones Toolkit, 2014), address the interface between urban and rural areas, while the municipal *Erfgoedbeleid Utrecht 2025–2030* (Utrecht Heritage Policy 2025–2030) positions heritage as a driver of livability, sustainability, and identity (Gemeente Utrecht, 2025b). In sum, national, provincial, and municipal frameworks collectively define how heritage values are embedded in Dutch planning. Within this context, the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* translates these principles into a spatial vision for the city.

The following diagram (Figure 3.1), taken from the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 21), presents the policy network that frames the strategy. It illustrates how *RSU 2040* is positioned within a multi-level governance system that links national, provincial, regional, and municipal policy frameworks.

The following overview describes the policy and legal framework within which the *RSU 2040* was developed, at a moment of transition toward the Environmental and Planning Act. Several of these instruments were not yet fully operative at the time, but already shaped the strategic orientation of the RSU.
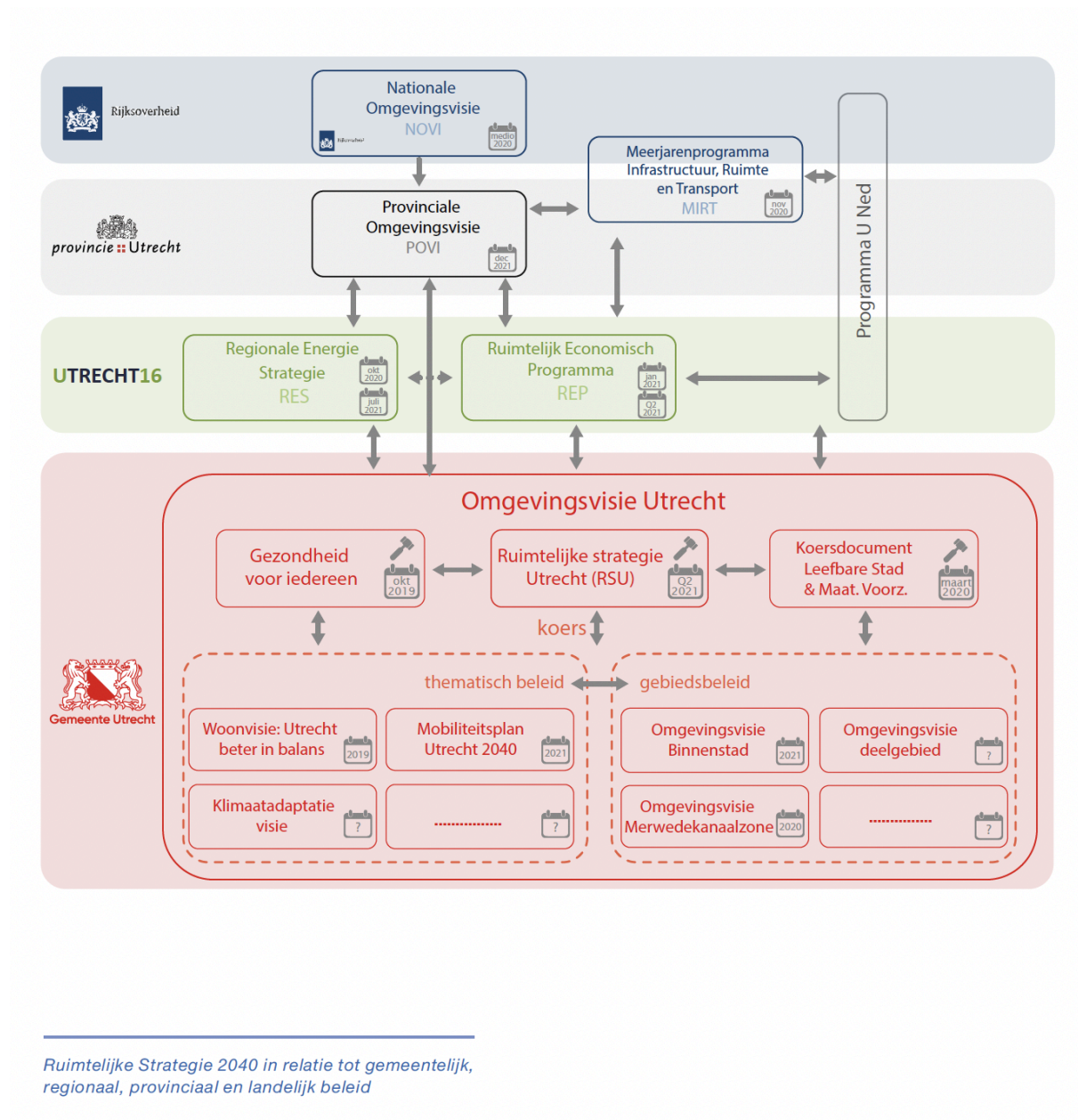
Figure 3.1. Governance and policy framework of the RSU 2040. Source: Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 21.

At the national level, already introduced, the *NOVI* and the *Meerjarenprogramma Infrastructuur, Ruimte en Transport* (Multiyear Infrastructure, Space and Transport Program, MIRT) guide long-term spatial and infrastructural development. The *MIRT* is a multi-year investment program that defines national priorities and financial agreements with regions. While the *Program U Ned* coordinates cooperation between the national government, the

Province of Utrecht, and regional municipalities such as Utrecht and Amersfoort, for coordinating infrastructure and housing investments in the Central Netherlands.

At the provincial level, the *Provinciale Omgevingsvisie* (Provincial Environmental Vision, POVI) translates these national goals into the context of the Province of Utrecht, aligning them with the *CHAT* and the Quality Guide Utrecht Landscapes, which together form the basis for integrating cultural-historical values into spatial policy.

At the regional level, the Utrecht16 collaboration brings together sixteen municipalities that coordinate strategies on housing, energy, and economic development. Their main policy instruments include the *Regionale Energiestrategie* (Regional Energy Strategy, RES) and the *Ruimtelijk Economisch Programma* (Spatial Economic Program, REP) which connect the energy transition and regional economic competitiveness to spatial planning.

At the municipal level, the *Omgevingsvisie Utrecht* (Environmental Vision Utrecht) integrates local policies under the national Environmental and Planning Act. While this legal framework became fully operative at a later stage, the *RSU 2040* functions as a preparatory strategic layer, interacting with other thematic and area-based policies each of which operationalizes specific components of the RSU's spatial vision, ensuring coherence between urban growth, infrastructure, and environmental quality.

Although heritage does not appear as a separate policy layer in the diagram, it is embedded across all the levels. Under the Environmental and Planning Act, cultural and archaeological values are treated as part of the living environment, informing both provincial and municipal environmental visions. In Utrecht, this integration was anticipated through instruments such as the *CHAT*, which provide analytical and normative frameworks for linking cultural history with spatial quality.

The *RSU 2040* translates these frameworks into its principles.

3.2 Introducing the *RSU 2040*

As noted earlier, the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* constitutes Utrecht's main spatial framework for guiding growth and transformation up to the year 2040. It was adopted by the City Council in July 2021, and it forms part of the Environmental Vision of Utrecht developed in anticipation of the Environmental and Planning Act. As the document presents itself, it is a strategic vision, it is "a perspective for Utrecht's future that describes ambitions and conditions for high-quality urban development" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 5). This

means that here shall be found the possibilities and imaginative principles that guide subsequent planning and investment for the City of Utrecht in the long term.

Utrecht anticipates a demographic increase from around 350,000 to 455,000 inhabitants by 2040 (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 9) and to accommodate this growth through compact, polycentric development and sustainable mobility systems. The key planning model it proposes is that of the *"ten-minute city"*, a structure of neighbourhoods where daily needs such as work, education, healthcare, and recreation can be reached within ten minutes by bicycle or public transport (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 28).

The RSU was prepared by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, assisted by the design and planning office De Zwarte Hond[2]. It updates and extends the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2030 (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c), reaffirming the city's central ambition of "Healthy Urban Living for Everyone". The document's elaboration took place between 2019 and 2021 and carried a process of consultation described in the *Reactienota RSU 2040* (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c) on which I examine more in the next chapter. The adoption was in 2021 and the next year, after the elections, it was reaffirmed as the principal instrument for Utrecht's development policy (Gemeente Utrecht, 2022). The new coalition agreement (2022–2026) confirmed its validity and introduced three additional guiding principles: (1) the inclusion of Rijnenburg as a future mixed-use urban district; (2) the notion that "growth is not a goal in itself, but must remain in balance"; and (3) the emphasis on quality and livability as leading principles for both existing and new urban areas (Gemeente Utrecht, 2022).

The *RSU 2040* translates these frameworks in its principles. And because cultural history is not conceived as a separate domain but integrated in the normative framework, it is therefore expected to function as a structural component of Utrecht's urban planning. As the *RSU 2040* states, "The main carriers of this structure are the landscape framework of greenery, water and cultural history" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 41) and "heritage serves as the basis for our continued urbanization." (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 52). The aim of this thesis is to examine how cultural and archaeological heritage is positioned within this plan and to observe whether tensions arise between preservation and growth, particularly when it comes to questions of identity and visions of the future. As discussed earlier, it has been noted that official statements about heritage often fade in practice, as integration into spatial planning

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[2]De Zwarte Hond is presented as a design agency for architecture, urban design and strategy with offices in Groningen, Rotterdam, Cologne and Berlin. Information taken from *De Zwarte Hond*, official website: https://dezwartehond.nl/ (last accessed 31 October 2025).

tends to remain largely rhetorical and subordinated to development priorities (Janssen et al., 2014, p. 5; Bringmans, 2018, p. 212). Therefore, the next chapter turns to a closer reading of the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040,* in order to address the first guiding subquestion of this research: How is heritage represented in the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*?

4 The Heritage Dimension in the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*

Chapter 4 gives an opening to the thesis analysis of the document. The chapter addresses the sub-question "How is heritage represented in the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*?" through a close reading of the document's language and visual framing. Here, I will examine how cultural and archaeological heritage appears within the *RSU*'s narrative, identifying the terms, metaphors, and associations through which the past is mobilized. It is my interest to analyze what is said, where, and how in relation to heritage.

The study is carried on with a qualitative and interpretative approach, combining textual coding of all explicit references to heritage, elements and related concepts with an examination of their narrative function in the overall vision.

Because the *RSU 2040* not only guides Utrecht's future development but also expresses how the municipality imagines its past and identity as part of that future, even though its pages can look very technical, they have a strong symbolic meaning as well. Therefore, after mapping the occurrences of heritage, I aim to uncover how these references are constructing meaning. By tracing presences and silences, the chapter explores how and to what extent heritage becomes part of Utrecht's vision of the future.

4.2 Heritage in the *RSU 2040*

This section examines how heritage appears within the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*, organized into two complementary parts: the first maps the discursive presences of heritage across the document; the second reflects on its absences and silences, considering the moments and contexts where heritage is not invoked at all.

4.2.1 Discursive Presences of Heritage

The lecture of the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*, starts by finding the city and the city's future as part of a long historical trajectory. Early in the document it states: "Throughout its rich story, Utrecht has always grown and changed. The municipality therefore sees this not as a threat, but as an opportunity to strengthen healthy urban living for all" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 9). Growth and change are presented together as part of the same. From there on, the introductory chapters list the city's "rich history and heritage" among the "specific spatial qualities" that form an important basis for further urbanization, "alongside its compactness

amid diverse landscapes" and its central position in national networks (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 22).

In line with the national perspective, landscape is presented as part of citizens' everyday life: "The landscape begins at the front door and runs through green connections, gardens, parks and green bridges to the various landscapes around the city" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 34). Within landscape as a "multifunctional" character (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 34, 39), heritage may be seen connected to social facilities like "sufficient accessible educational, cultural, healthcare and sports facilities" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 39), and in relation to landscape and urban systems: "The main carriers of this structure are the landscape framework of greenery, water and cultural history and the network of underground and aboveground infrastructure. Together they ensure that the city keeps its roots in the past and its surroundings and at the same time is ready to grow into a new future" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 41). The same page summarises this as "the landscape framework of greenery, water and cultural history together with infrastructure forms the backbone of the urban structure" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 41).

A dedicated intermezzo titled "History of Urban Development and Cultural Heritage" summarises more than two millennia of settlement, highlighting archaeological and architectural landmarks. It states: "Over the next 20 years, the city will continue to develop. Growth and change of the city is of all times! Utrecht is building on and can draw on a rich history. The city has a unique cultural heritage of which the people of Utrecht are proud; the municipality wants to cherish it" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 48). The intermezzo names, among others, the Roman Limes, the Domplein, and Hoge Woerd (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 48–49).

The most programmatic section lies under the heading "The historical significance for current spatial developments," the *RSU* states: "The *RSU 2040* builds on that tradition. The city is not a *tabula rasa* . . . In urban development, it is important . . . to account for the heritage that is there, recognise its significance for the city and add new value to it . . . heritage serves as the basis for our continued urbanization" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 52). The same section offers concrete signals for recognizability: "Keeping things recognizable is about using existing land parcels and main structures. A 13th-century reclamation . . . is still clearly recognizable as a 13th-century land parcel. The same applies to typical 20th-century forms of urban development" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 52).

As for "strategic choices," the *RSU 2040* lists the "historical green structures and watercourses" as "basis for spatial development" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 53). It also frames major linear systems historically: "The Merwedekanaal, the Vaartsche Rijn and the Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal will become the 'new New Canals'… transformed into living/working environments," and "the New Dutch Waterline will be given a place in the city as a 'new city wall'… a green-blue outdoor space," adding "a new mix of urban program and greenery on the forts" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 53). The Dom is named as "an important landmark for Utrecht for centuries and remains so as a matter of course. In the next 20 years, new landmarks will be added" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 53).

The document lists "five important spatial qualities" to protect: "Rich history and heritage; Compact city amidst diverse landscapes; Junction in national network; Highly developed knowledge cluster and amenities; [and] A big city with a human scale, a city for everyone" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 54–55). The same pages state that "Utrecht citizens are proud of these qualities" and that development will be tested against them (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 54).

The section "Rich history and heritage" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 55) points to iconic references like "the Dom and the water line with its forts… the Roman Limes and the New Dutch Waterline… the Rietveld-Schröder House —and to "the old urban structure with the canals and urban axes, the city's many monuments and industrial heritage" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 55).

Until here, heritage presence was vast, visible and recognizable. From here on heritage appears in map legends through icons for "fort of the New Dutch Waterline," "historic watercourse," "historic farm," "windmill," "water tower," "listed/protected elements," among others (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 56). For the skyline discussion the Dom is as a long-standing landmark and height benchmark (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 124), and regarding the subsurface it is said it "holds the memory of the city" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 127–128).

The plan divides the city into six strategic areas for Utrecht's future development, in the mission of the ten-minute city: the City Centre (Binnenstad, Stationsgebied, Beurskwartier, Merwedekanaalzone); North-Northwest (Leidsche Rijn Center, Lage Weide, Cartesius, Werkspoorkwartier, Zuilen); Overvecht; Utrecht East (Utrecht Science Park, Rijnsweerd, Galgenwaard and Lunetten Koningsweg); A12 zone (Papendorp, Woonboulevard, Westraven

and Merwedekanaalzone sub-area 6); and Rijnenburg (the polders Rijnenburg and Reijerscop). Some of these areas include explicit references to heritage, as discussed below.

In the City Centre's "value" section the historic city centre is described as part of a "coherent whole" with Beurskwartier, and lists "rich cultural history" among current qualities (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 140–141). In the objectives, "preserving, utilising and keeping alive the beauty of the historic city centre" and "controlled growth of tourism, in keeping with the scale and identity of the city centre" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 140–141) can also be found. Here, specific quantitative interventions are given for housing, work, green, and facilities, where culture appears as "cultural public facilities (Beurskwartier) and breeding grounds" in Beurskwartier and Merwedekanaalzone (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 141–142).

For Overvecht, the area is described with current qualities that include "cultural and historical heritage (forts and landscape)" and a "diverse and multicultural neighbourhood" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 148–150).

In the area of Utrecht East, the value lies in the "visible rich past" as the "landscape are ultimately intertwined by the New Dutch Waterline with the (historic) landscape as underlying foundation" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 151–152). The area current qualities include "protected cityscapes," and "The New Dutch Waterline and Limes as (future) UNESCO World Heritage sites" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 152), and the "challenges until 2040" takes into account "enhancing the experience of the Waterline landscape (UNESCO World Heritage Site): New Dutch Waterlines as a binding/interweaving structure/area between city and landscape, preserved through development," and "Repurposing forts with public programs" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 153). Among the "most important spatial interventions", "develop a new Liniepark… based on the water line and interweaves city and countryside" and "develop a landscape framework for Utrecht Science Park that focuses on cultural history, ecology, education, climate adaptation, health and recreation" become evidnet (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 155).

For Leidsche Rijn, Vleuten and De Meern the value section notes a residential area "rich in greenery (Maximapark) and cultural-historical elements". On the other hand, the "historical layers: the Limes, old ribbon developments and farms, and old village centres" are named as current qualities (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 163–165).

In chapters 7 and 8 the execution and financing frameworks are set out (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 171–214) Finally a historical context is provided in "*Appendix 1: History of*

Urban Development in Utrecht and Utrecht's Cultural Heritage" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 200–211). This appendix provides a chronological overview "to which the city owes its cultural heritage," with bullet points covering prehistoric habitation, Roman development of the Limes and use of the Rhine as supply route, and continuous occupation around the Domplein (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 200–211). The appendix enumerates notable elements of Utrecht's long-term formation, offering a historical context to the main text.

4.2.2 Absences and Silences

When examining the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040,* a pattern of omissions and rhetorical emphasis becomes apparent. Overall, references remain largely descriptive and general. As per specific mentions, the *RSU 2040* selectively highlights emblematic sites that align with national or UNESCO recognition, but does not include forms of local, everyday, or social heritage that might reflect community-based values. Heritage is not treated as a living process, as there are no indications of adaptive reuse, reinterpretation, or community-based meaning-making. The list of frameworks for the realisation of social facilities addresses accessibility, diversity, and efficiency but makes no reference to heritage-related functions or values (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 111). Because facilities and public buildings often embody historical layers of urban life, they could have been recognised as part of Utrecht's social and spatial infrastructure.

This tendency is also evident in the closing summary of Chapter 5, where the plan states that "the tasks, frameworks and ambitions described above yield a series of important principles that will be central to spatial development over the next twenty years," followed by principles such as "Green unless," "Circular unless," "Multiple use," "Public space accessible," and "Healthy subsoil as a basis for above-ground development," among others (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 130–131). These guidelines cite a strong focus on sustainability, multifunctionality, and healthy urban living but there is none explicitly reference cultural or historical values at this point.

A review of the area-based sections in Chapter 6 of the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* confirm the weak presence of heritage acknowledgment across Utrecht's development areas. As noted earlier, in the city centre (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 142–143), the plan lists sixteen major spatial interventions, none of which concern heritage; and "rich cultural history" is mentioned only as part of the area's existing qualities. That in Overvecht (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 148–150) "cultural and historical heritage (forts and

landscape)" is acknowledged as an existing quality but disappears entirely from the challenges and programs. And only in Utrecht East (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 150–156) does heritage acquire a more explicit presence in relation to the New Dutch Waterline and the Limes are identified as UNESCO World Heritage sites.

For the three remaining areas its presence is, at most, sporadic or purely visual. First, in the North and North-West Area, heritage does not present itself, as culture is emphasized mainly in relation to entertainment and leisure (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 144–145). Secondly, A12 zone area description does not have elaborated references to heritage but on a present map, two forts of the New Dutch Waterline are indicated as urban accents (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 160) in this section. And finally, when it comes to Rijnenburg, the area is presented as an "energy landscape to be developed," without further heritage references in the text either (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 156,162).

The concluding pages of Chapter 6 (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 166–169) make no further reference to heritage, focusing exclusively on housing, mobility, energy, and green space. Across these area-based narratives, heritage appears inconsistently, acknowledged descriptively as part of Utrecht's identity but rarely operationalized, except in the east, where cultural-historical features are linked to environmental and development strategies (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 153).

4.3 Analytical Dimensions of Heritage Representation in the RSU

The former section revealed that heritage in the *RSU 2040* is highly visible in the first instance, yet its articulation to other elements, instruments and even the future vision, becomes loose as the reading continues. This section proposes to move from the previous close reading to a more structured evidence based on a document-wide inventory of heritage references. By compiling and classifying every explicit mention of heritage, it seeks to identify how this rhetoric is structured: which types of heritage are invoked, at what scales, and with what discursive or operational roles. Although the RSU is a non-binding strategic vision, its language could still indicate possible directions for future implementation. Whether it does so becomes the focus of the following inventory and charts.

In total, forty-three distinct mentions were identified, encompassing monuments, historic structures, landscapes, and typological categories such as windmill, country house, or historic state, and protected cityscape. Each mention is coded through six analytical categories (reference type, spatial level, dimension, protection logic, operational integration and

discursive function). In this analysis, the *RSU 2040*'s "*Appendix 1: History of Urban Development in Utrecht and Utrecht's Cultural Heritage*" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 200–211) is set aside because even though it does indeed dedicate 11 pages to the "History of Urban Development and Cultural Heritage", my main interest is to see the heritage in context.

The analysis that follows draws on the aggregated results of this systematization. The full inventory can be found in the Appendix A of this thesis (see Table A.1). The quantitative mapping of explicit heritage mentions in the *RSU 2040* (Figures 4.1 to 4.5) seeks to reveal the patterns in how the document conceptualizes, scales, and operationalizes cultural heritage within its spatial vision.

First, Figure 4.1 refers to the Distribution of Reference Type, and shows that tangible heritage dominates the document's discourse (48.8%), followed by structural elements (34.9%) such as historic urban layouts, green–water systems, and cityscapes. Intangible (14%) and landscape (2.3%) dimensions appear less frequently. This composition indicates that the RSU primarily treats heritage as a collection of physical or spatial artefacts, rather than as a living cultural system.

Figure 4.1 – Distribution of Heritage Reference Types in the RSU 2040.
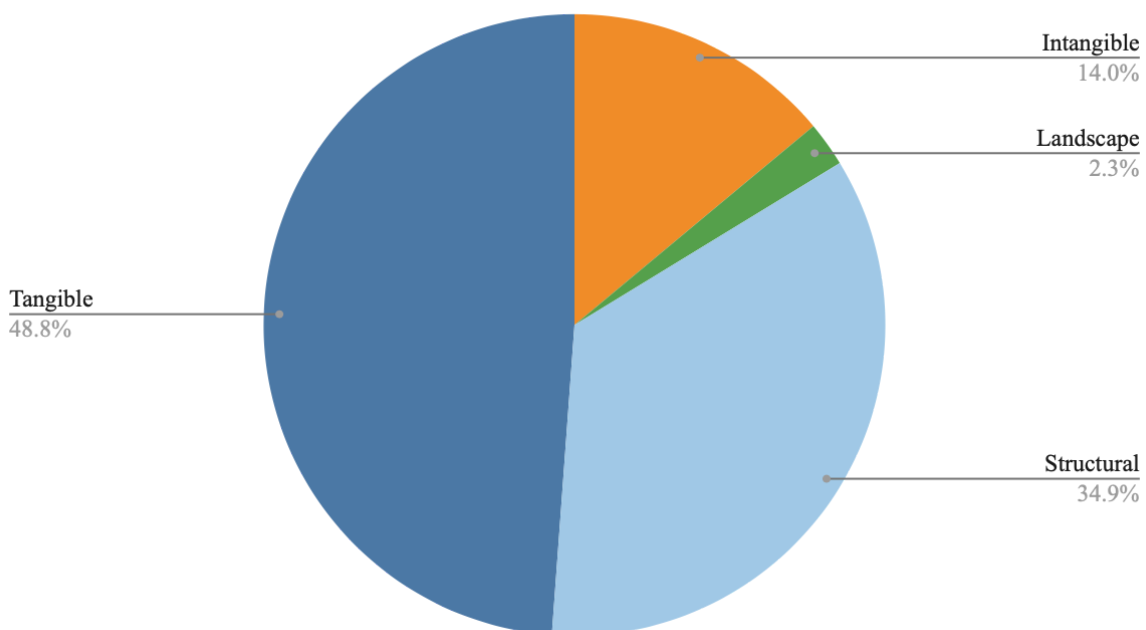
Figure 4.1 Distribution of heritage references types across the RSU 2040. (Graph created by the author, based on the author's original dataset compiled in Table A.1.)

In Figure 4.2, the Distribution by Spatial Level confirms that the RSU addresses heritage mostly at the City scale (69.77%), often referring to Utrecht as a historic entity or to its "rich history and heritage" as a collective value. At some distance, Element (13.95%), Neighbourhood (11.64%) and Regional (4.65%) scales follow in representation. This reveals a tendency to frame heritage as a property of the city as a whole, an emblematic background rather than a multiscalar framework embedded in local contexts. This distribution is not at all surprising in a municipal vision plan but does bring back to light that the Areal study does not bring significant attention to the local heritage.

Figure 4.2 – Spatial Scale of Heritage Mentions in the RSU 2040

Figure 4.2 Spatial scale of heritage references in the RSU 2040. (Graph created by the author, based on the author's original dataset compiled in Table A.1.)

Turning to the logic of protection, Figure 4.3 shows that almost all heritage references fall within soft protection (76.7%), understood here as non-regulatory forms through which heritage operates as appreciation, identity, or spatial quality. By contrast, hard protection

(23.3%) appears only marginally. These last, are the references that are explicitly linked to legal instruments, statutory designations, or formal protective regimes, typically in connection with UNESCO status or listed monuments. This distribution mirrors the analytical distinction introduced in Chapter 2 and confirms that, while the RSU acknowledges legally protected assets, it refrains from engaging with their regulatory or operational implications.

Figure 4.3 – Protection Logic of Heritage References in the RSU 2040
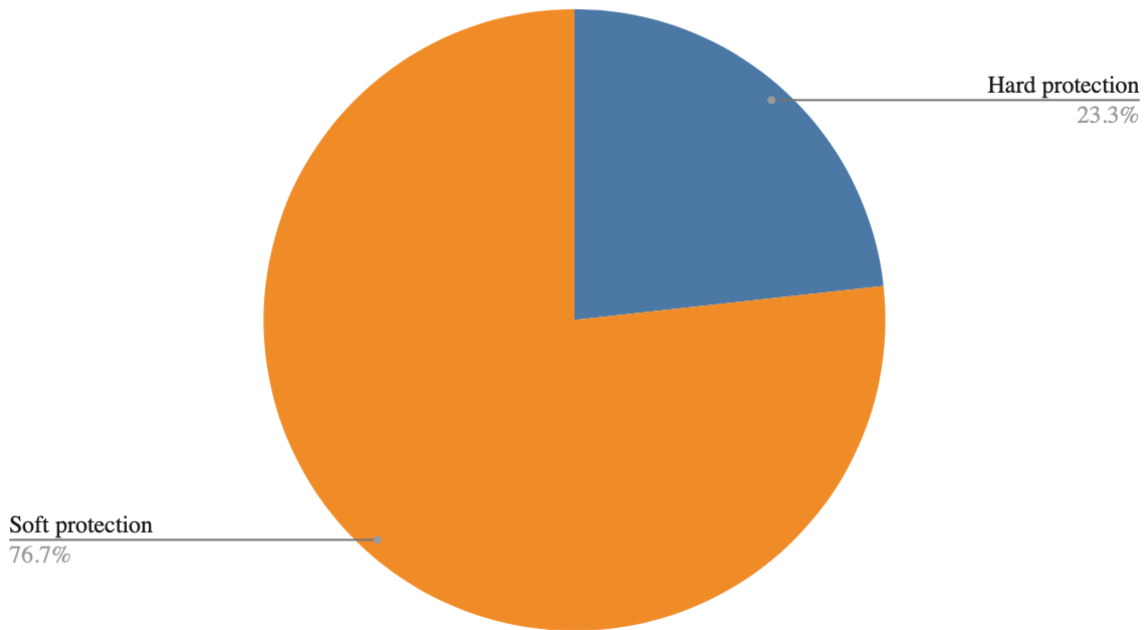
Figure 4.3 Protection logic of heritage mentions in the RSU 2040. (Graph created by the author, based on the author's original dataset compiled in Table A.1.)

Next, in Figure 4.4, the Operational Integration is characterised by mentions that are either rhetorical/descriptive (70.07%) or orientative (20.93%): the former expressing values or narrating history, and the latter offering general guidance or spatial principles. No mentions fall into the programmatic category, meaning that heritage is never formulated as an actionable component within the plan's implementation strategies. The predominance of rhetorical language also aligns with the overall "soft" character of the RSU's approach.

Figure 4.4 Levels of operational integration of heritage within the RSU 2040. (Graph created by the author, based on the author's original dataset compiled in Table A.1.)

Finally, Figure 4.5 combines Protection Logic and Operational Integration variables to illustrate their interaction. The cross-distribution shows that Soft-protected heritage dominates both Rhetorical and Orientative categories, confirming its symbolic and narrative role within the document. Hard-protected heritage appears slightly more often in Orientative passages but remains quantitatively minor. Even where formal protection exists, this synthesis demostrates that the RSU tends to integrate heritage through non-binding, descriptive discourse rather than through concrete regulatory or design-oriented mechanisms.

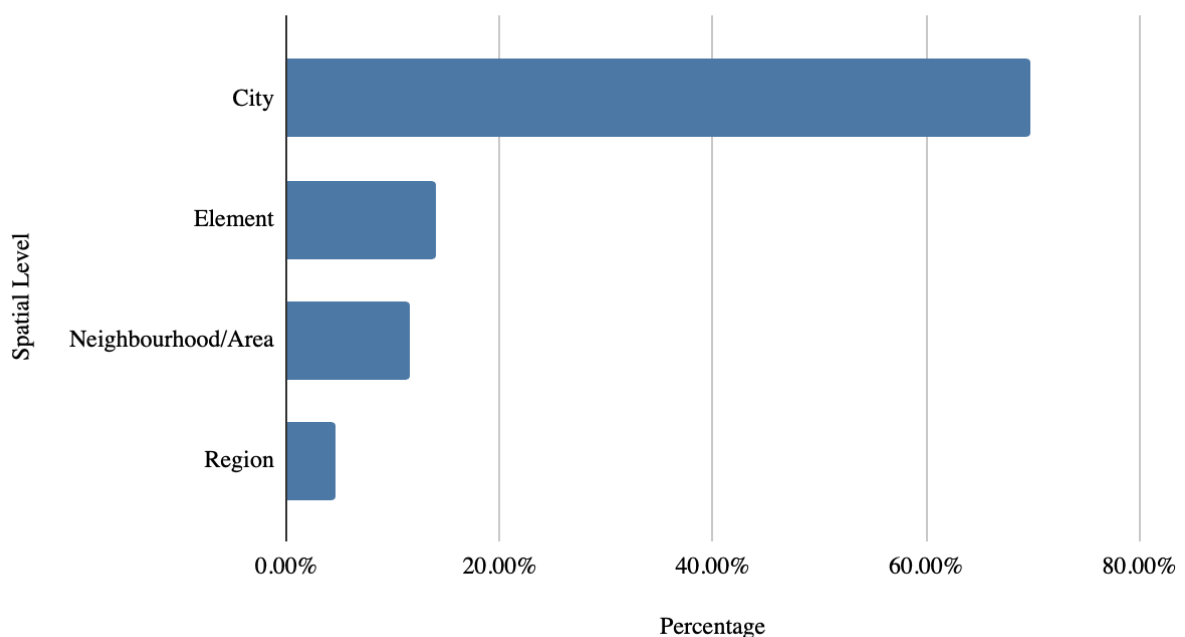*Figure 4.5 Distribution of protection logics within orientative categories in the RSU 2040.* (Graph created by the author, based on the author's original dataset compiled in Table A.1.)

I will turn now to the ways in which heritage is spoken about within the document. Its discursive articulation can be examined by the rhetorical functions of each reference, as well as their distribution across the plan's structure. Figures 4.6 to 4.8 thus shift from mapping what types of heritage are mentioned to understanding how those mentions operate narratively throughout the document.

Figure 4.6 identifies the four discursive functions of heritage across th*e RSU 2040*: Historical-Informative (67.4%), Historical-Narrative (9.3%), Identitary-Valorative (4.7%), and Programmatic (18.6%). This indicates that most heritage references in the *RSU 2040* serve to describe or contextualize the city's past, and a smaller portion that does not reach the 20% translates heritage into explicit orientations or actions. On the side of collective meaning and identification, narrative and identitary roles of heritage—those linking history to civic pride or belonging—are in minor representation, suggesting that the plan uses history primarily as factual context.

Figure 4.6 – Discursive Functions of Heritage References in the RSU 2040
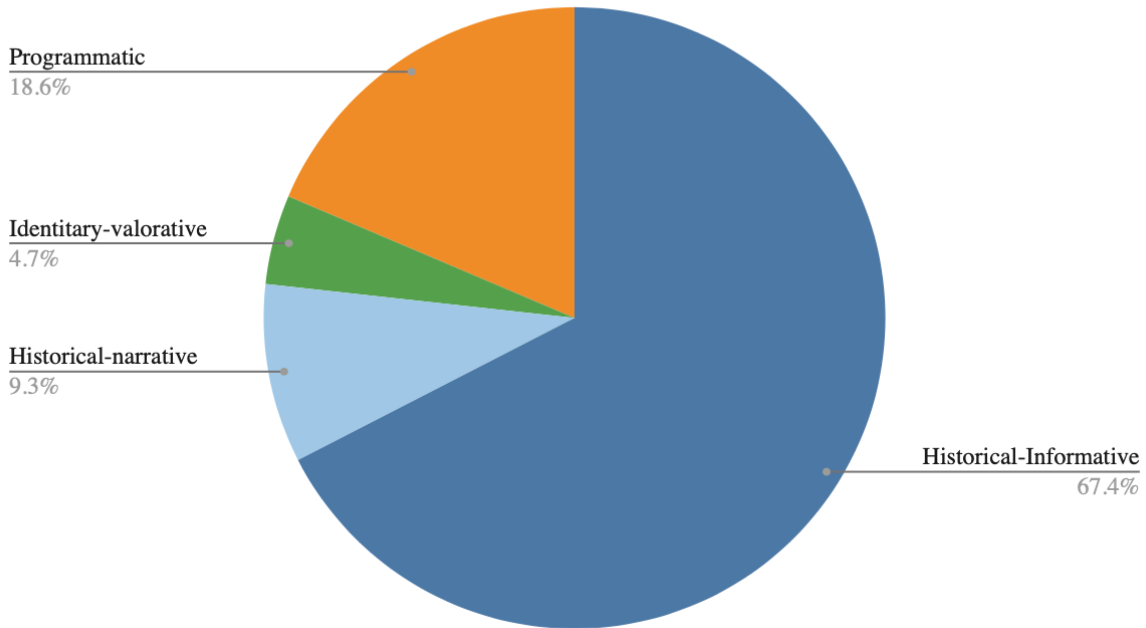
Figure 4.6 Discursive functions of heritage references in the RSU 2040. (Graph created by the author, based on the author's original dataset compiled in Table A.1.)

Figure 4.7 compares how different types of heritage protection relate to the ways heritage is talked about in the *RSU 2040*. As might be expected, Soft-protected heritage dominates across all categories. On the other hand, Hard-protected elements appear well distributed, in descriptive, narrative and identitary logics. This shows that even when the plan refers to officially protected heritage, it mostly does so to tell a story about the city, in relation to what they symbolise than for how they are or can be managed.

Figure 4.7 – Discursive Functions by Protection Logic in the RSU 2040
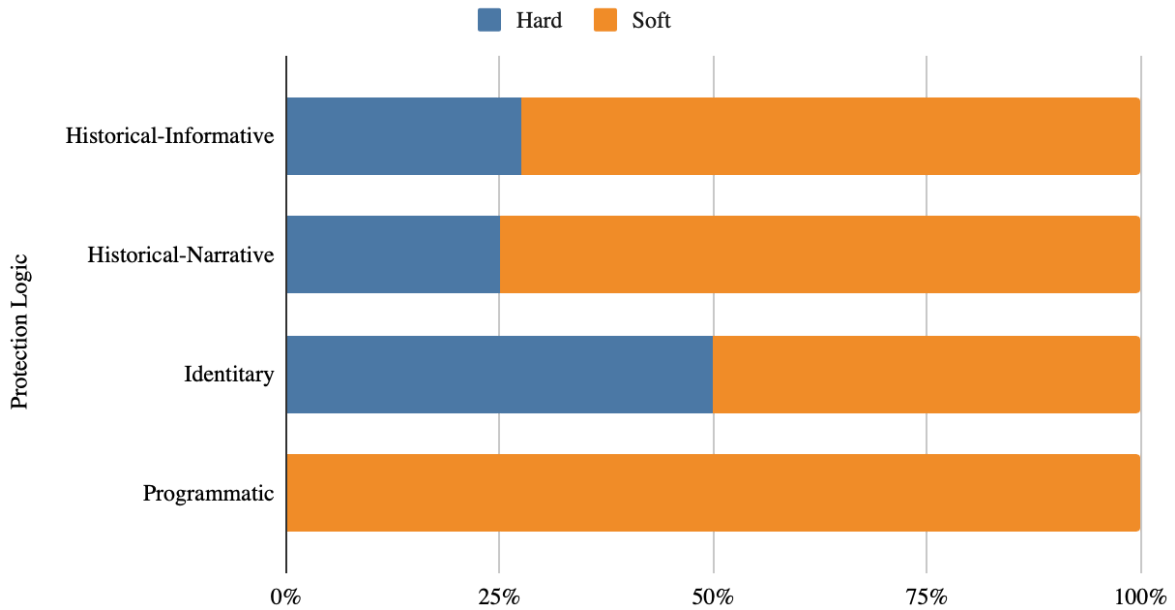
Figure 4.7 Discursive functions of heritage references by protection logic in the RSU 2040. (Graph created by the author, based on the author's original dataset compiled in Table A.1.)

Finally, Figure 4.8 shows how heritage references are distributed across the *RSU 2040*'s chapters. Mentions are concentrated almost entirely in Chapters 2, the principles, and 3, the qualities of Utrecht that include the intermezzo "History of Urban Development and Cultural Heritage." After page 56 (of a total of 214 pages) there are no more mentions of heritage. This pattern evidences that heritage is used to set the scene in the city's story, but once the plan turns to the future it is hard to find its application.

Figure 4.8 – Distribution of Heritage Mentions across RSU 2040 Chapters
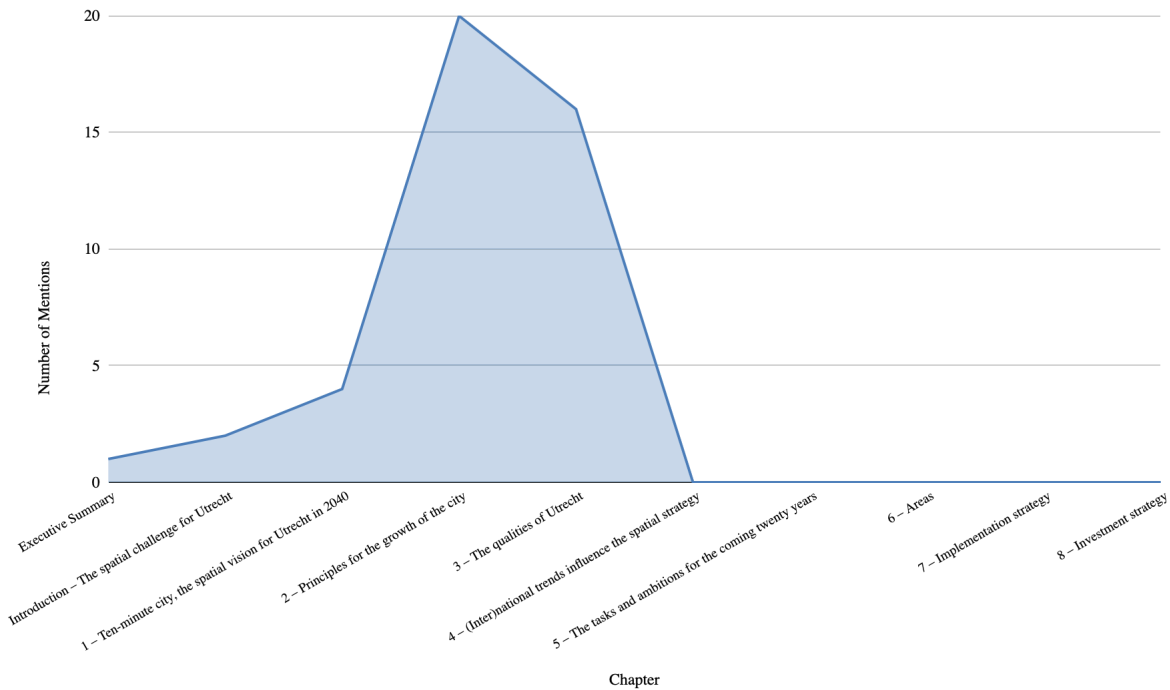
Figure 4.8 Distribution of heritage references across the RSU 2040 chapters. (Graph created by the author, based on the author's original dataset compiled in Table A.1.)

Taken together, these figures reveal that the *RSU*'s treatment of heritage is not only soft and rhetorical in functional terms, but also narrative in structure. Heritage is recognized in the document as meaning, coherence and identity provider, but it remains on a principle or general quality.

Overall, the eight figures together show that the *RSU 2040* in the beginning represents heritage with a good visibility and symbolic weight, particularly through its tangible and city-scale expressions, yet it embeds this visibility within a discursive or narrative rather than an operational framework. Beyond the starting point, heritage largely fades. The *RSU 2040* performs heritage as a form of strategic storytelling that legitimises growth through continuity and identity but lacks integration when it comes to the future operationalization.

5 Heritage in the Public Debate for the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*

In the previous chapter I examined how heritage is represented within the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* as a planning discourse. Now, this chapter turns to the dialogue that involved that same document before its last version. Here, I observe how it was discussed, contested, and translated through the mandatory participatory process. Beyond its procedural dimension, this stage offers a rich lens through which it is possible to observe how citizens and organizations have articulated their understanding of urban identity, development, and specifically the role of cultural heritage within them. The chapter therefore investigates how heritage featured in the public dialogue surrounding the *RSU 2040*. It reconstructs the participatory framework, the range of submissions received and the themes they include around heritage.

5.1 Process of Making the Plan and Participation

As stated in the Reactienota (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 3), the *RSU 2040* was available for public inspection from 27 January to 10 March, 2021. During that period, the municipality received 147 responses, from which 81 were submitted by individual citizens and the rest corresponded to other governments, companies, organizations, and interest groups. The participation process also included two webinars in February 2021. The stakeholders' webinar had 70 participants and the webinar for residents and other interested parties had 289 participants. Questions raised during the sessions were collected and answered in the annexes to the Reactienota that will be analyzed in this section (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 4).

The municipality also used the citizen panel of the municipality's Research & Advice department for input on the elaboration of the principles of the *RSU 2040* (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 4), giving the opportunity to reach a much larger number of residents. In October 2020, the municipality conducted a survey through its Residents' Panel on "the future of the city of Utrecht." At that time, the panel included nearly 6,800 registered members, of whom about 3,800 took part. While the municipality informs the findings cannot be regarded as fully representative of the city's population, they did offer valuable insight into residents' main concerns and priorities in themes such as "urban values, proximity of amenities, access to nature, workplace locations, the multifunctional use of space, and the perceived impact of innovation on urban life" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 4). The results of the poll are stated to

have been recorded in a report[3] that was not available on the municipality's website when this research was made. Therefore, these are excluded from this analysis, which is fully based in the Reactinota.

Several public consultation responses prompted significant revisions to the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*. In addition to these major amendments, the municipality introduced a number of textual and visual refinements based on participants' comments, which are referenced in the corresponding responses. As a result of the consultation, the plan was modified to include a new city profile titled "the delayed city," an additional subsection on logistics and goods hubs under the mobility chapter, and a new paragraph addressing events. References to developments located within neighboring municipalities were removed. Finally, the document's title was updated to *Utrecht Dichtbij: de tien-minutenstad – Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* (Utrecht Nearby: the Ten-Minute City – Spatial Strategy Utrecht 2040) (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 8).

Later, after the municipal elections, the new government published an *oplegger* (addendum) to the *RSU 2040 (*Gemeente Utrecht, 2022). This short document reaffirming the RSU as Utrecht's guiding spatial vision, confirmed the same strategic direction and set three additional emphases for implementation: quality and livability, growth in balance, and the inclusion of Rijnenburg as a future mixed-use district alongside permanent energy generation (Gemeente Utrecht, 2022, pp. 3–5).

5.2 Heritage in the Public Debate: Concepts and Approach

This section analyzes how heritage-related ideas appear in the public reactions compiled in the *Reactienota RSU 2040*. As mentioned before, this document constitutes the official record of feedback received during the participatory process of the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*. The analysis draws on its Section 4, which outlines the amendments introduced in response to the consultation, and on its six annexes that compile the various forms of participation. These include: questions and answers from the public webinars of 16 February 2021 (Annex 1 and Annex 2), input from the Development Network Utrecht, a professional and civic platform that discussed the main themes of the RSU in a dedicated digital meeting (Annex 3), the reports from meetings with entrepreneurs (Annex 4) and with sports associations held on 23 February 2021 (Annex 5), and finally the complete list of written

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[3] Link present in the Reactinota:
https://www.utrecht.nl/bestuur-en-organisatie/publicaties/onderzoek-en-cijfers/meedoen-aan-onderzoek/resultaten-bewonerspanel/resultaten-bewonerspanel-de-toekomst-van-de-stad-utrecht/ (not available, 29.10.2025)

submissions received during the public inspection period (Annex 6). Together, the analysis of these materials seeks to reflect how different actors, citizens, organizations, and professional networks, responded to and engaged with the proposed spatial strategy focusing on the heritage conceptualization.

To explore how ideas about heritage appear in the public debate, three key Dutch concepts were selected: "Cultuurhistorie", "Erfgoed/Werelderfgoed", and "Identiteit." Although they can be translated as "Cultural History," "Heritage/World Heritage," and "Identity," their meanings in Dutch planning and policy practice carry nuances that do not translate easily into English. Cultuurhistorie refers not only to historical or cultural narratives, but also to the physical and spatial traces that embody cultural-historical value. Erfgoed includes both tangible and intangible heritage and often functions as a social or political idea rather than a purely descriptive term, it is about what societies choose to value and preserve. Finally, Identiteit relates to belonging and place-making, and in this study it has been considered only when it helps to explain how residents and institutions connect urban development with a shared sense of place or collective identity.

These notions were chosen because they can be a good signal of the presence of cultural and heritage meanings within the reactions. By tracing their occurrence and including their context of use, the analysis seeks to identify how the idea of heritage was expressed, negotiated, or questioned in the public debate surrounding the *RSU 2040*. Sometimes the concepts appear in the public intervention, others in the response of the municipality and other times in both. Moreover the explicit mention of the concept itself that corresponds to the first filter of the document analysis, the core of the observation is in what is said. Each public (fragment of) intervention was examined, interpreted, and thematically coded, and the same procedure was applied to the corresponding municipal reply.

The purpose of this coding is to classify the use of heritage-related terms and to reveal how different actors construct and relate to the idea of heritage within a shared discursive space. By the comparison of public statements and institutional answers, the analysis identifies patterns of convergence, silence, or tension around what heritage represents in the context of Utrecht's planning vision. In this way, the interpretative reading transforms isolated remarks into a broader understanding of how cultural-historical values are positioned, negotiated, and redefined through the participatory process.

The complete table that summarizes the coded reactions and their municipal responses can be found in Annex B of this thesis.

5.3 Perspectives and Interpretations in the Debate

Although the consultation process of the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040 can be thought of primarily as technical, the reactions that reached the municipality reveal affective and symbolic concerns as well. Among the many themes raised, such as housing, mobility, green space, and density, several submissions referred, directly or indirectly, to the city's history and to the meanings attached to its built and cultural environment. These comments, while small in number compared with those on housing or infrastructure, express how residents and organizations connected questions of growth with questions of identity. The material reviewed in the *Reactienota RSU 2040* resulted in 30 entries from 21 public submissions and their corresponding response from the municipal team.

Among the 21 heritage-related remarks identified in the Reactienota, 18 include a clearly identifiable actor, while 3 could not be categorized due to missing information (see Table 5.1). The majority of identified remarks come from individual citizens (n = 11; ≈61%). There is also a relevant share of collective local actors, including community representatives (n = 3) and community working groups (n = 2), which together account for around 28% of the total. Environmental organizations (n = 1) and private actors (n = 1) are less frequent, yet their participation shows that the public dialogue on the RSU 2040 with regard to cultural heritage was not exclusively citizen-driven, but it also involved a variety of civic and community stakeholders.

Table 5.1 Distribution of actors identified

Actor type	Quantity (n)
Citizen	11
Community representative	3
Community working group	2
Private actor	1
Environmental organization	1
Total identified	18
Not identified ("x")	3

Total	21

Moving towards the arguments, a first group concerns the visibility and recognition of cultural-historical values.One contribution stated that "the historic identity of Utrecht should remain recognizable even as the city grows; new development must respect the layers of time that define its character" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 34). Similar appeals appear throughout the written submissions, that literally refer to visibility and recognizability. Thinking about our previous analysis in Chapter 4 it can be agreed that this vocabulary is strongly presented by the RSU itself, which describes heritage as what "keeps the city's roots in the past while preparing it to grow into a new future" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 12). In a sense, the repetition of this language by citizens suggests the internalization of the plan's rhetoric, but claims for stronger certainty regarding its implementation.

A comment summarises a second group of arguments:"The municipality speaks of a compact city, but compactness should not come at the expense of the cultural-historical landscape that gives Utrecht its quality" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 42). The theme here is the relationship between heritage and urban densification. Reactions from neighbourhood associations in the inner-city and eastern areas warned that the high-rise and infill projects proposed in the RSU could undermine the spatial coherence of historic areas. These remarks reveal a tension between densification, spatial quality and heritage. The concern is not necessarily anti-growth per se but relational, with the concern on the risk of growth may not proceed through recognition of heritage. Once again, these expressions are also made by the plan, but its precision still does not appear to accomplish the security of the citizens.

A third set of reactions highlighted the broader historical landscape surrounding the city. Multiple entries refer to the New Dutch Waterline and the Roman Limes, both UNESCO World Heritage sites. Participants emphasized their educational and recreational potential but feared that they were being used merely as symbolic background. As one submission observed, "The RSU mentions the Waterline as part of identity but offers no vision for its use. How will this heritage contribute to the living city?" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 47). The call for operationality could not be more straightforward in this case.

A related remark from the meeting with the Development Network Utrecht linked the Waterline and surrounding polders to contemporary ecological debates: "The cultural-historical landscape could play a role in climate adaptation and recreation, yet this connection is missing" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 51). Such comments align with recent academic arguments (Fatorić & Biesbroek, 2020) that heritage can support resilience, marking a silence or a lost potential in the vision document.

Finally, several citizens and organizations framed heritage as an element of collective identity and belonging with terms such as "identity of the city" and "shared history". A resident wrote, "Utrecht's identity is built from its history; people recognise themselves in the layers of the city" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 53). Others related this sense of identity to everyday experience, mentioning neighbourhood atmospheres or local landmarks as expressions of shared memory. Although these statements are not fully detailed, in a general sense, they show that heritage is functioning as a language of attachment.

Regarding the municipality's answers, they demonstrate a careful but limited engagement with these concerns. In most cases, the heritage-related remarks received acknowledgements that remained general and declarative, providing general reassurance and no concrete follow-up. For instance, to a question about whether the plan would protect the city's historic skyline, the municipality replied that "the Dom Tower remains the key reference point in the skyline policy" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 61), but it did not precise any mechanism to enforce height limitations in new projects for example. Similarly, in response to a comment calling for stronger integration of the Waterline into the city's development framework, the reply stated that "heritage forms part of the landscape structure that underlies the RSU" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 63), without further elaboration. This pattern of recognition without operationalization recurs throughout the document. The Reactienota explicitly notes that the *RSU 2040* is "a strategic vision, not a plan with regulatory power" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 8), which can explain the absence of specific heritage measures but also illustrates the structural limits of consultation outcomes.

Overall, participants requested more tangible forms of recognition. Specific attention to the skyline, to the Waterline forts, or to neighbourhood character suggest a need for place-based interpretation, beyond the abstract language of "quality" and "livability." In this sense, the dialogue between plan and public responses reproduces what Bloemers et al. (2010) described as the "heritage paradox" of Dutch planning: a system that celebrates cultural history rhetorically but struggles to translate it into operational practice. On the side of the

municipality, participation fulfilled its formal purpose. The Reactienota confirms this paradox in a procedural form because citizens' affective and spatial arguments are acknowledged but neutralised.

Meanwhile the plan speaks of how "greenery, water and cultural history together ensure that the city keeps its roots in the past while preparing it to grow into a new future" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 41), the residents expressed concern about the risks of losing those roots amid rapid transformation. From a discursive perspective, this exchange can be read as a negotiation of meaning between institutional and civic imaginaries of the city. With the same concepts municipality and the participants are acknowledging heritage —and vision of the future— in partially overlapping semantic fields. The tension can be traced into the structure of Dutch governance. Since the *Belvedere Memorandum* (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen et al., 1999), heritage is expected to contribute to development but the question of whether heritage serves to legitimate change rather than to guide it is still valid as public reactions intuitively grasped this imbalance, calling for a more dialogical approach in which historical and cultural layers inform the design of new urban forms.

Finally, a mention of public participation remains. Even though the official record concludes that, while many reactions "contributed to a better explanation of the RSU", none required "adjustments to its strategic direction" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c, p. 8). Heritage remains acknowledged as part of the city's value system but not so much as a driver of planning decisions. But even if these elements did not translate into concrete policy adjustments, they did expose the limits of existing participatory models and pointed to the need for more dialogical forms of planning. Between these discursive registers lies a space of negotiation for the value of heritage in the future planning vision.

6 Reflections from an Institutional Perspective: A Conversation-Based Perspective

This chapter reflects on a conversation held with a municipal heritage professional who was involved, in a consultative role, in the early stages of the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*. The interview was conducted after the main documentary and discourse analysis presented in this thesis had already been completed. Its purpose was not to produce new empirical findings, nor to represent the municipal position as such, but to reflect on how the observations developed in this thesis resonate within the institutional context in which the RSU was produced.

Rather than functioning as a source of evidence in itself, the interview is used here as a reflective device. It did not inform the analysis retroactively, but offered an opportunity to confront it with a practitioner's perspective. What emerged from this exchange was not disagreement with the observations presented in this thesis, but a difference in how those observations are framed and evaluated.

6.1 Position of the interviewee and scope of the conversation

The interviewee has extensive experience working within the municipal heritage field, particularly in relation to twentieth-century urban development and neighbourhood-scale cultural-historical values. Her work centres on identifying cultural-historical values in urban areas and reflecting on how these values relate to processes of spatial development. Within the *RSU 2040* process, her involvement was limited to an early consultative phase, during which heritage professionals were asked to contribute reflections on historical development patterns and the cultural-historical qualities of the city.

This institutional position is fundamental for interpreting the interview. The interviewee did not participate in political decision-making, nor in the drafting of the final strategy. Her perspective therefore reflects that of a heritage professional operating within municipal structures, rather than that of a planner responsible for shaping the RSU as a strategic whole. This conversation thus offers insight into how heritage expertise is positioned in relation to long-term spatial visions, but not into how competing priorities were ultimately negotiated or resolved in this particular case.

The interview was semi-structured and conversational in nature. It did not follow a rigid questionnaire, but it developed as a dialogue in which analytical observations drawn from the RSU were discussed and reflected upon. The conversation lasted approximately 20 minutes.

6.2 Abstraction, intention, and practice

Throughout the conversation, the *RSU 2040* was emphasized as a long-term vision operating at a very abstract level. It was described as a framework that allows for general orientations and shared intentions, and not as a document meant to guide concrete projects. This understanding aligned with the analysis earlier developed in this thesis, where the RSU is shown to function primarily at the level of vision and framing.

At the same time, these characteristics were not framed as problematic. From the interviewee's perspective, the abstract nature of the RSU is intentional and appropriate for its means. As a long-term strategy, its role is to set general directions, while more concrete considerations are expected to take place at later stages of planning and through other instruments. In this context, the interviewee noted that once planning moves closer to concrete projects, addressing specific heritage values becomes difficult in practice. As she put it, "when there's a lot of pressure to add new buildings and develop different parts of the city, that becomes very difficult." While the intentions expressed at the level of the strategic vision were described as good and broadly shared, their translation into practice was characterised as consistently challenging. This difficulty was linked not only to development pressure, but also to the relational dimension of planning work, as "it depends also on who you work with," and on the willingness of different actors to take heritage considerations into account.

Taken together, these reflections show that the observations developed through document analysis in this work are also clearly recognised within municipal practice. However, they are framed differently. The abstract positioning of heritage, the emphasis on intention rather than implementation, and the expected difficulty of translation into concrete projects were not contested, but described as familiar and structurally embedded. What this research treats as analytically significant—namely the limited operational presence of heritage within the RSU—was understood by the interviewee as a functional division of tasks between planning instruments, an inherent consequence of how long-term strategic planning operates.

This difference in framing is related to the type of knowledge through which heritage operates. Cultural-historical values tend to be articulated in qualitative, narrative, and place-based terms, whereas strategic planning relies on calculable indicators, program targets,

and feasibility assessments (Janssen et al. 2017, p. 19). In the *RSU 2040*, heritage is mainly framed through notions of identity, recognizability, and historical continuity (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 9), and reiterated through place-based qualities and recognizable spatial character (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, p. 52), while remaining largely absent from the operational language through which spatial capacity, housing numbers, growth scenarios, and phased development are articulated (see Chapter 4.2). This asymmetry reflects a hierarchy of knowledge forms in which qualitative values struggle to gain traction in decision-making environments dominated by quantitative logics (Janssen et al., 2017, p. 21).

6.3 Heritage, pressure, and limits in practice

The interviewee reflected openly on the challenges heritage faces in concrete development contexts. Heritage was described as broadly valued in principle both within the municipality and citizens; but it was also characterised as structurally weaker when confronted with competing priorities such as housing targets, financial feasibility, and program density. The interviewee noted that in situations where multiple claims converge on a single site, heritage protection tends to operate as a negotiable consideration.

At the same time, she stressed that municipal heritage practice is not oriented towards resisting change. Change is understood as an inherent part of the city's historical continuity. The central challenge therefore lies not in whether transformation should occur, but in determining its extent, location, and consequences for existing spatial identities. This is the mediating role of the heritage professional.

These observations resonate with debates discussed earlier in the thesis concerning the difficulty of translating cultural-historical values into planning contexts dominated by quantitative logics. Ashworth and Tunbridge conceptualize this condition as "dissonance", referring to situations in which heritage is socially recognised as valuable, yet systematically marginalised when confronted with development pressures and growth-oriented planning priorities (Ashworth & Tunbridge 1996, p. 21). Similarly, Bloemers et al. describe this tension not as a contingent failure, but as a structural condition embedded in contemporary planning systems (Bloemers et al. 2010, p. 11). Within such contexts, heritage tends to retain symbolic legitimacy while lacking the operational capacity to shape concrete decisions. Cultural-historical values may be acknowledged in principle, yet their influence remains contingent on negotiation, individual actors, and situational openness. As a result, heritage influence fluctuates rather than being institutionally guaranteed. From this perspective, the

situation described by the interviewee reflects not a lack of commitment to heritage, but the distribution of authority across different forms of knowledge within planning systems.

6.4 Citizens, scale, and accessibility

Another point raised in the interview concerns the gap between strategic planning documents and everyday experience. The interviewee noted that residents often care deeply about their neighbourhoods and local environments, including places without formal heritage designation. However, documents such as the RSU struggle to engage with this scale of lived experience. Their length, abstraction, and technical language make them difficult to interpret for non-specialists.

This observation aligns with the analysis of public consultation material presented earlier in the thesis. While citizens tend to express concrete, place-based concerns rooted in everyday experience, these concerns do not easily translate into strategic documents operating at the city-wide scale. The issue is therefore not only one of accessibility or communication, but of scale: the RSU necessarily abstracts from the neighbourhood-specific values that residents seek to articulate or protect.

From this perspective, the interview points to a structural limitation of strategic planning instruments. Although citizen input is formally collected, the scale at which the RSU operates limits the extent to which such concerns can meaningfully shape the strategic vision. As a result, heritage-related concerns raised by citizens tend to remain confined to local negotiation, rather than becoming structurally embedded within long-term planning frameworks.

6.5 Concluding reflection

This interview reflects a single institutional perspective and cannot be generalised to municipal practice as a whole. It does not offer insight into political priorities or internal negotiations, but it does help to situate the analysis developed in this thesis more precisely. From an institutional perspective, the abstract positioning of heritage within the *RSU 2040* is understood as intentional and even functional. As a long-term strategy, the *RSU 2040* is designed to operate through general orientations rather than an operational guidance, allowing flexibility across long temporal horizons. Heritage, articulated through qualitative values and historical continuity, is therefore positioned at the level of intention and framing, while its operationalization is deferred to other instruments and later stages of planning.

At the same time, the interview makes visible the consequences of this division of labour. When planning moves closer to concrete projects, heritage enters decision-making contexts characterised by development pressure, program density, and quantitative evaluation criteria. In these settings, cultural-historical values retain symbolic legitimacy but struggle to exert structural influence. Their impact becomes contingent on negotiation, individual actors, and situational openness rather than being institutionally guaranteed.

The discussion of citizens and participation further illustrates how these dynamics operate across scales. While residents articulate strong place-based attachments and heritage concerns at the neighbourhood level, strategic documents such as the RSU necessarily abstract from everyday experience. The limited availability of feedback mechanisms means that tensions encountered at the project or neighbourhood level rarely travel back upward to reshape the strategic vision.

Taken together, this chapter shows that the central issue is not the absence of heritage from Utrecht's spatial strategy, nor a lack of institutional awareness of its value. Rather, it lies in the way heritage is positioned within a planning system that privileges abstraction, calculability, and future-oriented growth. This helps explain why heritage remains visible at the level of intention, while its capacity to shape long-term spatial decisions remains structurally constrained.

7. Policy reflection on the vision

This thesis has shown that the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* frames heritage primarily as a spatial quality and an element of urban identity. Heritage is used to articulate continuity and recognizability in a rapidly transforming city, and is explicitly valued within Utrecht's long-term spatial vision (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 52). At the same time, the analysis has demonstrated that this role remains largely discursive. While heritage is present in narrative framing and guiding principles, it is largely absent from the strategic core of the RSU, where spatial priorities and pathways toward implementation are defined (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a, pp. 8–9; see Chapter 4).

Building on this observation, this chapter reflects on how heritage is positioned beyond the level of the strategic vision. It situates the RSU within the broader policy and planning frameworks through which heritage is mediated in Dutch spatial planning practice, with particular attention to the forms of articulation that shape its role in strategic spatial thinking. This reflection is especially relevant in the actual context of the *Omgevingswet*, which has reinforced integrated and area-based planning approaches.

7.1 Conceptualizing the relation between vision, planning and heritage

Strategic spatial visions occupy an ambiguous position within planning practice. They are not instruments of regulation, nor do they directly intervene in concrete projects. Instead, they work by setting orientations, values, and shared ways of imagining the future of a city. Their strength lies precisely in abstraction: they establish a common frame without fixing outcomes.

Within such documents, heritage does not operate as something to be implemented, but as something to be articulated. In the RSU, heritage appears primarily as a way of framing spatial identity, continuity, and recognizability. It helps to narrate change, to make transformation legible, and to anchor future development in a sense of historical depth. This form of presence is not neutral. By privileging certain narratives, layers, and spatial qualities, the vision shapes what counts as heritage in the first place, while leaving other histories and attachments less visible or harder to mobilise later on.

Planning, however, does not unfold through a single instrument or moment. Vision-making, spatial analysis, design exploration, and project-level decision-making operate with different temporalities and degrees of abstraction. They are connected, but not continuous. What is

articulated at the level of vision conditions what can later be recognised, discussed, and negotiated, even if it does not determine outcomes directly. The distance often observed between heritage in strategic visions and heritage in concrete interventions is therefore not only a matter of functional differentiation, but also a consequence of the limited capacity of visions to actively structure subsequent planning practices.

From this perspective, the RSU should neither be read as a failed attempt at integrating heritage nor as a neutral container of values. It exemplifies a particular positioning of heritage within strategic spatial thinking: heritage is made present as reference and orientation, while the ways in which this reference translates into action are left open. This openness allows flexibility, but it also weakens heritage's capacity to travel across planning stages in a consistent way.

It is within this space—between articulation at the level of vision and negotiation in later planning stages—that approaches such as landscape biography and instruments like the Gebiedsbiografie become relevant. Rather than turning visions into binding frameworks, they work on the conditions under which heritage, once articulated as spatial quality and identity, can be taken up more explicitly in planning practice, discussed across scales, and negotiated beyond purely narrative terms.

7.2 Landscape biography and its relevance for spatial planning

Strategic spatial visions shape how heritage is articulated and recognised in the long term. The issue is not implementation, but how this articulation operates over time. Landscape biography offers a way of approaching landscape not as a fixed backdrop or a set of protected elements, but as a historically layered and continuously evolving lifeworld. From this perspective, landscape is shaped through the ongoing interaction of practices, material change, and representation, rather than through isolated moments of preservation or intervention (Kolen & Renes, 2015, p. 22).

Kolen and Renes (2015, p. 22) describe landscape as a differentiated life world of human and non-human beings, in which individual lives and everyday practices become woven into longer historical trajectories that extend beyond lived memory. Landscapes accumulate traces, meanings, and attachments, while at the same time developing their own temporal rhythms that exceed individual biographies (Kolen & Renes, 2015, p. 22). As De Jong shows in his biographical study of an "ordinary" neighbourhood, Buiten Wittevrouwen in Utrecht, this process can never be grasped in a complete or coherent way. Instead, it appears as what

he calls a "kaleidoscopic biography", composed of fragments, partial perspectives, and selective memories (De Jong, 2015, p. 284).

One of the reasons landscape biography emerged as an approach, according to Kolen and Renes (2015, p. 23), was the dissatisfaction with the fragmentation produced by decades of disciplinary specialisation and reductionist research traditions that had made it increasingly difficult for historical landscape knowledge to speak to the planning and design practices that actively transform space. Renes (2015, p. 404) adds that even widely used metaphors such as "layers" risk simplifying landscape complexity if they are treated as static strata rather than as elements that are constantly reworked, reassigned, and reinterpreted through planning and reuse. In the RSU, as discussed earlier, this dynamic becomes visible in the way heritage is articulated through general narratives, while the complexity of historically layered places is largely flattened at the level of the strategic vision.

It is precisely in response to this tension that the biographical approach places particular emphasis on the relationship between representations of space and material landscapes. Visions, planning concepts, and design ideas are not external to landscape change, but participate in it. Strategic visions can therefore be understood as biographical moments: they shape how landscapes are interpreted and valued, and in doing so influence how change unfolds over time (Kolen & Renes, 2015, p. 26). For spatial planning, this means that planning and design are not external interventions imposed on an otherwise stable landscape, but part of the landscape's ongoing life history. The landscape biography perspective seeks for making historical processes, narratives, and memories available to contemporary actors, and in opening space for more reflexive engagement with landscape transformation (Kolen & Renes, 2015, p. 42).

Within the scope of this chapter, landscape biography functions as a conceptual lens to better understand why articulation at the level of strategic vision matters. In strategic visions histories, layers, and meanings are framed within spatial thinking. The analysis of the RSU shows that this framing capacity is present, but only partially activated, suggesting room for more deliberate and explicit forms of heritage articulation already at the level of vision for Utrecht. This observation opens the question of how such articulation can be supported and operationalized through existing planning instruments in the Netherlands.

7.3 The *Gebiedsbiografie* as an instrument for strengthening heritage articulation

The *Gebiedsbiografie* (RCE, 2020) needs to be understood against the background of longer-standing developments in Dutch heritage and landscape research, as well as more recent shifts in environmental and spatial planning policy. Biographical approaches to landscape predate both the RSU and the *Omgevingswet,* and have been developed within heritage and landscape scholarship as a way of understanding landscape as a historically layered and continuously evolving entity (Kolen & Renes, 2015, p. 22). What changes in the current policy context is not the concept itself, but its institutional uptake and positioning within planning practice.

With the introduction of the *Omgevingswet* and the *Nationale Omgevingsvisie,* integrated and area-based approaches to the physical living environment have become central to Dutch spatial planning. Within this framework, strategic visions are expected to bring together environmental, cultural, spatial, and social dimensions in a more coherent and place-based manner, while remaining non-binding in character (Janssen et al. 2017, p. 15). It is within this context that the *Gebiedsbiografie* has been explicitly repositioned and formalised as a policy-supporting instrument.

Rather than introducing new regulatory requirements, it responds to the need for historically informed and spatially grounded knowledge at the level of areas and regions. The instrument formalises the expectation that historical landscape development and cultural-historical values are made explicit at an early stage of vision-making and planning processes, particularly in relation to strategic visions and participation trajectories (RCE 2020, p. 6). In this sense, the *Gebiedsbiografie* should not be understood as an optional add-on, but as part of a broader shift toward integrated spatial thinking within contemporary Dutch planning frameworks.

Offering a concrete example of how heritage articulation can be strengthened without transforming strategic visions into binding instruments; it is a supportive tool, that structures historical landscape knowledge in an area-based and accessible form, explicitly intended to inform spatial visions, early-stage planning, and participatory processes (RCE 2020, p. 6). Its role is not to prescribe outcomes, but to clarify historical context and spatial logic at a moment when planning choices are still open. It brings together long-term landscape development, spatial structures, and cultural-historical narratives into a coherent account that can circulate across different planning contexts. In doing so, it translates a biographical understanding of landscape into a format that remains compatible with the abstract and

orienting character of strategic visions, while offering a more explicit and spatially grounded articulation of heritage than vision documents typically provide (Renes 2015, p. 404).

A key characteristic of the *Gebiedsbiografie* is its deliberate separation between description and valuation. The instrument is explicitly described as policy-neutral: it does not prioritise values, prescribe spatial choices, or resolve conflicts between competing interests (RCE 2020, pp. 9–10). At the same time, participation plays an important role in this process. The RCE frames the *Gebiedsbiografie* as an instrument through which experiential and situated knowledge can be incorporated alongside expert-driven historical analysis, particularly in identifying what is perceived as valuable within the physical living environment (RCE 2020, p. 8). This reinforces an understanding of heritage as relational and lived, while maintaining a clear distinction between knowledge production and decision-making.

Read against the RSU, the *Gebiedsbiografie* demonstrates that strategic visions are not inherently limited to weak or purely rhetorical forms of heritage articulation. While the RSU mobilises heritage primarily through identity and spatial quality, the *Gebiedsbiografie* shows how heritage can be articulated in a more structured and spatially explicit manner, even still within non-binding planning contexts. The limited activation of heritage within the RSU is therefore not an inevitable consequence of vision-based planning, but reflects the degree to which available instruments and conceptual approaches are mobilized.

The *Gebiedsbiografie* does not resolve the tensions identified in earlier chapters. It does not guarantee that heritage knowledge will become decisive in planning outcomes, nor does it eliminate conflicts between development pressure and cultural-historical values. Its contribution lies in strengthening the articulation of heritage at an early stage, making historical layers, spatial logics, and lived meanings more visible and discussable within the strategic planning process. Within the scope of this chapter, the *Gebiedsbiografie* thus functions as an example of how heritage articulation can be made more robust without abandoning the format of strategic vision-making. It shows that even within the constraints of non-binding spatial planning, there is room for more explicit, structured, and spatially grounded articulations of heritage than those observed in the RSU. Its value lies in making the tensions further developed in this thesis, explicit and negotiable within area-based planning processes.

8 Conclusion

This thesis has examined the ways in which cultural and archaeological heritage are articulated within contemporary urban planning discourse, using the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040 as an analytical lens. By analyzing the strategy document itself, the public consultation process, and reflections from within municipal practice, I have explored how heritage circulates across different planning arenas: as discourse, as value, and as spatial reference. The thesis has focused on how heritage is articulated within Utrecht's long-term planning, where it is positioned, and what consequences this positioning has for planning practice.

The analysis of the RSU 2040 demonstrates that heritage is prominently mobilized as a spatial quality, an identity marker, and a legitimizing narrative for urban growth. Heritage is invoked to frame continuity, recognizability, and belonging in a rapidly transforming city. However, this visibility is unevenly distributed. While heritage features strongly in the introductory chapters, principles, and descriptive sections of the strategy, it largely disappears once the document moves toward spatial priorities, development logics, and future-oriented structuring choices. The quantitative mapping of heritage references I have developed confirmed this pattern: heritage is predominantly articulated through soft, rhetorical, and orientative language, and remains almost entirely absent from programmatic or operational formulations.

This finding does not suggest that the RSU fails to acknowledge heritage, nor that heritage is deliberately excluded. Instead, it reveals a structural characteristic of vision-based planning. Strategic visions such as the RSU operate at a high level of abstraction, where values, imaginaries, and long-term orientations are articulated without prescribing concrete outcomes. Within this format, heritage functions primarily as narrative infrastructure: it helps explain why growth is acceptable, how change can be framed as continuity, and what kind of city Utrecht understands itself to be. The consequence, however, is that heritage remains weakly articulated at the point where planning moves from symbolic framing to prioritization.

The analysis of the public consultation process reinforced this interpretation. Citizens, neighbourhood groups, and organizations articulated heritage-related concerns in concrete, place-based terms: historic skylines, landscape structures, neighbourhood character, and the future of the Waterline and the Limes. These contributions show that heritage is not only a symbolic value but a lived and spatial concern closely tied to everyday experience. Yet, in the

Reactienota RSU 2040, such concerns were simply acknowledged in general terms without being translated into changes to the strategic framework. Participation thus confirmed the importance of heritage for civic identity while simultaneously exposing the limited capacity of strategic visions to absorb place-specific values into their core logic.

The institutional reflection presented in Chapter 6 further contextualized these dynamics. From within municipal practice, the abstract positioning of heritage within the RSU was not experienced as a shortcoming but as an expected and functional feature of a long-term vision. The municipal heritage professional interviewed for this research, recognised the difficulty of translating qualitative, place-based values into planning contexts dominated by quantitative targets, development pressure, and feasibility assessments. Heritage was described as widely valued in principle, yet structurally fragile in moments of decision-making. This was not perceived as a problem the *RSU 2040* itself was expected to resolve, but as a structural condition of strategic planning documents operating at this scale. The interviewee confirmed that the limited operational presence of heritage in the *RSU 2040* is therefore not accidental, but embedded in broader planning logics that privilege calculability, flexibility, and future-oriented growth.

Together, these findings point to a central conclusion: the challenge is not the absence of heritage in Utrecht's spatial strategy, but the way heritage is articulated and carried forward across planning stages. Heritage is present as meaning and intention, but its capacity to shape subsequent planning processes remains contingent. This contingency is associated with scale mismatches, institutional divisions of labour, and the separation between vision-making and implementation.

Chapter 7 addressed this condition through a policy reflection, bringing the *RSU 2040* into dialogue with the landscape biography perspective and the *Gebiedsbiografie*. The landscape biography provides a conceptual framework for understanding why articulation at the level of vision matters. By emphasising the temporal and relational nature of cultural landscape, it highlights that visions, plans, and representations are not external to cultural landscape transformation but become part of its ongoing life history. From this perspective, the way heritage is articulated in a strategic vision actively shapes what becomes visible, legible, and discussable in future planning contexts.

The *Gebiedsbiografie* illustrates that stronger forms of heritage articulation are possible within non-binding planning frameworks. By structuring historical knowledge spatially and temporally, and by explicitly linking expert analysis with participatory input, it strengthens

the presence of heritage at early stages of planning without prescribing outcomes. Importantly, the *Gebiedsbiografie* does not resolve conflicts between heritage and development, nor does it guarantee heritage influence in decision-making. Its relevance lies in making historical layers, spatial logics, and lived meanings more explicit and shareable, thereby improving the conditions under which heritage can enter planning debates.

Reading against the RSU 2040, this comparison demonstrates that the limited activation of heritage within Utrecht's spatial strategy is not an inevitable consequence of vision-based planning. Rather, it reflects specific choices about how heritage is positioned, structured, and mediated within that format. These choices were made at a moment when the Dutch planning system itself was undergoing significant transformation, as integrative environmental and heritage-sensitive approaches were still being consolidated. While strategic visions can articulate heritage more robustly than the RSU 2040 currently does, even while remaining non-binding and future-oriented, such articulation is neither automatic nor guaranteed, but depends on how emerging policy perspectives and regulatory logics are taken up within the vision itself.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to ongoing debates on heritage and urban planning by shifting attention from questions of protection versus development toward questions of articulation, mediation, and scale. It shows that heritage integration is not a matter of adding more references or stronger rhetoric, but of how historical knowledge and values are framed, structured, and allowed to travel across the planning process. The case of Utrecht illustrates both the possibilities and the limits of vision-led planning in this respect.

By tracing how heritage is mobilized in discourse, contested in participation, and contextualized in institutional practice, the thesis demonstrates that heritage remains a powerful but fragile presence in contemporary urban planning. Recognising this fragility clarifies where critical attention is needed: not only in protecting heritage, but in shaping the conditions under which it can meaningfully inform the city's future.

In doing so, this thesis offers an analytical perspective that may be relevant beyond Utrecht, for understanding how heritage is negotiated within long-term spatial planning under conditions of institutional change. From an archaeological and heritage perspective, it highlights the importance of engaging not only with what planning documents say about the past, but with how historical knowledge and values are expected to operate across planning scales, instruments, and moments of decision-making. This shift in focus underscores the contribution that archaeological and heritage-based approaches can make to contemporary

planning debates, not as external critiques, but as analytical frameworks for examining how the past is mobilised, translated, and constrained within contemporary planning systems.

Abstract

This thesis examines how cultural and archaeological heritage is conceptualized and mobilized within long-term urban planning, using the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* (RSU 2040) as an analytical case. Rather than treating the *RSU 2040* as an object of study in itself, the thesis approaches it as a strategic planning document through which broader tensions between heritage and urban development become visible. The research addresses a central paradox in contemporary planning practice: while heritage is acknowledged as a spatial quality and cultural value within strategic visions, it often remains weakly translated into operational, regulatory, and implementation-oriented planning frameworks.

The study is situated within the current context in Dutch and European spatial planning, including the relatively recent move toward integrated, area-based approaches and the increasing emphasis on participation and long-term visioning. Against this background, the thesis asks how heritage is framed, valued, and made actionable within the *RSU 2040,* and what this reveals about the role of heritage in guiding future urban transformation.

Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative and interpretative approach. It combines discourse analysis of the *RSU 2040* with an analysis of public participation documents associated with the plan's development. In addition, a semi-structured interview with a municipal professional involved in heritage-related urban development provides an institutional perspective on the relationship between strategic intentions and planning practice. Together, these materials allow the thesis to examine both how heritage is articulated in policy discourse and how it is perceived and negotiated in practice.

The analysis distinguishes between different logics of heritage protection and engagement, notably between legally grounded, regulatory forms of protection and more implicit, narrative-based or design-oriented approaches. It shows that within the *RSU 2040,* heritage is predominantly mobilized as an identity marker, a source of spatial quality, and a narrative resource that contributes to the city's recognizability and continuity. At the same time, explicit references to legal instruments, regulatory constraints, or implementation mechanisms remain limited and are largely deferred to other policy documents and planning instruments outside the vision itself.

The theoretical framework draws on heritage-as-process perspectives and landscape biography scholarship, understanding heritage as a dynamic, historically layered, and socially negotiated practice rather than a static object of preservation. From this perspective, heritage

is not something static only to be protected, but also a resource through which past, present, and future are continuously related within the planning process.

The findings suggest that while the *RSU 2040* successfully integrates heritage into its strategic narrative, it simultaneously externalises responsibility for its concrete operationalization. This configuration reflects broader challenges in contemporary spatial planning, where strategic visions emphasize integration and flexibility, yet risk weakening the practical anchoring of heritage considerations. The thesis concludes by reflecting on the implications of this dynamic for spatial planning in Utrecht and the Netherlands more broadly, and argues for the potential of the *Gebiedsbiografie* as a governance tool capable of strengthening the operational articulation of heritage by linking historical understanding, spatial design, and participatory planning practice. By treating the *RSU 2040* as an analytical window rather than as an object of evaluation in itself, the thesis reflects on broader implications for heritage articulation within Dutch spatial planning.

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Appendix A. Heritage-Related Excerpts from the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040

In this appendix a compilation of the excerpts from the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040* that explicitly or implicitly refer to cultural and archaeological heritage can be found. These were organized and codified in Table A.1 that constitutes the primary data base for the analysis of Chapter 4. The text was originally written in Dutch and translated into English using DeepL Translator (https://www.deepl.com) with a personal manual revision for accuracy with the aim to preserve the original meaning as closely as possible. Page references correspond to the official *RSU 2040* document (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021a). The table presented in this appendix is an original compilation by the author.

Table A.1. Excerpts from the *RSU 2040* Related to Cultural and Archaeological Heritage

#	Heritage element	Page	RSU quote (summary)	Reference Type	Spatial Level	Dimension	Protection Logic	Operational integration	Discursive Function
1	History	9	Troughtout its rich story, Utrecht has always ground and changed. The municipality therefore sees this not as a threat, but as an opportunity to strengthen healthy urban living for all	Intangible	City	Symbolic	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-narrative
2	Rich history and heritage	22	In addition to the development direction set by the city council, the specific spatial qualities of the city also form an important basis for further urbanisation. These include its rich history and heritage, its compactness amid diverse landscapes, and the fact that the city is the central hub in a national network (...)	Structural	City	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Orientative	Programmatic
3	Urban heritage and cultural assets	23	The city lies centrally, is compact and has a great wealth of heritage, amenities, culture and green.	Tangible	City	Object	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
4	Cultural landscape surrounding Utrecht	32	Utrecht is surrounded by diverse landscapes with a rich cultural history, each with its own quality and identity.	Landscape	Region	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Orientative	Identitary-valorative
5	Accessible cultural facilities	39	Sufficient accessible educational, cultural, healthcare and sports facilities are also crucial in an inclusive and affordable city	Intangible	City	Institutional	Soft protection	Orientative	Programmatic
6	Cultural history	41	The main carriers of this structure are the landscape framework of greenery, water and cultural history and the network of underground and above infrastructure. Together they ensure that the city keeps its roots in the past and its surroundings and at the same time is ready to grow into a new future."	Structural	City	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Orientative	Programmatic
7	Landscape framework of greenery, water and cultural history	41	The landscape framework of greenery, water and cultural historytogether with infrastructure forms the backbone of the urban structure.	Structural	City	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Orientative	Programmatic
8	History of urban development and Utrecht's cultural heritage	47	Intermezzo: History of urban development and Utrecht's cultural heritage	Intangible	City	Symbolic	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
9	Historical continuity / tradition of growth	48	Growth and change of the city is of all times! Utrecht is building on and can draw on a rich history. The city has a unique cultural heritage of which the people of Utrecht are proud; the municipality wants to cherish it. (...) The Netherlands has a large number of historical cities, but only a few have such a long track record as Utrecht. Over two thousand years of habitation has bit by bit shaped the rich mosaic of present-day Utrecht."	Intangible	City	Symbolic	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-narrative
10	Roman Limes	49	The first major spatial developments occurred in Roman times. Around 800 years before our era, the Vecht split off from the Rhine and several settlements arose near the water. The Romans started using the landscape more intensively and used the Rhine as a supply route. Forts were built to guard the border (Limes), including the Domplein and the Hoge Woerd. The old fort Trajectum on Domplein has now been inhabited almost continuously for almost 2,000 years and is considered the foundation of today's city of Utrecht.	Tangible	City	Object	Hard protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
11	Domplein	49	Remains of the old fort lie beneath today's Domplein.	Tangible	Element	Object	Hard protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
12	Hoge Woerd fort	49	Forts were built to guard the border (Limes), including the Domplein and the Hoge Woerd	Tangible	Element	Object	Hard protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
13	Churches, Cathedral	49	At the beginning of the 11th century, the church centre was expanded on a large scale including three new collegiate churches and an abbey, which were built around the forerunner of today's Cathedral.	Tangible	Element	Object	Hard protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
14	Lofen Palais	49	The bishop built his palace attached to the castle, and around 1050 the Emperor built the Lofen Palace.	Tangible	Element	Object	Hard protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
15	Oudegracht & wharf cellars	49	In 1275, the Weerdsluis was built, allowing people to regulate the water level in the city. As a result, the Oudegracht developed from north to south into an elongated harbour with its characteristic wharfs and wharf cellars.	Tangible	City	Structural	Hard protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
16	Weerdsluis (1275)	49	Built to regulate the water level in the city	Tangible	Element	Object	Hard protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
17	Domtoren	49	In 1320, Utrechters embarked on a major prestige project: the construction of the Dom Tower, still the city's most important icon. The complete construction of church and tower took 200 years.	Tangible	Element	Object/Symbolic	Hard protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Identitary-valorative
18	Blauwkaepl and Zuilen	49	By the mid-16th century, (...) small suburbs, such as Blauwkapel and Zuilen, had also sprung up outside the city walls.	Structural	Neighbourhood/Area	Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
19	New Dutch Waterline+ fortifications	49	The medieval city walls were no longer functional; city defences were modernised from 1830 onwards with the construction of the forts near Utrecht as part of the New Dutch Waterline. (p.49) Given a place in the city as a 'new city wall', originally a defensive structure and now incorporated as green-blue outdoor space. It also seeks a new mix of urban programme and greenery on the forts. (p. 53)	Tangible	City	Landscape/Structural	Hard protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
20	Zocher's canal banks	49	Mayor Van Asch van Wijck used the more than 160-year-old plans of father and son Moreelse concerning the expansion locations on the west side of the city. He commissioned J.D. Zocher to develop the expansion plan based on the existing water and green structure. Zocher designed the beautiful canal banks.	Structural	City	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
21	new neighbourhoods (Tuinwijk, Ondiep and Rivierenwijk)	50	[in 1920] new neighbourhoods and districts such as Tuinwijk, Ondiep and Rivierenwijk emerged in the period before World War II.	Structural	Neighbourhood/Area	Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
22	residential areas (Hoograven, Kanaleneiland, Overvecht) and industrial area (Lage Weide)	50	In 1954, Utrecht's territory was doubled and in the following years the modern and spacious residential areas of Hoograven, Kanaleneiland, Overvecht and the industrial area of Lage Weide emerged.	Structural	Neighbourhood/Area	Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
23	residential areas (Lunetten, Rijnsweerd and Voordorp)	50	Between 1975 and 1990, the last extensions took place within the then municipal boundaries and Lunetten, Rijnsweerd and Voordorp emerged.	Structural	Neighbourhood/Area	Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
24	13th-century reclamation parcels	52	Still recognisable as a 13th-century land parcel.	Structural	Neighbourhood/Area	Landscape	Soft protection	Orientative	Programmatic
25	20th-century urban forms	52	The same applies to typical 20th-century forms of urban development	Structural	City	Landscape	Soft protection	Orientative	Programmatic
26	Strategic choices for visibility and recognition of cultural heritage	52	In making cultural heritage visible and recognisable, the municipality makes several strategic choices (...)	Intangible	City	Institutional	Soft protection	Orientative	Programmatic
27	Historical green structures & watercourses	53	Historical green structures and watercourses form the basis for spatial development	Structural	Region	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Orientative	Programmatic
28	City's rich history & heritage	55	The people of Utrecht are proud of its history and valuable cultural heritage from various time periods.	Intangible	City	Symbolic	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-narrative

#	Heritage element	Page	RSU quote (summary)	Reference Type	Spatial Level	Dimension	Protection Logic	Operational integration	Discursive Function
29	Iconic heritage ensemble: Domtoren, Waterline forts, Roman Limes, Rietveld-Schröder House, monuments, industrial heritage, canals and urban axes	55	Think of the Dom and the water line with its forts. The Roman Limes and the New Dutch Waterline are nominated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites to become a UNESCO world heritage site. The Rietveld-Schröder House already is. The old urban structure with the canals and urban axes, the city's many monuments and industrial heritage remind Utrechters of their city's rich past.	Tangible	City	Symbolic	Hard protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-narrative
30	Castel	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Tangible	City	Object	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
31	Windmil	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Tangible	City	Object	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
32	historic state	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Tangible	City	Object	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
33	Country state	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Tangible	City	Object	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
34	Historic farm	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Tangible	City	Object	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
35	Water tower	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Tangible	City	Object	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
36	Historic watercourse	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Structural	City	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
37	fort of the New Dutch Waterline	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Tangible	City	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
38	Historic city park	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Structural	City	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
39	Protected cityscape	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Tangible	City	Object	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
40	Historic axes	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Structural	City	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
41	Waterline zone	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Structural	City	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
42	Fortified city	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Tangible	City	Landscape/Structural	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative
43	Historic village core	56	Listed among heritage elements in map legend	Tangible	City	Object	Soft protection	Rhetorical/Descriptive	Historical-Informative

Appendix B. Heritage References in the *Reactienota RSU 2040*

This appendix compiles the passages from the *Reactienota RSU 2040* (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c) that mention cultural or archaeological heritage. The text was originally written in Dutch and translated into English using DeepL Translator (https://www.deepl.com) with a personal manual revision for accuracy with the aim to preserve the original meaning as closely as possible. The excerpts were selected as the secondary corpus for the analysis presented in Chapter 5. The tables presented in this appendix are original compilations by the author.

Table B.1 introduces the thematic codebook. Codes H1–H6 were developed through iterative reading and comparison of public remarks and municipal responses in the Reactienota (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c). Each code captures a recurring dimension in the way heritage was framed and negotiated within the consultation process (see Table B.1).

Table B.1 Thematic Codebook

Code	Label	Description
H1	Visibility & Recognition	Heritage is referenced as a visible or symbolic element of Utrecht's identity, focusing on its recognizability in the urban image.
H2	Cultural Landscape	Mentions connecting heritage to the historical landscape, ecological continuity, or rural character surrounding the city.
H3	Heritage vs Growth/Density	Expressions of tension between conservation goals and urban growth, densification, or high-rise development.
H4	Policy & Procedure	References to governance, participation, or procedural aspects of how heritage is treated in planning practice.
H5	Planning Quality & Livability	Heritage invoked as part of spatial quality, design excellence, or everyday livability in urban development.
H6	Regional/Institutional Framing	Heritage discussed within regional, intermunicipal, or institutional frameworks.

Table B.2 sets out the reference matrix used to assess the degree of correspondence between public and municipal discourse. Three degrees of alignment were distinguished: aligned, when both share the same theme and show direct engagement with the issue; partially aligned, when the response remains related but translates the concern into a different policy or technical vocabulary; and not aligned, when it addresses a different topic (see Table B.2).

Table B.2 Reference Matrix for Thematic Alignment

Response Code ↓ Public Code →	H1 Visibility & Recognition	H2 Cultural Landscape	H3 Heritage vs Growth/Density	H4 Policy & Procedure	H5 Planning Quality & Livability	H6 Regional/Institutional Framing
H1 Visibility & Recognition	Aligned	Partially Aligned	Not Aligned	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned	Not Aligned
H2 Cultural Landscape	Partially Aligned	Aligned	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned	Not Aligned
H3 Heritage vs Growth/Density	Not Aligned	Partially Aligned	Aligned	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned	Not Aligned
H4 Policy & Procedure	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned	Aligned	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned
H5 Planning Quality & Livability	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned	Aligned	Not Aligned
H6 Regional/Institutional Framing	Not Aligned	Not Aligned	Not Aligned	Partially Aligned	Partially Aligned	Aligned

Table B.3 lists all coded remarks concerning heritage in the Reactienota Utrecht Dichtbij: de tien-minutenstad and their corresponding municipal responses (Gemeente Utrecht, 2021c) with codes, interpretations, and alignment ratings. Together, these cases form the empirical basis for the analysis presented in Chapter 5, illustrating how heritage was articulated, negotiated, and translated within the *RSU 2040* consultation process.

Table B.3 Heritage-Related Public and Municipal Discourse (Reactinota RSU 2040)

ID	Source/Page	Actor	Actor Type	Concept/Theme	Public remark (excerpt)	Main concern/interpretation	Public remark theme (code)	Municipality response (excerpt)	Response interpretation	Response Theme (code)	Alignment level
1	Webinar Spatial Strategy Utrecht 2040 of 16 February 2021 (p. 27)	x	x	Identity	What is that identity, and how is it made visible in the Utrecht barcode? Is this not a starting point for every city?	Questions the distinctiveness of Utrecht's urban identity as presented in the RSU and its relation to the "barcode" model. The participant seeks clarification on how identity is concretely represented, suggesting that the stated principles may appear generic rather than uniquely Utrecht.	H1	The barcode is mainly a tool to visualise quantities. The quality and identity are described in Chapter 3 of the RSU 2040, where the main values of Utrecht are outlined	Clarifies that the barcode serves a quantitative purpose and refers the participant to Chapter 3 of the RSU for qualitative aspects such as identity and values. The response does not elaborate further, instead pointing back to the existing framework where these concepts are already described.	H4	Partially aligned
2	Webinar Spatial Strategy Utrecht 2040 of 16 February 2021 (p. 41)	x	x	Cultural History	Overvecht is already green and we already have everything within ten minutes. I see that densification here comes at the expense of light, air, space and valuable greenery. How do you take into account the cultural history and strong points of the urban design of our neighbourhood?	Links built identity and everyday livability; sees densification as threat to both.	H5	The cultural history and urban design of the neighbourhood form the basis of the densification task, but we place this in a contemporary context. The densification task is used precisely to strengthen these qualities, for instance by giving greenery everywhere a high-quality design.	Reframes local identity and historical design qualities within a contemporary planning logic, translating heritage concerns into the language of spatial and environmental improvement.	H5	Aligned
3	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2040 (p. 73,74)	Resident of Utrecht City Center	Citizen	Heritage	We want to live pleasantly in the city centre. Please stop with this GreenLeft terror (voted for them for years, but what regret!) of covering the whole city in red asphalt. Have we learned nothing from Hoog Catharijne and the filling in of the canals? Apparently not. Keep Utrecht historical. Keep Utrecht classic. Stop with this misery and the false arguments that cyclists can no longer be channelled, so that roundabouts and even 14th-century locks have to disappear... please, we beg you.	Strong opposition to recent urban and mobility interventions. The speaker urges the municipality to preserve Utrecht's historical and classical character, rejecting changes perceived as damaging to the city's heritage and spatial identity.	H3	The history of Utrecht, both its landscape and its cultural heritage, belongs to the city's important values. In the RSU 2040, these form the basis for decisions regarding the city's development. We encourage cycling and walking in the city and want to give them visibility and space. We do this, in accordance with policy, by indicating specific routes for cyclists with a red colour scheme.	Affirms that history, landscape, and cultural heritage are fundamental values guiding urban development. At the same time, it reiterates the policy objective of promoting cycling and walking as part of Utrecht's spatial identity. The statement balances heritage recognition with mobility enhancement, framing both as complementary elements of the city's vision.	H1	Not aligned
4	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2041 (p. 74)	Resident of Utrecht City Center	Citizen	Heritage	I live in an old house, a national monument, in the city centre. We would like to make our house more sustainable, especially by installing double glazing. This would not only save a lot of energy, but also greatly reduce the noise from the street. We can literally hear all conversations from people outside. I notice that this insulation ambition, which is also expressed in the RSU, does not match the guidelines that the heritage department applies to these houses. They reject this kind of modernisation because it does not fit the historical appearance of the building. Only the so-called monument glass is permitted, but compared to double glazing it has only a limited effect. Incidentally, in the municipality's own monumental buildings, such as the City Hall, double glazing is allowed. I believe there are great energy savings to be achieved if, within aesthetic guidelines, the monumental houses in the city centre were also really allowed to be insulated.	Highlights a conflict between the RSU's sustainability goals and the restrictive regulations applied to listed monuments. The resident points out an inconsistency between municipal heritage policy and its own practices, arguing that energy efficiency and comfort improvements should be permitted within aesthetic limits. The statement frames heritage regulation as a barrier to achieving broader climate objectives.	H3	We are pleased with your initiative to further make your property more sustainable. The (sound) insulation of monumental buildings and windows is often custom work, depending on the type of frame, the type of desired glass, etc. Not all monumental buildings are suitable for insulation such as in the example you mention of the City Hall. Practical information about making monuments more sustainable can be found at https://www.toolkitduurzaamerfgoed.nl/tochtwering/."	Expresses support for the resident's sustainability initiative while explaining that insulation solutions for monuments require case-specific approaches. The municipality clarifies that not all buildings are technically suited for double glazing and provides a resource for guidance. The response maintains the heritage framework as the determining factor for feasibility within sustainability efforts.	H4	Partially aligned
5	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2042 (p. 89–92)	Lisman & Lisman B.V. (owner of Heemstede Castle)	Private actor	Cultural History, Heritage	The RSU 2040 rightly emphasises the importance of connecting the growing city with the surrounding green landscape; among others, the "Groene Scheg Laagraven-Oost", the landscape park Laagraven-Oost. Lisman & Lisman B.V., owner of Heemstede Castle — a unique piece of cultural heritage within the area to be developed as landscape park Laagraven-Oost — fully endorses this ambition. Yet, in the RSU we find few instruments that could actually secure this development, which lies across the municipal boundary. Below we first indicate which developments on the territory of Houten and Nieuwegein might jeopardise the ambitions of the RSU 2040. We then offer several suggestions on how to safeguard the desired development. Laagraven-Oost Scheg under threat For the development of the landscape park Laagraven-Oost, an Integrated Landscape Vision Laagraven Oost (ILLO) was drawn up in 2011 on behalf of the municipalities of Houten and Nieuwegein for the Enveloppecommissie Linieland (within the framework of the New Dutch Waterline). A renowned firm (H+N+S) prepared several scenarios. To make implementation financially feasible, a specialised company proposed a scenario in which housing construction would serve as the financial driver. In the RSU, phase 4 envisages the development of the Groene Scheg Laagraven-Oost into a landscape park. Nature, some (urban) agriculture, and various recreational uses are foreseen, but no housing. We consider this development desirable. The housing indicated in the ILLO, however, is not limited in scale (partly multi-storey apartment buildings) and is even located on land designated as a national monument (for example, the 1 ha east of Heemstede Castle). The required infrastructure for such a development would destroy the rural character of the park. This would completely undermine the ambition of the RSU. Although the ILLO is now ten years old, it has not disappeared into oblivion. Recently, the Ruimtelijke Koers Houten 2040 again cited the ILLO as a guiding framework for Laagraven-Oost. Documents from U16 (for example regarding the A12 zone) also refer to it. There has even been a concrete proposal for about 40 houses in this area, to which the municipality of Houten did not respond negatively. The Province of Utrecht, however, could not agree, and Nieuwegein still regards the ILLO as a desired development. The conclusion must unfortunately be that we cannot, as the RSU suggests, wait until phase 4 to allow Laagraven-Oost to play the crucial role that this Green Wedge should have in the near future. Need for regional investment Instruments are needed to provide greater certainty about the desired development direction of Laagraven-Oost. The RSU 2040 contains an Investment Strategy (Chapter 8). We have examined possible funding sources for Landscape Park Laagraven-Oost. Several potential budgets for green development are mentioned there. Page 187 lists € 1.6 million for green spaces; p. 189 refers to financing "part of the green upscaling"; p. 190 introduces the Fonds Bovenwijkse voorzieningen (for mobility and green projects). We consider it essential that financial resources be allocated beyond the municipal boundary to ensure realisation of Landscape Park Laagraven-Oost. The municipalities of Houten and Nieuwegein must be able to rely on the fact that the park's implementation will not fall largely upon them financially. Ensuring implementation The Implementation Strategy (Chapter 7) aims (p. 182) to anchor the expansion of municipal green structures in concrete zoning plans. For Laagraven-Oost this is highly desirable, but difficult given its cross-border location. The forms of inter-municipal cooperation mentioned in § 7.3.1 mainly concern investments in economic development. We believe that specific cooperative arrangements are needed for the Groene Scheg Laagraven-Oost in which the municipalities and the province contribute jointly. (This differs from Amelisweerd-Rhijnauwen, where most land belongs to the municipality of Utrecht and Staatsbosbeheer.) The Landscape Park Laagraven-Oost project requires contributions from Houten, Nieuwegein and Utrecht municipalities as well as the Province of Utrecht. Given the ambition of the RSU for the Groene Scheg Laagraven, the benefits will largely accrue to the citizens of Utrecht. We therefore expect the municipality of Utrecht to take timely steps (considering potential undesirable initiatives) to secure the desired development for both city and region. Given the threats mentioned above (housing proposals and policy references), such action is already warranted. Conclusion Lisman & Lisman is determined to ensure that Heemstede Castle and its cultural-heritage setting can contribute positively to the development of the landscape park. Currently, part of the historical garden is being restored (partly subsidised), further reviving its former splendour. That effect would be nullified by incompatible urban elements in the vicinity. To allow the site's heritage value to flourish, it is crucial that the surrounding spatial environment retains its rural character, so that a landscape park can be developed similar to the Groene Scheg Amelisweerd-Rhijnauwen.	Frames heritage as part of a threatened cultural landscape, emphasizing the need for inter-municipal protection and long-term regional investment. Heritage is positioned as both a spatial and financial responsibility.	H2	As part of the U10 region we are working together on an Integrated Spatial Perspective. We will certainly cooperate regionally with the municipalities of Houten and Nieuwegein to coordinate and optimise the various challenges that our municipalities face. Preservation and development of the landscape and cultural-historical values are important principles in the Laagraven area. The competent authorities in this area are the Province of Utrecht and the municipalities of Houten and Nieuwegein, and as the municipality of Utrecht we are pleased to enter discussions with these partners to further elaborate this area.	Reaffirms commitment to regional coordination but translates heritage protection into administrative collaboration, emphasizing procedural alignment rather than concrete instruments.	H6	Not aligned

ID	Source/Page	Actor	Actor Type	Concept/Theme	Public remark (excerpt)	Main concern/interpretation	Public remark theme (code)	Municipality response (excerpt)	Response interpretation	Response Theme (code)	Alignment level
6	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2043 (p. 92–100)	Residents of Vechtdijk / Overvecht	Community representative	Cultural History	At present, the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040 is open for consultation. I have read the plan with interest, particularly the parts concerning Overvecht and my immediate surroundings along the Vechtdijk. I noticed that a sketch in paragraph 6.3 shows that a new bridge over the Vecht near Zwanenvechtlaan is being considered. I believe that such a bridge is unnecessary within the concept of the ten-minute city. Moreover, it would be undesirable with regard to green provision, safety, and recreation. I therefore request that the proposed Vecht Bridge be removed from the RSU 2040. A new river crossing over the Vecht would not contribute to solving mobility bottlenecks. Such a crossing seems to have been included in the plan mainly to connect the districts of Zuilen and Overvecht. Since there are already two cycling routes across existing bridges, the added value of a new bridge would be negligible. As a concerned resident of the Vechtdijk I wish to share my vision with you in order to improve the RSU 2040 together. Using the themes of mobility, safety, green provision and recreation, I will explain why a Vecht Bridge is not consistent—and even conflicts—with the principles and objectives of the RSU 2040, and I will present several alternatives that would have a greater and more positive impact. Mobility The Vechtdijk forms an important connecting route to the outskirts of Utrecht and is used by many different road users in all weather conditions. A Vecht Bridge would diminish the value of this connecting route. Constructing a bridge would create an intersection that would make the route less suitable as a continuous cycle route. According to the Cyclists' Union, routes along railway lines or waterways are naturally free of crossings and therefore ideal for serving as fast-cycling routes. A new bridge on the Vechtdijk would hinder this function. No clear, recognisable or smooth cycle route could be created that connects to a Vecht Bridge. The approach to and from such a bridge would always have to run through a built-up part of Overvecht, where a logical and easily accessible continuation for cyclists is lacking. A new connection between Zuilen and Overvecht would add no real value to the facilities in either district. The shopping centres De Klop and Rokade offer similar services, while Swimming Pool De Kwakel and Shopping Centre Overvecht are already easily accessible via the Marnix Bridge. A new bridge would save cyclists at most three minutes compared with the existing bridges—only for those travelling exactly between Zuilen and Overvecht. Anyone with a further destination can, without any significant time loss, use the existing routes via the Marnix Bridge or the J.M. de Muinck Keizer Bridge. Such a minimal advantage for a few users contributes nothing to achieving the ten-minute city and does not, in our view, justify the cost. Safety Both Zuilen and Overvecht face their own specific challenges regarding safety. A river crossing between the two districts would worsen traffic safety and could aggravate crime. The Vechtdijk already accommodates many different users: racing cyclists, (fast) cyclists, rowers, skaters, walkers, seniors from nearby care homes, and cars. A Vecht Bridge with its associated intersection would impede traffic flow on the Vechtdijk and create unsafe conditions, especially since traffic already has to share limited space. A new bridge would increase traffic pressure on the Vechtdijk given its location and the lack of logical continuation routes. A bridge linking two districts with existing problems of nuisance and petty crime would create escape routes through the parks on both sides of the river. This would make it harder to combat existing disturbances—already recorded in the Monitor Utrecht—because a cycle bridge would provide an escape route inaccessible to police cars. A Vecht Bridge would land on both sides in poorly lit parks, creating a route that would not feel safe in the evening hours. The spaces under the existing J.M. de Muinck Keizer Bridge and the Marnix Bridge are already used as hang-outs and places where prohibited substances are consumed or traded. An additional bridge would increase insecurity in the immediate area for passers-by and residents, especially at night, by creating a third such gathering place. A bridge would also aggravate the nuisance linked to the prostitution zone planned for the Zandpad area. Such nuisance ended after the closure of the former Zandpad zone. The new Vecht Bridge would provide a new approach and escape route for those harassing sex workers and clients, as well as for drug dealers and users, and would create an entrance that is difficult to control for individuals attracted to that zone. In the past, studies of a Vecht Bridge have ended with a negative conclusion because the bridge would hinder access for emergency services to and along the Vechtdijk. Green provision A pleasant and healthy living environment is important; in that I fully share the findings of the RSU 2040. With increasing inner-city densification, the added value of green routes and areas for the people of Utrecht becomes ever greater. Besides providing pleasant spaces, ecological zones and greenery contribute to a better climate and environment. A new bridge over the Vecht would have negative effects on the greenery in the immediate surroundings. Green areas would have to be removed for the bridge's ramps and approaches, including parts of the ecological zone where the Niftarlake Park is located. The zoning plan for that park explicitly states that no construction is allowed because it is an ecological zone. A bridge for slow traffic would inevitably also be used by scooters, increasing pollution and disturbing tranquillity in the parks. For safety reasons the bridge would have to be illuminated 24 hours a day, which would disturb wildlife in the area. Utrecht invests heavily in the experiential value of surface water. The restored city canal has been widely praised, and the water network will continue to be expanded in coming years. The Vecht is also heavily used for recreation: paddle-boarders, canoeists, rowers, swimmers and motorboats all use it frequently. An additional bridge would become an obstacle for this water traffic, forcing users to manoeuvre and wait; many lack the skills to do so safely, as I know from living there, and every extra obstacle increases safety risks. A new bridge would also conflict with the green character of both riverbanks, in which the municipality has invested over the years. Whirlpools and exhaust gases during manoeuvring near a bridge can easily damage revetments and natural banks. Skippers waiting for passage would be moored along the banks, disturbing nesting sites and damaging aquatic plants and embankments. Recreation The route along the Vecht is a beautiful part of the city. The long sightlines over the water, the varied riverbanks and the many water birds make this connection to the countryside a true gem. The RSU 2040 aims to enhance the city's recreational value, particularly for cyclists and pedestrians. Adding a bridge over the Vecht would run counter to the recreational value of the route along the Vechtdijk and the surrounding parks. The Vechtoevers Vision Document describes the cultural-historical, ecological and spatial value of the line formed by the Vecht. A bridge would disrupt that line along and across the water. The Marnix Bridge connects to the Vecht route and is the natural point for cyclists from various directions to choose a logical continuation. Make the Marnix Bridge more attractive and safer so that it adds value for cyclists and pedestrians—perhaps by creating green strips on both sides of the roadway, separating bicycle and car traffic. The plans in the RSU 2040 and the Mobility Plan 2040 appear to lead to greater traffic pressure on the Franciscusdreef. The J.M. de Muinck Keizer Bridge, at the end of this road, already provides good access for cyclists and pedestrians between Zuilen and Overvecht and to both the Vechtdijk and Fort a/d Klop and the Klopvaart. Invest in upgrading this bridge for cyclists and pedestrians instead. Major projects such as the grade-separated NRU (Noordelijke Randweg Utrecht) and the bicycle tunnel at Westplein in Lombok are far more important for improving cycling mobility in Utrecht, yet still lack sufficient funding. The money required for a Vecht Bridge would certainly have a greater effect if used for those facilities instead. I trust that my comments will help you to optimise the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040. Naturally, I look forward with interest to your reply. Much has been invested in the Niftarlake Park. Reports from residents' meetings show that the beautiful view over the Vecht is regarded as an important value. A Vecht Bridge would spoil that view. Another carefully implemented investment is the fishing platform for people with disabilities. A bridge over the Vecht would disturb the tranquillity and undermine the intended purpose of this fishing spot. The parks on both sides of the Vecht are pleasant walking areas. The access to a bridge would form a barrier within both parks. Alternatives Although Overvecht is not always portrayed positively in statistics or public perception, I am proud of our district and neighbourhood and consider it important to share its beautiful aspects with all of Utrecht and the surrounding region. The route along the Vechtdijk is intensively used by many types of road users, especially recreational cyclists and walkers. For the reasons described above, a new bridge over the Vecht (with an earlier estimated investment of about € 4 million) does not contribute to the objectives of the RSU 2040. I would gladly think with you and propose alternatives to make better use of the route along the Vecht and the Vechtdijk. This can be achieved through the following initiatives: The access to the Vechtdijk from the city centre via the Zandpad currently looks like a barren industrial area rather than the entrance to a green zone. By investing in its design and improving safety and recreational quality, the Zandpad could become part of a pleasant connecting route. Conclusion Considering all of the above, we can only conclude that the additional bridge over the Vecht, located between the two existing bridges 1.6 kilometres apart: • causes too much damage, • creates too much nuisance, • yields too little benefit, and • is completely unnecessary. There is only one appropriate response from the municipality: the withdrawal of the plan for the additional bridge over the Vecht, now and in the future. We further request that the municipality recognise, appreciate and protect the special character and the ecological and cultural-historical value of the Vechtdijk and the Vecht. We hope that with our response we have been able to contribute to sound decision-making and to the protection of a valuable part of the city. We look forward to your reply.	Frames the bridge as a direct threat to ecological and cultural-historical values, connecting multiple discourses—mobility, safety, livability, and heritage—under a narrative of place-based protection. The public constructs heritage as an everyday environment requiring preservation against unnecessary infrastructural interventions.	H2	Thank you very much for your very extensive response. The Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040 (RSU 2040) is a strategic guidance document that outlines the main directions for the city's spatial development. The bicycle bridge over the Vechtdijk was included in the Exploration of New Cycling Connections. Nine locations were given the highest priority, among which the bridge over the Vechtdijk. The connection can provide a safe and comfortable cycling route between the districts of Zuilen and Overvecht, where cyclists currently have to make a long detour via a high bridge for cars. The connection therefore contributes effectively to a finer-meshed (recreational) cycling network and encourages the use of bicycles instead of cars. It considerably shortens the distance and travel time for cyclists and pedestrians between Zuilen and Overvecht. The bridge forms an important link in both the urban and regional networks, as part of the continuous cycling route through Zuilen to and from the Amsterdam-Rhine Canal (near the Demka Bridge) and of the route via the Klopdijk through Overvecht. In this way, Overvecht will be better connected by bicycle to the employment area of Lage Weide. For walkers and other recreationists, new opportunities will arise to make various shorter loops and walks. Two districts and two parks will be connected with each other. This fits well with our principles of Healthy Urban Living for Everyone and with the concept of the Ten-Minute City, in which all facilities are close by. Based on the Mobility Plan 2040, projects can be initiated, including this connection with this bridge. A precondition for starting a project is that the Municipal Council must make a financial budget available for it. The decision on the actual realisation of the bridge will only be taken at a later stage, based on the detailed elaboration of the project. In that process an integrated assessment will be made between the interests of residents and the effects on the liveability and quality of the districts and of the city as a whole. Aspects such as ecology, safety, recreation and cultural history will be considered in this assessment. The incorporation of the connection and the bridge into the surroundings, as well as the location of any houseboat(s) that may need to be moved, will be investigated. Residents and stakeholders will be closely involved in this process.	Recontextualises the objection into a planning narrative centred on accessibility and health. While acknowledging ecology and cultural history, these are subordinated to mobility and network efficiency. The discourse shifts from protection of place to facilitation of movement, translating heritage and landscape values into components of "healthy urban living."	H4	Partially aligned
7	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2044 (p. 106, 107)	Resident of Haarzuilens	Citizen	Cultural History	I would like to respond to the environmental vision. Although I am a positive person. That is because I live and work in this beautiful, varied agricultural landscape. I live and work in the lovely village of Haarzuilens, a real village within the municipality of Utrecht. I am very proud of it. A lot has changed here in recent years. There is still a very beautiful area that has remained untouched. This area is called Ockhuizen. This area has been designated as a search location for forest, recreation and solar fields. I find it truly ridiculous to misuse these lands for a solar meadow. Utterly absurd. Especially while there are still so many roofs to use, or noise barriers along roads, and many other such places where one can be creative. And therefore not on such a beautiful, varied, quintessentially Dutch meadow, like between the Thematerkade and the Ockhuizerweg. This meadow is a beautiful open landscape. This area should sooner be designated UNESCO heritage. The area falls within the nationally protected villagescape (Rijksbeschermd dorpsgezicht) of Haarzuilens. This is the kind of area that has become rare, and no matter how hard you try, you cannot make it more beautiful in this place. Better to find a farmer who wants to manage this area for €0.00 and still make a decent living from it. Everything is alive here. There is a very fine hare population (apparently rare). Wild rabbits, a beaver, roe deer, pheasants and many species of meadow birds live here. It is a remarkably beautiful, quiet spot in this area. Leave this area alone. Any change is undesirable (planting trees will add nothing here either, and certainly the placing of solar panels—read: pieces of metal—does not belong in this beautiful piece of nature). Leave a meadow landscape untouched for posterity for once, and certainly in this place. Every cubic metre that is altered is a sin. Please read all your documents for this area with: 'Caution, vulnerable.' I am sure that many—very many—will agree with me!	Positions Ockhuizen/Haarzuilens as a protected, biodiversity-rich cultural landscape; rejects ground-mounted solar and afforestation, advocating preservation and rooftop/linear-infrastructure alternatives—an explicit conservationist framing against energy siting.	H2	Space within the municipality of Utrecht is scarce. We see opportunities to add three urgently needed functions in Ockhuizen. This area will therefore change. The area has a protected cultural-historical status, which we will take into account in the further planning of this area. This consideration will be made carefully, and we will also take into account the existing natural values.	Acknowledges the area's cultural-historical protection yet frames change as inevitable and multifunctional. Heritage and nature are treated as planning constraints to be considered, not as primary values guiding development. The discourse normalises transformation through balanced, procedural language.	H2	Aligned
8	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2045 (p. 112113)	Residents of the neighbourhood adjacent to the Koningsweg–Lunetten–Maarschalkerweerd area	Citizen	Heritage	The area Koningsweg–Lunetten–Maarschalkerweerd In our opinion on the Mobiliteitsplan 2040, we already pointed out that a traffic junction in the triangle formed by the railway lines to Arnhem, Den Bosch and the A27 is inconsistent with the Development Perspective Maarschalkerweerd of July 2020, in which the protection of heritage, nature, sport, and recreation are central. More than objecting to one (or two) stations where Intercity trains might stop, we opposed the designation of transport hubs as A-locations for the realisation of intensive development for housing and employment. The RSU goes even further: it envisages high-rise buildings between 70 and 105 metres tall. These new locations are expected to accommodate a relatively high number of dwellings, with construction planned alongside or between the railway lines. We are residents of an adjacent neighbourhood and as directly affected stakeholders we strongly object to the degradation of this area, for which other values were, rightly, very recently prioritised. Although the municipality refers to other aspects—such as a green wedge connecting to the forests of Amelisweerd and the Kromme Rijn and to a Liniepark—this does not change the fact that large-scale urbanisation will visually and materially dominate, overwhelming the experience of the green area. The Mobiliteitsplan 2040 outlines a future in which multimodal transport is central: to travel within the city or beyond, one must preferably use bicycles or public transport and transfer—sometimes several times. Housing will remain unaffordable, but with difficulty and detours. Cars will no longer be able to park at the doorstep. The vision of the Mobiliteitsplan suits young people who can easily continue their journey from the train on foot or by shared bicycle, but it is based on the pre-Covid era. NS (the national railway company) is already reducing its timetable, because people, due to infection risks, now travel less by train and more by car.	The residents contest the RSU's and Mobiliteitsplan 2040's vision for the Koningsweg–Lunetten–Maarschalkerweerd area, arguing that the proposed transport hub and high-rise developments contradict earlier planning documents that prioritised heritage, nature, and recreation. They frame the plan as incompatible with local environmental and cultural values and criticise its reliance on outdated mobility assumptions. The statement expresses concern over the loss of the area's green and recreational identity due to large-scale urbanisation.	H3	The RSU is a plan at a general level and does not go into detail about specific areas. For Maarschalkerweerd, a Development Perspective Maarschalkerweerd has been written. On page 23 of that document, it is stated that the urbanisation possibilities of the area around Lunetten station will be further investigated. The area 'Between the Rails' is part of this. Therefore, the Development Perspective does not give a definitive designation of the area but rather an indication for temporary use and layout.	Clarifies that the RSU operates at a strategic level and that detailed decisions for the Maarschalkerweerd area are addressed in a separate planning document. The municipality refers to the Development Perspective Maarschalkerweerd as the framework guiding further studies on urbanisation potential, indicating that no final decisions have been made. The response situates the issue within an ongoing and procedural planning process.	H4	Partially aligned

ID	Source/Page	Actor	Actor Type	Concept/Theme	Public remark (excerpt)	Main concern/interpretation	Public remark theme (code)	Municipality response (excerpt)	Response interpretation	Response Theme (code)	Alignment level
9	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2046 (p. 147148)	Initiative group "De Vertraagde Stad"	Community Working group	Heritage	See response 59 in the appendix with an elaboration of the profile of the 'Vertraagde Stad'. We would like to respond to the draft Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040 with great interest. We appreciate your invitation to respond to the RSU and your intention to improve the plans together with residents. Our initiative group consists of entrepreneurial residents of the city, and its composition is diverse. We share the municipality's ambition to be a healthy city and to use growth to strengthen the values that underpin health. However, precisely when it comes to health and inclusivity, we find that some crucial basic elements are missing. The image evoked by the RSU is of a city that is vibrant, dynamic, fast, compact, and efficient. We therefore propose a sixth city profile titled 'The Slower City (De Vertraagde Stad)' — a city with a good balance between calm and liveliness; a city that develops from within and builds on and strengthens existing qualities and traditions; a city for people to dwell in. This city profile gives concepts such as 'inclusive', 'human scale', 'encounter', 'health', and 'we make the city together' more concrete meaning. We have outlined this sixth city profile in seven design principles, which you will find in Appendices 1 and 2 of this letter. We hope that this perspective enriches the RSU and we are, of course, happy to think along with you about its further elaboration.	Proposes an alternative conceptual model for Utrecht's urban development — De Vertraagde Stad ("The Slower City") — emphasising human scale, inclusivity, health, and continuity with existing qualities and traditions. The group endorses the RSU's goals of a healthy and liveable city but critiques its emphasis on speed, density, and efficiency. Their proposal reframes urban growth as an opportunity for reflective, socially grounded development.	H4	Thank you for contributing this additional city profile. We endorse many of the aspects you mention. The city profile you proposed has been adapted and summarised by us so that it fits with the other city profiles. The following text has resulted from this. The profile has been added to the RSU 2040. The Slower City (De Vertraagde Stad) A healthy city provides, alongside dynamic places with activity, space for places to find peace. The municipality therefore wants not only lively centres and neighbourhood hubs but also sufficient places where people can be in a calmer atmosphere. Green public spaces for quiet, cooling, meeting, and relaxation. Utrecht regards walking and cycling not only as practical forms of (commuting) transport but also as ways of dwelling and wandering through the city. This is not only healthy, but in this way walking and cycling also gain a social component, allowing everyone to participate. A slower city also means there is space for places to grow gradually together with their users. The existing city is never finished; we make it together so that it develops further as an organic whole. Unfinished places challenge people more than polished ones. Utrecht therefore also keeps space for adventurous places with shrubs, taller grass, areas to climb and clamber, or where the industrial character around heritage remains visible.	Expresses appreciation for the community proposal and integrates it directly into the RSU as an additional city profile, De Vertraagde Stad. The municipality acknowledges the value of the suggested principles—calmness, gradual development, inclusivity, and connection to everyday urban life—and formalises them within its strategic vision. The response illustrates an instance of participatory influence on the RSU's final content.	H4	Aligned
10	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2047 (p. 154-156)	Residents of Haarzuilens (north of Ockhuizerweg)	Citizen	Cultural History	We would like to respond to the draft Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040. It mentions a proposed development for the area north of Ockhuizerweg in Haarzuilens. It remains somewhat vague what the specific implementation will be, but as we understand it, it possibly concerns the installation of solar panels and/or the planting of trees. Haarzuilens lies in a very rural area and is a village with a relatively small population. The Ockhuizerweg—particularly the section near the Thematerkade—is one of the oldest roads in the province of Utrecht and is situated in a highly picturesque setting. Not without reason, the area around Haarzuilens has been designated a protected village view (beschermd dorpsgezicht). Directly west of the proposed search area lies a nature and recreation area. We would like to raise several objections. First, the plots fall within a nationally protected village view. This indicates that the area has a special cultural-historical character. Not only the buildings are important, but also the immediate surroundings in which they are located must be protected for future generations. In our view, there is no place within such a culturally important area for solar meadows. Below you can see an image of the area with the designated boundaries and the approximate search area in green. It is clear that this lies within the boundaries of the protected village view. Second, this is a beautiful piece of rural land, used for agriculture and as a habitat for hares, rabbits, and roe deer, and also as a refuge for many meadow birds. Due to recent housing construction in the vicinity and the creation of water areas after sand extraction for new housing, a considerable number of hectares of meadowland have already been sacrificed in the nearby surroundings over the past 10–15 years (Haarrijnse Plas, De Wetering business park, housing around Thematerweg [Haarzicht], Leidsche Rijn, etc.). Meadow birds are already under severe pressure in the Netherlands, and the effect of installing solar panels on these bird species is still insufficiently studied. Some studies already indicate negative effects on meadow birds. Without clear evidence, another blow to this habitat seems undesirable to us. In addition to the above, the installation of panels could have a negative effect on the groundwater system. According to research on solar parks and soil coverage (L. Kok, N. van Eekeren, W. van der Putten et al.), solar fields are expected to negatively affect soil-related ecosystems. Again, there is insufficient knowledge about the long-term effects. The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) therefore recommends, in a "cascade ladder," that agricultural lands should be avoided as much as possible. The Dutch Federation of Agriculture and Horticulture (LTO) likewise sees little merit in using farmland for this purpose. The Province of North Holland, in its wisdom, has drawn up a design framework that seeks to avoid solar parks in the open landscape as much as possible. Are there no other options to realise green energy in the region? Of course there are! There are still many possibilities in Utrecht to install solar panels without having to sacrifice scarce green space. According to online calculations, 58% of Utrecht's roof surface could be used for power generation—no less than 4,651,048 m² of solar panels (Rooftoprevolution.nl). There are also many industrial estates where the roof surfaces remain largely unused, such as the De Wetering, Oudenrijn, Lage Weide and Papendorp industrial areas. The absence of solar panels there is clearly visible on aerial photos; nationally, 90% of all commercial roofs remain unused. If we further consider that as of 2022 municipalities may oblige the installation of solar panels on the roofs of commercial buildings, this seems to us a more realistic and nature-friendly solution than using a piece of nature where the long-term negative effects are still unclear. (https://groenleven.nl/nieuws/vanaf-2022-gemeenten-mogen-zonnepanelen-op-industriele-daken-verplichten). Should the municipality nevertheless decide to place solar panels in this area, we will monitor this process closely and will not hesitate to initiate legal proceedings in the event of any nuisance or damage.	Constructs the Ockhuizerweg area as a rural cultural landscape whose heritage, ecological and agricultural values are incompatible with ground-mounted solar installations. The argument links heritage protection to environmental responsibility, invoking scientific, legal and policy-based legitimacy while proposing rooftop and industrial-site solar as sustainable alternatives.	H2	Space within the municipality of Utrecht is scarce. Indeed, near Ockhuizen there is a designated search area for solar fields and forest compensation. In shaping this development, the surrounding community will also be involved, and we therefore warmly invite you to submit your ideas and initiatives.	Acknowledges the contested energy and land-use plans but reframes them as participatory opportunities within a context of spatial scarcity. The response shifts from addressing heritage and ecological concerns to inviting civic input, positioning public engagement as the form of mitigation.	H2	Aligned
11	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2048 (p. 186)	Residents of Utrecht	Citizen	Heritage	(...) 8. The expansion of Noorderpark is appealing. The expansion of Noorderpark with a mix of recreation, sport, nature, water and energy, with respect for and strengthening of the Waterline landscape and with better green connections to the Overvecht neighbourhood, appeals to us. Outsiders should become more aware of this. The historical heritage (forts and landscape) must also be preserved.	Expresses approval of the Noorderpark expansion, valuing its multifunctional design that integrates recreation, ecology, and energy production. The statement stresses that development should respect and enhance the Waterline landscape and preserve historical heritage.	H4	(...) 8. For information.	Notes that the comment has been taken into account (ter kennisname) without further reply or commitment.	H4	Aligned
12	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2049 (p. 198 -200)	Resident of Vleuten–De Meern area (near Haarzuilens and Kasteel de Haar)	Citizen	Cultural History	First of all, thank you for giving residents the opportunity to express their views on the draft Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040. I will limit myself to commenting on the concept as it concerns the district of Vleuten–De Meern. I am pleased that you recognise and appreciate the cultural-historical values of this area. These values are manifold. First of all, Castle De Haar and its surrounding landscape must be mentioned. The first castle dates back to the 11th century. At that time, several powerful castles stood here. The Hamtoren is a remnant of the early medieval Castle Den Ham. Most castles have since disappeared, destroyed or demolished. Castle De Haar was rebuilt in full glory at the end of the 19th century on its medieval foundations. The old village was relocated to make way for a varied park: a formal layout near the castle, a woodland surrounding the park, merging into agricultural areas that were partly reclaimed and parcelled out as early as the Middle Ages. The current country roads, waterways, and sightlines still follow these medieval plots. Laag Nieuwkoop, Thematerweg, Thematerkade, and the dead-end Ockhuizerweg are still recognisable as old reclamation roads and dikes. The Haarpad was an ancient church path from Castle De Haar to the very old village of Vleuten. Vleuten and De Meern have partly retained their village character. Both the castle and the surrounding lands, with several farms, have been designated as a protected villagescape (beschermd dorpsgezicht). Several farms have been listed as national monuments. In my opinion, to do justice to and preserve these cultural-historical values, a number of conditions must be met: • No high-rise construction should be allowed, even if development were to continue after Haarrijn and Haarzicht are completed. • No large-scale arable farming should take place that would require the infilling of old waterways or the removal of old tree lines (willows). • Oversized and heavy agricultural vehicles should not use the old parcel roads, which are too narrow; their verges erode and the top layers crack. • The maximum speed of tractors should be restricted, e.g., to 15 km/h. • No activities should take place that attract traffic — no AirBnB, no large meeting locations requiring car parks. For major events at the castle park there is already insufficient parking space, forcing visitors' cars into the verges. I fully understand, of course, that Castle De Haar needs financial means to survive. • No wind turbines, no solar parks, which would seriously damage the small-scale landscape around Haarzuilens and Vleuten. Haarzuilens is already working through Haarze Zon to achieve energy supply for the village. Many residents have already bought certificates; we are now waiting for the third phase of issuance. That concludes my vision for the future. Thank you for the opportunity to let citizens' voices be heard.	Constructs Vleuten–De Meern and Haarzuilens as an historically layered cultural landscape centred on Castle De Haar. The speaker articulates a preservationist vision grounded in continuity, small-scale land use, and resistance to vertical, industrial or energy-related interventions. Heritage is framed as a living environment shaped by local stewardship and historical coherence rather than a static monument.	H2	Cultural-historical values form an important building block for the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht (see, among others, Chapter 3 and the intermezzo on pages 44–48). The RSU 2040 builds on that tradition. The city is not a 'tabula rasa,' an empty sheet on which one can plan without constraints. It is important that the municipality, in urban development, takes account of the existing heritage, recognises its significance for the city, and adds new value to it. This goes beyond the preservation of larger and smaller monuments; heritage serves as the foundation for our further urbanisation. That does not mean that we lock all areas down and prohibit high-rise buildings or large-scale energy generation, but rather that we carefully consider the cultural-historical context and values present in the area concerned.	Positions heritage as an integral yet flexible component of urban development. The municipality presents cultural-historical values not as limits but as reference layers that can coexist with transformation. The response normalises growth and energy transition while invoking heritage as a contextual design principle rather than a restrictive framework.	H2	Aligned
13a	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2050 (p. 201, 210-212)	Community representa group from Overvecht	Community representative	Cultural History	A. Location Overvecht has a lot to offer, such as … Overvecht is well located in relation to the inner city, public transport and national roads, and, in addition to green and blue within the district (various parks and green and blue connections), it also has nearby natural areas such as the Oostelijke Vechtplassen, the western part of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug and nature/recreation spots such as the Noorderpark and the Maarsseveense Plassen. In addition, the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterline (nominated for UNESCO World Heritage) can give a boost to more recreation and tourism (as an overflow for the inner city) while preserving historical value. With the addition of the still-missing elements from the Utrecht Barcode in the RSU, the district will become attractive for residents in the future. Elements that are still missing and should be added: 1. Add workplaces and culture, making the district economically attractive as well. 2. Facilities for secondary education. 3. The opportunities to be utilised of the Hollandse Waterline (nominated for UNESCO World Heritage). Turn the forts in and around Overvecht into a tourist attraction with recreation (from Noorderpark) as an overflow for tourists in the city centre and for an economic boost in the district of Overvecht. NB. 'The Nieuwe Hollandse Waterline and Limes have been nominated as (future) UNESCO World Heritage.' These qualities are mentioned for other districts, but not for Overvecht. Why not? Below we will further elaborate on a number of components to meet Healthy Urban Living for Overvecht residents. Overvecht is well located in relation to the city centre, public transport, and national roads, and, besides green and blue spaces within the district (various parks and green and blue corridors), it also has nearby natural areas such as the Oostelijke Vechtplassen, the western part of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug, and recreation/nature sites like Noorderpark and the Maarsseveense Plassen. In addition, the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterline (nominated for UNESCO World Heritage status) can give a boost to recreation and tourism (as an overflow for the inner city) while maintaining its historical value. With the addition of the missing elements from the Utrecht Barcode in the RSU, the district will become attractive for residents in the future. The elements that lack and that should be added are: Add workplaces and cultural facilities so that the district also becomes economically attractive. Add facilities for secondary education. Exploit the opportunities of the Hollandse Waterline (nominated for UNESCO World Heritage). Turn the forts in and around Overvecht into tourist attractions with recreation (from Noorderpark) as an overflow for tourists in the city centre and as an economic stimulus for the district of Overvecht. Note: 'The Nieuwe Hollandse Waterline and Limes have been nominated as (future) UNESCO World Heritage.' These qualities are mentioned for other districts, but not for Overvecht. Why not? Below we will further elaborate on a number of components to meet the goal of Healthy Urban Living for residents of Overvecht. (...)	Frames Overvecht as a strategically positioned and under-recognised district whose potential lies in the interplay of landscape, heritage, and recreation. Argues that the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterline should be mobilised as an economic, cultural, and educational asset, advocating its explicit inclusion in the RSU as a heritage-led component of equitable urban development.	H3	With regard to the section 'Work': a number of workplaces have been included. Employment at multiple locations within Overvecht is an important development goal in order to achieve more mixed-use functions and to stimulate labour participation. With regard to the facilities for secondary education: work is currently underway to add a secondary school within Overvecht.	Addresses the citizen's requests in pragmatic, sectoral terms. The municipality reaffirms that employment opportunities and education facilities are already being integrated into Overvecht's development agenda. The response reflects a managerial, incremental approach focused on social and functional improvement rather than the broader heritage or identity concerns expressed by residents.	H3	Aligned
13b	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2051 (p. 201, 210-212)	Community representa group from Overvecht	Community representative	Cultural History	34. The Noorderpark has been designated as a potential area for wind turbines (Illustration p. 115), but in the overview on page 158 these turbines are missing. How many turbines are involved? Arbitrarily designating a search area for wind turbines can lead to considerable social unrest. To avoid unnecessary unrest, it is better to be clear about what the ambitions are and not to present ambitions that are, from the outset, in conflict with other principles and preconditions. The plans for wind turbines must align with the Regional Energy Transition of U16, in which there seems to be no room for wind turbines in Noorderpark according to the municipality of Utrecht. The council letter Substantiation of energy search locations in RSU of 22 January 2021 only adds more uncertainty. It states: 'In Noorderpark lies a piece of cultural-historical landscape. It is our ambition to treat these valuable areas with respect. We cooperate with the province on this. In the Provincial Environmental Regulation of Utrecht it is stipulated that solar fields and wind turbines in these areas are permitted only if the heritage and nature values described by the province are sufficiently protected. This condition makes the realisation of energy production in these areas particularly difficult. It is not certain in advance that sufficient measures can be devised to adequately protect these values. Formally, it is not excluded that wind turbines may be possible in areas with a double protected status, for example nature and the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterline. However, in such areas so many special values must be taken into account that it is unlikely for initiators to develop a viable project. We therefore choose to exclude wind turbines in areas that enjoy protection on more than one theme under provincial policy.' And further: 'Selection of wind-turbine search areas – Based on considerations regarding distance to housing and ecological and cultural-historical constraints, the following locations are not excluded as potential sites for wind turbines (see Figure 1): … Noorderpark … These locations, with a more abstract delineation, are included as search areas for sustainable energy in the draft RSU.' We conclude that this search area is incompatible with other ambitions and conditions. In the table on page 158 of the RSU it appears that there is no spatial assignment for energy in Overvecht. More clarity is needed here.	Expresses opposition to the designation of Noorderpark as a wind-energy search area, framing it as inconsistent with other municipal and provincial objectives and as a threat to a culturally and environmentally valuable landscape. The argument appeals to procedural transparency and multi-level policy coherence, using the language of governance to challenge energy siting.	H3	34. We have designated Noorderpark as a search area because there appear to be opportunities for wind energy in this area. How many turbines there will be is not yet known and will be investigated. Cultural-historical values will also be taken into account.	Confirms that Noorderpark remains under consideration for wind-energy development while emphasising that specific feasibility and impacts are yet to be determined. Heritage values are acknowledged as part of the evaluation criteria, reflecting a procedural and exploratory framing of the planning process rather than a fixed position on protection or exclusion.	H3	Aligned
14	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2052 (p. 235236)	Residents of Utrecht	Citizen	Heritage	(...) 7. Recognise the unique value of the historic city centre for all of Utrecht and secure it better in the RSU – not as an afterthought in brackets alongside the station area.	Requests stronger recognition and safeguarding of the historic city centre's unique value within the RSU, asking that it be presented as a central feature rather than as a secondary addition.	H2	(...) 7. In the RSU, the rich history is one of the city's core values. It is important that the municipality, in urban development, takes account of the existing heritage, recognises its meaning for the city, and adds new value to it.	Reaffirms that Utrecht's history and heritage are fundamental values within the RSU. Emphasises the municipality's intent to acknowledge, interpret, and enhance heritage as part of urban development rather than treating it as separate from modern planning.	H5	Partially aligned

ID	Source/Page	Actor	Actor Type	Concept/Theme	Public remark (excerpt)	Main concern/interpretation	Public remark theme (code)	Municipality response (excerpt)	Response interpretation	Response Theme (code)	Alignment level
15a	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2053 (p. 257 - 264)	Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. (Environmental Foundation Zeist and surroundings)	Environmental organisation	Cultural History	Housing and living environment. This has already been addressed above, particularly with regard to the scale of the housing task and what that might mean for the qualities of various areas. Naturally, for each category of area, appealing examples are shown of how such developments might look—also including the greening of continuous streets and, in particular, roofs (see in the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040, examples on pp. 90–97). Yet the question remains what the carrying capacity of the city actually is—both in cultural-historical and ecological terms, and also in terms of a possible alienation of people. The Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. therefore believes that with regard to the stated challenges and ambitions, a general reconsideration is desirable or even necessary—especially given that in the Randstad the issue is not only the growth of the existing population, assuming a so-called "zero migration balance," but rather a migration toward the Randstad, not only from the rest of the Netherlands (domestic migration) but also from Europe and beyond (international migration). The question then is whether, given the limits of sustainability that are being reached, it would not be better to distribute population growth more evenly across different parts of the Netherlands. In any case, the attraction to the Randstad may diminish, considering the effects of Covid and the experience of working from home, and it would therefore be wise to take these possible scenarios into account. Work and employment locations. What applies to housing applies even more strongly to the creation of many additional jobs, for this too attracts people from outside the province, thereby increasing the pressure on the region—also following the principle of the so-called 'escalator model,' whereby young people first move to the city and later in life seek a less dynamic residential environment in the wider region.	Raises a structural critique of Utrecht's projected urban growth, questioning the demographic assumptions behind the RSU 2040. The organisation frames sustainability not only in ecological and cultural-historical terms but also in socio-demographic balance, calling for national spatial redistribution of population and employment rather than continued concentration in the Randstad. Heritage and ecology are invoked as indicators of the city's carrying capacity and limits to growth.	H3	At present, it is impossible to foresee what the long-term impact of the coronavirus crisis will be—not in five years, let alone in twenty. However, we do expect Utrecht to remain attractive and to continue growing strongly. The RSU indicates how we will deal with that. In the RSU, we explicitly choose to grow in balance. The presence of jobs in the city is part of that. According to research, a large share of employment from the region settles in the city of Utrecht (70,000 of the 85,000 projected jobs). This does not mean that everyone who works in the city also lives there, or wishes to live there. Good connections to surrounding municipalities and the region are therefore important. The Integrated Regional Perspective (IRP) explicitly addresses the relationship between the city and the region.	Reaffirms confidence in Utrecht's long-term growth trajectory and positions the RSU as the framework to manage it "in balance." The municipality acknowledges uncertainty due to Covid-19 but maintains the assumption of continued urban attraction. The response reframes concerns about overconcentration and sustainability into a narrative of regional connectivity and functional balance between city and hinterland.	H3	Aligned
15b	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2054 (p. 257 - 264)	Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. (Environmental Foundation Zeist and surroundings)	Environmental organisation	Cultural History	In this regard, the city is aiming for a transition toward more sustainable forms of transport, which Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. fully supports (see also De Kracht van Utrecht 2.0). Central to this transition is the 'Wheel with the (seven) spokes.' However, in our view, regarding the major scale increase intended for public transport (HOV) and cycling, explicit consideration must be given to the existing values of nature, landscape, and cultural history in certain areas. In particular, this applies to the extension of the Uithof tram line to Zeist, as well as to the improvement of the cycling path between the Utrecht Science Park (USP) and Zeist(-West). Depending on the chosen alignments, both projects may have significant effects on the local ecological values, including existing ecological corridors (see also Appendix 1: 'Leaflet on Connecting and Preserving Nature'). Furthermore, they may affect the area's high cultural-historical and landscape values, including geological features. In our opinion, regarding the tram—if it is desirable at all—existing bus lanes along Universiteitsweg and the N-237 should simply be used, and for the cycling route improvement between USP and Zeist(West), the existing route along Bisschopsweg should be utilised. As far as Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. is aware, the municipal council has already spoken out against the widening of the A27 at Amelisweerd, which we naturally appreciate given the impacts and consequences for the local natural values at stake in that expansion.	Supports Utrecht's sustainable mobility transition but warns against ecological impacts of infrastructure expansion. The foundation calls for route optimisation using existing corridors to protect ecological and cultural-historical landscapes. The argument frames sustainability as conditional—technological progress must remain subordinate to environmental and heritage preservation.	H4	We agree with you that the integration of a cycling path or public transport (HOV) lane must be carried out carefully, taking into account cultural-historical and landscape values.	Expresses agreement with the principle that new cycling or HOV infrastructure should be integrated carefully, with due regard for cultural-historical and landscape values. These considerations are formulated as part of the planning process, consistent with Utrecht's general spatial-quality approach.	H4	Aligned
15c	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2055 (p. 257 - 264)	Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. (Environmental Foundation Zeist and surroundings)	Environmental organisation	Cultural History	It is in itself good that special attention is given to this theme, as it is important for, among other things, social cohesion—that is, for an inclusive society. However, Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. has noticed that near the Voorveldse/Voordorpse Polder—the green zone between Utrecht and De Bilt, north of Utrechtseweg—a search area of 3.5 hectares has been indicated for the construction of sports fields. Yet this area forms an important 'stepping stone' within the ecological corridor between the Vechtplassen area and the Kromme Rijn area (see also Appendix 1: Leaflet on Connecting and Preserving Nature). Recently, for instance, fauna passages have been constructed under the Universiteitsweg (in the municipality of De Bilt) and also under the Biltse Rading (in the municipality of Utrecht), and the municipality of De Bilt has drawn up an area vision for this zone (Voorveldse Polder Area Plan, Municipality of De Bilt, 2020), paying particular attention to the ecological connection located here. In that sense, we believe that sports fields are in no way appropriate in this area, since it constitutes the 'last green link' between De Bilt and Utrecht, with important ecological, landscape, and also cultural-historical values, such as those related to the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie (see also the report The Last Link – The open green space between Utrecht, De Bilt and Groenekan, STL, 1990).	Objects to the proposed sports-field search area in the Voorveldse/Voordorpse Polder, arguing that the site is a critical ecological and cultural-historical corridor—a "last green link," integrating environmental connectivity, landscape value, and heritage protection under a single conservation rationale that conflicts with the RSU's functional zoning for sports facilities.	H2	The Voorveldse Polder has been designated as a search area for sports and sustainable energy. This means that we will investigate whether there is space for these functions. To promote nature and ecology, the province has plans to take measures this year in the area south of the Biltse Rading. See: Voorveldse Polder	Province of Utrecht (province-utrecht.nl). The feasibility study regarding possible functions will, together with the related considerations, be submitted to the municipal executive as a further elaboration of the RSU 2040.	Clarifies that the designation of Voorveldse Polder is exploratory and subject to feasibility studies, indicating that ecological measures and spatial functions (sports, energy) are still to be assessed in coordination with the province. The response situates the concern within a procedural planning framework, emphasising investigation and intergovernmental alignment rather than predetermined outcomes.	H2	Aligned
15d	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2056 (p. 257 - 264)	Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. (Environmental Foundation Zeist and surroundings)	Environmental organisation	Cultural History	Energy. It will be clear that the city of Utrecht faces an enormous challenge in the energy transition—one that will only grow larger with the city's expansion. Here again, the question arises as to how this challenge will be addressed while taking into account the values present in different areas. When we look at the search areas indicated in the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040, these are projected at the city's edges. Yet it is not specified what this might mean for the existing values of nature, landscape, and cultural history there, even though it would be important to provide such insight. Although Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. supports the idea that every municipality should take responsibility for the energy transition together with its residents and businesses, it also considers it essential that the selection of locations for solar fields and especially wind turbines be made carefully, taking into account the relevant values of nature, landscape, and cultural history. In this regard, it would in our opinion be preferable for such assessments to take place at the scale of the Regional Energy Strategy (RES) as a whole, since this would allow these values to be taken into account more effectively (see also Appendix 1: Leaflet on Connecting and Preserving Nature). Dutch Nature and Environmental Federations, 2020). This, however, on the condition that such an approach does not lead to the shifting of responsibilities and that the goals set out in the Climate Agreement are still achieved. The urgency of addressing climate change is far too great, also on a global scale.	Acknowledges the urgency of the energy transition but calls for landscape- and heritage-sensitive implementation. The foundation advocates for coordinated decision-making at the regional scale (RES) to safeguard ecological and cultural-historical values, balancing environmental urgency with spatial caution. The discourse emphasises procedural responsibility and integrated planning rather than outright opposition to renewable energy.	H2	For large-scale energy generation, we indeed see possibilities mainly at the edges of the city, where these can also be combined as much as possible with other spatial tasks. Various initiatives are currently underway in which, for each location, careful integration into the landscape, cultural-historical values, etc. is being sought. The RES provides a clear framework that will be used for energy generation projects within the municipality of Utrecht. That does not change the fact that current and future (re)construction are already subject to strict requirements to minimise energy consumption and to generate as much sustainable energy as possible, for example through solar panels and thermal energy storage. Unfortunately, this is not sufficient to meet the city's own energy demand. That does not alter the fact that strict requirements are already in place, and will continue to apply, to current and future (re) construction in order to minimise energy consumption and generate as much energy sustainably as possible—for example through solar panels and thermal energy storage. Unfortunately, this will not be sufficient to meet the city's own energy demand.	States that opportunities for large-scale energy generation are mainly seen at the city's edges, where projects will be combined with other spatial tasks. Indicates that various initiatives are underway in which integration with the landscape and cultural-historical values is being considered. Refers to the RES as the guiding framework for implementation and notes that current and future construction must already meet strict sustainability requirements, although these will not be sufficient to meet the city's full energy demand.	H4	Partially aligned
15e	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2057 (p. 257 - 264)	Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. (Environmental Foundation Zeist and surroundings)	Environmental organisation	Cultural History	In this chapter, the intended developments on the eastern side of the city of Utrecht are discussed, such as around the Lunetten junction and also the Utrecht Science Park (USP). USP. The process surrounding the Omgevingsvisie USP has already been underway for some time, with attention to various aspects and values that should be considered important, and with active citizen participation. In that sense, the first question is how the vision and direction indicated for the USP in the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040—where major tasks are located, both regarding employment and housing, which will again have major consequences for mobility—fit with the process currently taking place in the context of the Omgevingsvisie USP. The USP is located in several respects in a very sensitive environment, with, among others, nearby estates such as Oostbroek, Amelisweerd and Rhijnauwen, as well as the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie, which is nominated to be proposed by UNESCO as World Heritage. Therefore, for Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o., it remains in a more general sense the question of how the intended development for this area relates to the values that the present vision also aims to protect and, where possible, improve—those of nature, landscape and cultural history. This also in relation to the high-rise buildings up to 105 metres that apparently are to be made possible here, which will have enormous visual and spatial effects, as well as light impacts on the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, the vision apparently aims to connect the USP even better with the surrounding towns, such as the municipalities of Bunnik, De Bilt and also Zeist. For instance, there is the plan, as already mentioned before (see also above, Chapter 2.2.1 'Major tasks of Utrecht', under the heading 'Mobility'), to realise a new tram connection from the USP in the direction of Zeist (and possibly further towards Amersfoort), as well as a new cycling path through the Lage Grond to Zeist(-West). Of course, it is good to consider how a transition to sustainable forms of transport can be achieved, but it must be done in such a way that the existing values of nature, landscape and cultural history are explicitly taken into account. Regarding the tram and the cycling path between the USP and Zeist(-West), in our opinion this can be done well by using already existing routes— for the tram, the existing dedicated bus lanes along both the Universiteitsweg and the N-237, and for the bicycle, the existing cycling path along the Bisschopsweg.	Questions the coherence between the RSU's large-scale development ambitions for the Utrecht Science Park and the parallel process of the Omgevingsvisie USP. The organisation highlights the ecological and cultural-historical sensitivity of the area, surrounded by listed estates and the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie, and warns against visual and environmental impacts of high-rise and mobility projects. It supports sustainable transport but urges that new connections use existing corridors to minimise harm.	H3	During the area studies that will take place after the adoption of the RSU, all your questions will be addressed (coherence and inclusivity).	Indicates that the issues raised—regarding coherence between planning processes and inclusive consideration of local values—will be addressed in the forthcoming area studies following the RSU's adoption. The response situates the concerns within the next procedural phase rather than responding substantively at this stage.	H3	Aligned
15f	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2058 (p. 257 - 264)	Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. (Environmental Foundation Zeist and surroundings)	Environmental organisation	Cultural History	More specifically, there has recently been a wide dialogue about the possible relocation of the Ronald McDonald House, also in the context of the Provincial Environmental Vision. In that sense, it is good that alternatives are being considered which, on the one hand, do justice to the particular importance of the Ronald McDonald House, and, on the other, to the landscape, cultural-historical (for example, the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie) and ecological qualities of the area. The programme for the USP (and also for the Lunetten–Koningsweg junction) will probably require the identification of an additional 2 + 3.5 hectares of sports fields, for which the Voorveldse Polder is again indicated as a search location. As already mentioned earlier under Chapter 2.2.1 'Major tasks of Utrecht', under the heading 'Social facilities', the Voorveldse Polder, in our view, is an undesirable or unsuitable location for the possible realisation of sports fields or other spatial developments, given its ecological importance as a green link in the ecological corridor between the Vechtplassen area and the Kromme Rijn area, as well as its cultural-historical values, including the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie. The programme for the USP as envisaged in the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040 will also lead to considerable pressure on the surrounding (national) road network, including the A27. All in all, given the large-scale programme and its effects on sensitive values such as nature, landscape and cultural history, we believe that not only is a general reconsideration of the programme for the USP even better with regard to the USP. In that sense, a proper balance should still be sought.	Connects multiple local planning issues—the relocation of the Ronald McDonald House, additional sports fields, and increased traffic pressure around the USP—to a broader call for re-evaluating Utrecht's development programme. The foundation emphasises the need to protect ecological, landscape, and cultural-historical values, repeatedly invoking the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie as a key reference. The argument frames balanced planning as both a moral and ecological imperative in the face of cumulative urban pressures.	H2	In the public response, an opposition seems to be described, whereas the RSU precisely seeks to describe the coherence of all tasks. At every location, considerations are made as to how we can strengthen the city's development in both quantitative and qualitative terms.	Clarifies that the RSU does not set conflicting goals but seeks to integrate various development objectives within a coherent spatial strategy. Emphasises that each site will be assessed through balanced considerations aimed at enhancing both the scale and quality of urban growth. The statement reinforces the RSU's integrative and coordinating intent rather than addressing specific objections.	H4	Partially aligned
15g	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2059 (p. 257 - 264)	Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. (Environmental Foundation Zeist and surroundings)	Environmental organisation	Cultural History	3. Conclusion. In general, Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. appreciates the integrality that is aimed for in the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040, including the introduction of the so-called '(intelligent) barcode'. However, it raises major questions and comments about the large growth task that the city has set for itself, both regarding housing and employment, which also have consequences for mobility and the energy challenge. Of course, based on the 'barcode', one chooses, among other things, 'Green grows along', which is, of course, positive in itself, but it is expected that the urban densification associated with the intended developments, as well as the pressure on the landscapes and natural areas adjacent to the city, will, in our opinion, nevertheless lead to certain negative effects, both on the qualities of the living environment and on existing values of nature, landscape and cultural history. In that sense, regarding the presented vision and direction, a general reconsideration is, in our opinion, still desirable. "In general, Stichting Milieuzorg Zeist e.o. appreciates the integrality that is aimed for in the Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040, including the introduction of the so-called 'barcode'. However, it raises major questions and reservations regarding the significant growth ambitions the city has set for itself—both in terms of housing and employment—which will again have consequences for mobility and also for the energy challenge. Of course, based on the 'barcode', one chooses, among other things, for 'Green grows along', which is in itself positive, but it is to be expected that the urban densification accompanying these intended developments, as well as the pressure on landscapes and natural areas bordering the city, will indeed have certain negative effects, in our opinion—both on the quality of the living environment and on the existing values of nature, landscape and cultural history. In that sense, with regard to the presented vision and direction, a general reconsideration is, in our opinion, still desirable."	Expresses appreciation for the RSU's integrated approach but questions whether the scale of the city's growth ambitions is compatible with environmental and cultural-historical preservation. Highlights expected negative effects of densification and landscape pressure, concluding that a comprehensive reconsideration of the urban vision remains necessary.	H2	The barcode is precisely there to ensure that the danger you describe will not occur; Utrecht wants to densify and green in balance, to grow in an even and balanced way.	Reaffirms the RSU's conceptual method, explaining that the 'barcode' framework itself is designed to prevent the negative outcomes described. Emphasises densification and greening as complementary processes within a balanced growth strategy, presenting the method as the safeguard of sustainability.	H2	Aligned
16	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2060 (p. 265)	x	x	Identity	As a second point, which relates to the first: a comment about the residential environments (woonmilieus). These residential environments present a Sim City depiction of places that cannot be found anywhere in Utrecht. I do not want every neighbourhood to end up looking like those residential environments.	Criticises the visual and conceptual representation of woonmilieus in the RSU as unrealistic and homogenising. The participant expresses concern that these illustrative models could lead to a loss of neighbourhood diversity and authenticity.	H3	The woonmilieus provide an indication of what the corresponding residential environment could look like. They show which spatial elements are part of it. For each spatial development, an urban design plan or vision will ultimately be made in which the characteristics of the existing location are the starting point. Every (new) neighbourhood will thus have its own identity and interpretation of the respective residential environment. The intention is not to use these woonmilieu illustrations as a blueprint.	Clarifies that the woonmilieu visuals are indicative rather than prescriptive and that local identity and site-specific characteristics will guide future design. The response reassures that diversity and contextual sensitivity remain priorities in neighbourhood development.	H3	Aligned
17	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2061 (p. 270)	Community representatives from Leidsche Rijn, Vleuten and De Meern	Community representative	Cultural History	For our response, we refer to paragraph 6.7, in which Leidsche Rijn, Vleuten and De Meern are discussed. We wish to express our concerns and viewpoints regarding: • Spatial intervention 8: construction of a landscape framework (including new forest) at Ockhuizen, containing a search area for solar fields. A technical search area that still requires an integrated assessment. • Spatial intervention 9: solar-energy islands in the Haarrijnse Plas. • Spatial intervention 10: search area for solar and wind energy in Polder Bijleveld. A technical search area that still requires an integrated assessment.	Introduces specific objections and concerns about three proposed energy-related spatial interventions in Leidsche Rijn, Vleuten and De Meern. The statement calls attention to the need for integrated assessments before implementation, signalling apprehension about the ecological and spatial consequences of solar and wind developments in sensitive polder and water landscapes.	H4	We understand your concern, but we also see that space within the municipality of Utrecht is scarce. We see opportunities to add three functions in Ockhuizen, for which there is an urgent need. The area will therefore change. The area has a protected cultural-historical status, which we will take into account in transforming the area. We will also take into account the existing natural values and any nuisance for local residents. For the surface area of 5 hectares of solar panels needed to make Haarrijn energy-neutral (in addition to the solar panels on residential roofs), no alternative locations are available in the surrounding area.	Acknowledges residents' concerns but reiterates the need to balance spatial scarcity with functional demands. The municipality presents the planned changes as necessary and unavoidable, while pledging consideration of cultural-historical values, ecological values, and local impact. The justification emphasises the lack of viable alternatives, framing the intervention as a pragmatic requirement for achieving local energy neutrality.	H4	Aligned

ID	Source/Page	Actor	Actor Type	Concept/Theme	Public remark (excerpt)	Main concern/interpretation	Public remark theme (code)	Municipality response (excerpt)	Response interpretation	Response Theme (code)	Alignment level
18	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2062 (p. 278, 279)	Residents and entrepreneurs of the Utrecht city centre	Citizen	Identity	The response addresses: • The relationship between RSU 2040 and the Omgevingsvisie Binnenstad — what it means for the city-centre vision once the RSU is adopted. • The importance of the city centre with its residents and entrepreneurs. • The mix of functions in relation to the residential function. • Areas of tension: – Noise nuisance from hospitality venues – Balanced functional mixing (clear residential neighbourhoods) – Absence of a housing policy – Mobility – Rest or liveability • The relationship of the city as a whole to the inner city. The RSU 2040 and the Omgevingsvisie Binnenstad are aligned. The RSU 2040 is a strategic document for long-term spatial development; the Omgevingsvisie Binnenstad provides more specific frameworks for the inner city.	x	x	We agree with you on the importance of living and entrepreneurship for the city, complemented by education (University) and culture. We support the variation between neighbourhoods. Hospitality policy aims to distribute hospitality development more towards districts outside the city centre. When drawing up area profiles, deviations from this policy can be made with justification in consultation with all stakeholders. The RSU 2040 and the Omgevingsvisie Binnenstad recognise the importance of the residential function in the city centre. The city centre is a mix of functions; neighbourhoods differ. This variety is a strength of the city centre that we want to maintain. This means that we focus on housing for diverse households and groups (including older people, families, people with disabilities, and affordable/social rental housing). The residential function is essential for the city centre. Therefore, we take measures to protect it. Temporary private rental is limited to 60 days; short stay has been prohibited (since April 2020). Room division and splitting are only possible if liveability and public space allow it (for example, noise, car/bicycle parking). Additional space and noise requirements apply. The municipality is investigating and lobbying the national government for an owner-occupancy requirement for affordable housing in the city centre to prevent speculation, and we are examining the possibility of introducing conditions for good landlordship combined with a rental permit. 'Verblijf centraal' refers to public space. Staying is not only for visitors; it is also part of a pleasant living environment. Where functions conflict, we plan in the coming years to create area profiles with all stakeholders, based on the identity and quality of each place, indicating development directions and making agreements about the design, use, and management of public space. Regarding mobility, walking and then cycling take priority in the city centre. Cars are guests. The city centre remains accessible by car. The speed in the city centre is the speed of the pedestrian, making better mixing of pedestrians, cyclists, and cars possible. Parking on the street is discouraged. In the Omgevingsvisie, liveability is described as a combination of calm and vibrancy, which can differ across parts of the city centre. The RSU assumes four new centres. This will prevent further pressure on the city centre. These centres fit into the Utrecht dichtbij, ten-minute city vision. What happens in each area depends on context: location, identity, land use, ownership, and the people who live there.	Affirms alignment between the RSU and the Omgevingsvisie Binnenstad, acknowledging the importance of housing, diversity, and liveability in the inner city. The municipality outlines specific housing, hospitality, and mobility policies aimed at managing conflicts between functions and protecting residential quality. It situates these measures within a broader strategy of decentralisation (four new centres) and place-based planning, reinforcing the notion of the inner city as a balanced mix of living, working, and cultural environments.	H5	x
19	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2063 (p. 290–292)	Resident of Utrecht	Citizen	Identity	Below is my response to the RSU 2040. Safeguarding the liveability of the growing city The text in the Foreword (p.5) — 'How we can make use of the existing urban fabric', 'safeguarding the liveability of the growing city' — and in the Summary — 'strengthening healthy urban living for everyone', 'preserving the human scale in the city', and 'how sufficient space can be provided to move safely and naturally in and around the city' — made me optimistic. You also write in the RSU 2040 (p.34) 'High-rise is not an aim in itself', and I often come across the phrase 'Safeguarding the human scale'. In the next twenty years, 'healthy urban living for everyone' primarily means maintaining the balance between densification and greening. The municipality cherishes the various districts, their residents, and their own identities. In my opinion, the human scale will soon be lost in the compact city of Utrecht, while the existing surrounding neighbourhoods will be heavily burdened by large numbers of cyclists routed through well-functioning residential areas. Especially in the heavily built-up district of Merwede, it is inhumane to pack so many residents together. It is unrealistic to almost entirely ban private cars from the streets and the city, even if parking for people with disabilities remains. It is a utopia to think that everything will fit in the city! Advice: Housing projects should be distributed more evenly across the city. A search area of 7 hectares for new sports fields should not focus exclusively on central areas; do not forget the city's edges and outskirts. Advice: Ensure that Utrecht remains a mixed city, with space — also green space — for everyone. Question 1: How will you prevent too many people from getting in each other's way in the future? Question 2: Will there still be room to meet and move 'at a proper distance'? Question 3: Will Utrecht be 'pandemic-proof' in the future?	Expresses concern about over-densification and the loss of human scale in Utrecht's urban fabric. The resident warns that compact-city policies may harm liveability, accessibility, and social diversity, particularly in developments like Merwede. The statement advocates for a more balanced spatial distribution of housing, preservation of green space, and inclusivity for diverse household types.	H3	Utrecht must remain a mixed city with space for everyone and green areas for everyone. That is the ambition of the RSU. Questions 1, 2 and 3 The RSU vision (the ten-minute city) assumes that daily amenities are available nearby. As a result, we limit mobility flows within the city and thus also reduce pressure on existing urban areas. In addition, we improve the quality of the existing city, among other things by adding greenery and restructuring existing streets. In the RSU and the municipal Mobility Plan, the goal is not to completely remove cars from the streetscape; rather, the aim is to prevent further growth in car traffic and to give more space to pedestrians and cyclists. We also improve public transport. We, too, believe that Utrecht must remain a city for everyone; therefore, the RSU also pays much attention to diverse residential environments and a wide range of amenities.	Acknowledges the resident's concerns but reaffirms the RSU's ten-minute city framework as the means to maintain liveability and accessibility. The municipality defends the strategy of balanced growth through proximity, greening, and restructuring existing housing types, while clarifying that car traffic will be limited but not eliminated. The response reframes the critique within the plan's existing objectives of inclusivity and sustainable mobility.	H4	Partially aligned
20	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2064 (p. 351)	Resident of Buurtschap Wayen (municipality of Houten)	Citizen	Erfgoed/Werelderfgoed	With this, I would like to submit a response to the Omgevingsvisie / draft Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040. I find it striking that on page 105 it is indicated that Buurtschap Wayen, in the municipality of Houten, is a search area of 7 hectares for new sports fields. Buurtschap Wayen, nominated as part of the World Heritage Hollandse Waterlinie, is in my opinion beautiful as it is, and with its many orchards does justice to the history of the region and the Waterline. From the accompanying text, I understand that primarily Laagraven is part of the technical search area, but then this has been incorrectly marked on page 105. In addition, Plas Groenraven, again part of the municipality of Houten, has in recent years been successfully transformed into a habitat for many species of flora and fauna as a nature pond. The current dual function as a recreation area is already an eyesore to me as a resident. This serious disturbance of natural tranquility harms the area's rich natural character. Therefore, in my opinion, there can be no question of expanding with sports fields south of the A12, on the territory of Houten, within Utrecht's spatial vision.	Objects to the depiction of Buurtschap Wayen as a potential site for new sports fields, arguing that the area's heritage and ecological values, linked to the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie and its orchards, should be preserved. The resident also cites the successful ecological restoration of Plas Groenraven as evidence against further recreational development. The statement calls for correction of mapping errors and exclusion of Houten's territory from Utrecht's spatial designations.	H2	The technical search area for sport is an indicative designation. We are addressing this task together with the regional municipalities.	Clarifies that the sports-field search area is only indicative and that further assessment will take place in collaboration with regional municipalities. The response reframes the issue as a procedural and intermunicipal matter rather than a fixed plan.	H2	Aligned
21a	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2065 (p. 335,336, (…) 338, 339)	Community working group from the Werkgroep Natuur, Landschap en Cultuurhistorie Zeist	Community Working group	Cultural History	Our Working Group promotes nature, landscape and cultural history in and around the municipality of Zeist. Our 'working area' lies roughly between the Langbroekerwetering and Kromme Rijn and the Voorveldse Polder. We carry out various activities such as excursions, information campaigns, lectures, advocacy, and a knotting group (for landscape maintenance). The choices made in your Strategy Document cause us great concern for nature, the landscape and cultural history in and around Utrecht, and especially to the east of Utrecht. We have the following arguments for this."	Introduces the Working Group as an organised civil initiative focused on protecting the natural, landscape, and cultural-historical values surrounding Zeist. Expresses general concern that the RSU's spatial choices threaten these values, particularly in the eastern periphery of Utrecht. This opening positions the group's forthcoming points as a collective environmental and heritage advocacy statement.	H3	x	x	x	x
21b	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2066 (p. 335,336, (…) 338, 339)	Community working group from the Werkgroep Natuur, Landschap en Cultuurhistorie Zeist	Community Working group	Cultural History	1. The choices in the Strategy Document will cause major damage to greenery, nature, landscape and cultural history in and around Utrecht. a. Because it is impossible to build 60,000 homes (104,000 in the U16 region) without extensive paving over and loss of open green areas. b. You cannot grow by 70,000 jobs (80,000 in the region) without a large spatial claim on open space and greenery (including an addition of 32 hectares of industrial land) and, moreover, additional inflow of new demand on the housing market. See also the following point.	Criticises the RSU's growth targets for housing and employment as incompatible with the preservation of natural and cultural-historical landscapes. The working group views quantitative expansion directly to environmental degradation, warning that large-scale urbanisation will inevitably consume open and green spaces in and around Utrecht.	H2	In the RSU, the choice is made for densifying and greening in balance. This is crucial for the health of our residents (green walking routes, play, sports, social contact, relaxation, clean air), it strengthens natural values and is important for a climate-resilient city. Green starts close to home, with greenery in front of the door, on roofs, in gardens, and continues through green connections (streets) to parks and neighbourhood green spaces, city parks, green wedges, and the landscape surrounding the city.	Reaffirms the RSU's central principle of balanced densification and greening. The municipality presents greenery as an integrated urban system that contributes to health, climate resilience, and biodiversity. The response reframes concerns about loss of green space into a vision of multifunctional, layered green infrastructure extending from individual homes to the wider landscape.	H2	Aligned
21c	Submitted public responses to the RSU 2067 (p. 335,336, (…) 338, 339)	Community working group from the Werkgroep Natuur, Landschap en Cultuurhistorie Zeist	Community Working group	Cultural History	6. The permitted growth of the USP will, due to increasing mobility, cause major damage to nature, landscape, cultural history, and liveability to the east of Utrecht. The current recreational and natural values will be severely affected. a. Damage to Amelisweerd: the mobility problems of the Uithof make the widening of the A27 inevitable. When residents near the USP complain, officials indicate that accessibility problems in Utrecht-East will be solved if the USP's connection to the A28 is expanded as part of the A27 widening. b. The proposed large densification and high-rise development in the USP, with a 'mobility hub', parking garages, and tram at the edge, will lead to horizon pollution and diminished landscape experience in the Kromme Rijn area, the Waterlinie area, and the Stichtse Lustwarande (parks Sandwijck, Oostbroek, Vollenhoven). c. The possible extension of the tram to Zeist will cause major damage to nature, landscape, and cultural history (Oostbroek and Vollenhoven) and, depending on the route, to a geological monument. d. The large increase in housing in the USP will lead to excessive recreational pressure in the immediate surroundings of the USP. e. The multitude of connections required by employment growth can, through their fragmenting effect, damage landscape, cultural history, and nature. This is an argument against employment growth. It is also important to state that the connected city must not lead to damage to landscape, cultural history, and nature.	Warns that the planned expansion of the Utrecht Science Park will have severe cumulative impacts on ecological, landscape, and cultural-historical values east of Utrecht. The working group links urban and infrastructural growth—especially the A27 widening, high-rise projects, and new mobility infrastructure—to degradation of heritage landscapes and increased recreational pressure. The statement frames mobility-driven development as incompatible with the preservation of natural and cultural assets.	H4	a) The employment growth at the USP is not a reason for the widening of the A27. The flow of traffic on the A27 and A28, as well as traffic safety, are. b) The tasks in the area will be designed in such a way that they do justice to the location itself as well as to its surroundings. c) The integration of the tram extension is a complex issue. In the elaboration, all interests and values will have to be considered in an integrated manner. d) We see possibilities to expand recreational green areas in the surroundings in the future. e) This has also been included in our Nota van Uitgangspunten and therefore forms the basis for this structural vision. In the further elaboration of the areas, including the USP, this will continue to be one of the guiding principles.	Addresses each concern point by point, clarifying that the A27 widening is unrelated to USP growth and emphasising balanced, context-sensitive planning for the area. The municipality acknowledges the complexity of the tram issue and reaffirms that all values will be weighed integrally. It also highlights future opportunities for recreational green expansion and refers back to existing policy foundations (Nota van Uitgangspunten).	H4	Aligned

Appendix C. Interview transcription

This appendix contains the transcription of the semi-structured interview conducted as part of the qualitative component of this research. The interview was conducted on 17 December 2025. The interview was carried out with a municipal professional involved in heritage-related work within the context of urban development in Utrecht and was intended to provide an institutional perspective on the role of heritage in long-term spatial planning. The conversation focused on the interviewee's experience with the *Ruimtelijke Strategie Utrecht 2040*, as well as broader reflections on the relationship between heritage, planning practice, and urban transformation. In the transcription, "R" denotes the researcher's voice and "I" denotes the interviewee's voice. The transcription is presented as a supporting empirical source and is not intended as a standalone analysis. Relevant excerpts are discussed and interpreted in Chapter 6.

R– I would like to make up with introductions so you know who you are speaking to. I'm an Argentinian anthropologist. I have a specialization in heritage and development and I've recently relocated to the Netherlands. I have lived in Utrecht for two years now. I moved here and I'm doing my masters in applied archaeology in Leiden, now finishing it with the thesis where I work on Utrecht's urban development. Where I try to look at the heritage part of it. So, my idea for this conversation is to share a bit what I've been seeing on my reading of the document. And maybe hear your opinions on it, to reflect a bit on them from your working experience.

I – Yes. So, shall I tell you a little bit about myself?

R– Yes, sure.

I – Well, I've been working for a very long time here with the municipal city area, a part of the heritage, what do you call that? Department, not the right name, but you won't really go understand. I've always been busy with everything that happened between the 1920s and 21st century. So I do a lot of things that have to do with development in the city itself. And my task is to tell what other heritage values that are in this particular area and how can you, with new developments, how can you take these heritage values and use them for making better plans. That is the idea.

R – Perfect. Thank you. It's also precisely the subject I'm into. It's also what I used to work in Argentina, for the provincial government. But the heritage materiality and management is

quite different. And as I would like to keep on talking and working on this matter, that's why I was taking a look into the vision plan of Utrecht for 2040.

I – Yes.

R – Which I find interesting already because it's a very long term vision. So maybe to start very openly, I can ask you what you remember of the process of working on it because I think you were actually in that team or at least in the consultation process of it, right?

I – Yes, in the consultants. At the start of it we worked with the rest of the people who worked on it, just to implement something about the historical development of interest and what we thought was very essential to get into the documents. That was very at the start. And one of the principles is that you take notice of the heritage share, of the typical values that's from all these centuries of development in the city. So that was when we were consulted. And then, well, then at the end product, we read and consulted, then we read with the text. But in the middle process, we didn't have much participation.

R – All right, and well, for the end then of that process, perhaps, were the things that you found more challenging for the team to acknowledge, from what you have already known or told in the beginning? Or like the tensions that you could see in the preservation and the growth of the city?

I – It's very abstract. It's a vision for a long time, so it's very on a very abstract level. So you can talk about taking the heritage and what is in particular of importance in the city that you take that seriously. But it's very difficult when it comes to the projects themselves, to the specific development of several parts of the city. When there's a lot of pressure to add all new buildings and develop new parts in the city, that becomes very difficult. So to protect the heritage, specific heritage, things that we find very important. So the intentions are good, but in practice it is always difficult. It depends also on who you work with, because some people are more willing to take heritage into account than others.

R– Yes. What you mentioned is what I noticed as well, that heritage is described mostly in terms of identity or recognition of monuments, but it is not very operational. How do you see this difference?

I– This plan is a vision, so perhaps not the place to be very operational. What you would want is another document that explains how you actually implement these intentions in practice, the steps to take.

R – Yes, I understand. And now with the environmental vision, do you think this helps to push heritage considerations further?

I – Yes, because now we have an instrument that says it is important to take notice of heritage in new developments. It does not mean nothing can change, but that you seriously assess what is already there, including characteristics of periods or neighbourhoods that are not formally protected.

R – And when it comes to the opportunities to strengthen the role of heritage in Utrecht's urban development?

I – There are many people in the municipality who take this seriously. The difficulty is that there are many competing interests and often too many programs for one place. Heritage can lose because it is seen as soft, not directly linked to figures or money.

R – And what about citizens and communities?

I – People usually do not want their environment to change too much. They value not only monuments but their own neighbourhoods. We explain that change is part of history, but that it should be done carefully.

R – Yes, I noticed that as well when I worked with the public consultation archives. Many comments were very precise, but the vision could not address them directly. At the end they were not really introduced.

I – Yes, and these documents are often too difficult for people to read and understand. Because they are abstract and written in a technical language.

R – Okey, is like a communication gap, you say. But the comments were still there, not fully addressed.

I- nods affirmatively

R- And this communication issue t is something that can also be seen between disciplines and practice, do you agree?

I – Exactly.

R – Okay. Well, I don't wish to take more time from you as my questions are answered. I really appreciate your time and reflections. Would you like to add something else?

I – No. You're welcome. I wish you a lot of success with your research and your studies.

R – Thank you very much. Have a lovely day.

I – Bye-bye.