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## THE NETHERLANDS IN MAPS

# HOW FUTURE-PROOF ARE DUTCH CITIES?

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### DUTCH CITIES: FROM PROBLEMS TO POTENTIALS

In the 1980s and 1990s, many large and medium-sized cities in the Netherlands suffered from different types of problems and repeatedly called upon the national government for support. For example, the four largest cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) in 1994 published *Een Deltaplan voor de grote steden*, a 'rescue plan' for the big cities. The report requested national government action to reverse trends of population decline, relocation of employment to surrounding municipalities, increasing concentration of unemployment and dependency on social benefits, rising crime rates, and declining levels of safety and livability. In the same year, the national government started the *Grotestedenbeleid* (large cities policy), aimed at improving residential and living conditions as well as employment opportunities in the four largest cities (Van Kempen 2000). In subsequent years, another 27 large and medium-sized cities were added to the *Grotestedenbeleid*.

Since the turn of the century Dutch cities have experienced a revival. Clear evidence of the changed prospects is the strong population growth. A large majority of the 31 Dutch municipalities with over 100,000 residents experienced stronger population growth than the surrounding regions, as we discussed in the first issue of this year's series of *The Netherlands in Maps* on Dutch cities (Van Steen *et al.* 2016a).

In this last issue of this year's series, we will take a look into the future: the prospects for continued growth and welfare of the larger cities. In other words, how well are these cities equipped for the future?

### FUTURE-PROOF CONDITIONS

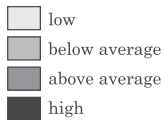
For the map in this issue, we have selected five different variables that indicate to which degree a

city is prepared for the future. Scores for these variables have been collected for the 31 municipalities with 100,000 or more residents in 2015 (cf. Van Steen *et al.* 2016a). The five variables are:

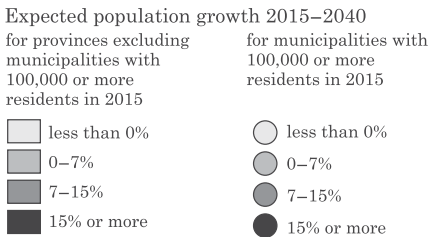
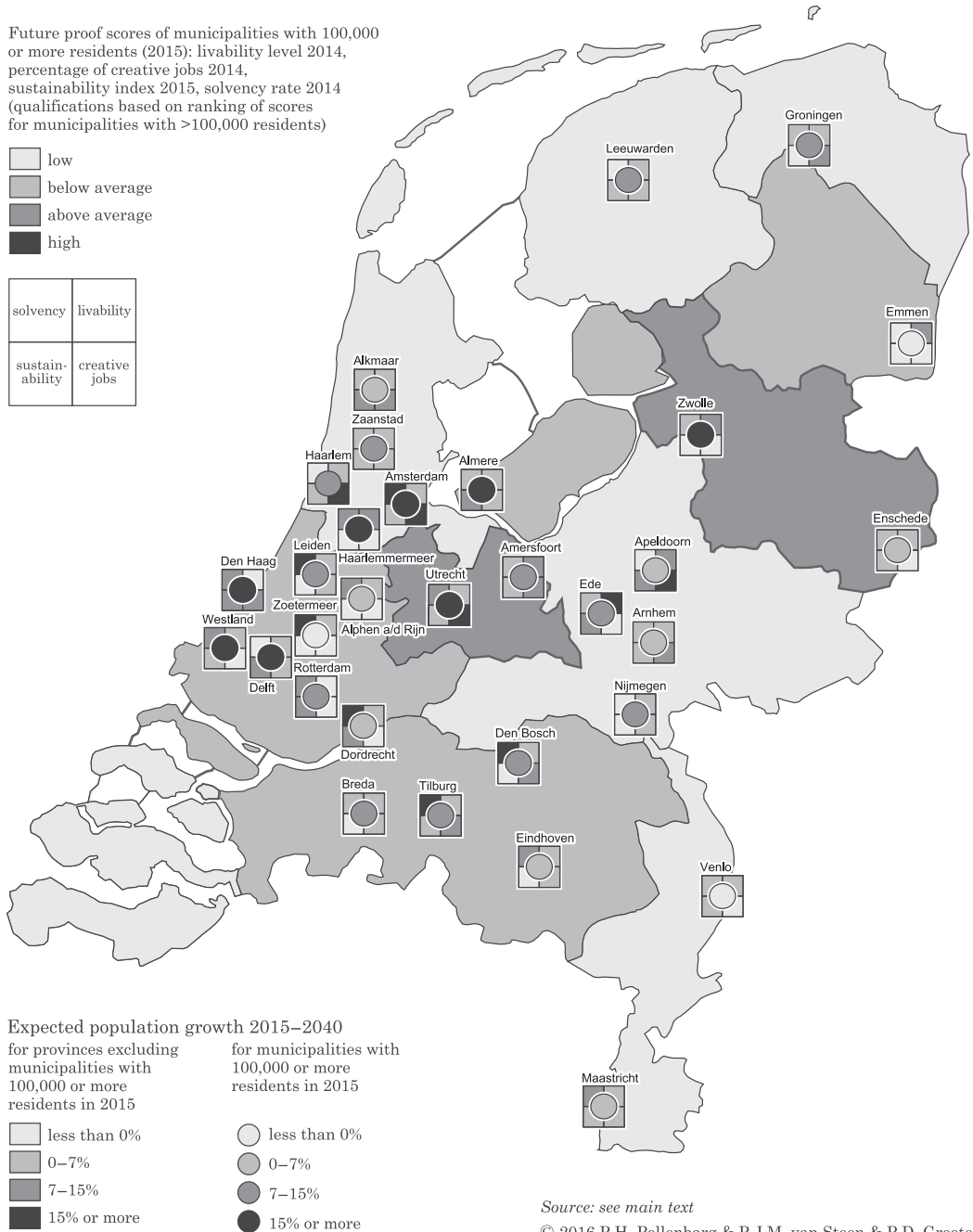
1. population forecasts, as published by PBL (Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency) (PBL 2016). We have used the forecast for population growth between 2015 and 2040. For the Netherlands as a whole, the population is expected to grow with just over 7 per cent. Of the 31 largest municipalities, 20 are likely to have an even stronger population growth;
2. livability scores for 2014, as published by the data portal of the Dutch government, in the 'Leefbaarometer 2.0' (BZK 2016). This variable is calculated using no less than 100 variables. Our assumption is that cities with a higher present score for livability are more likely to have above average scores for livability in the future, as the scores between 2002 to 2014 for most individual municipalities did not change significantly;
3. creative jobs as a percentage of the total number of jobs (LISA 2014). Although much criticised, Richard Florida's theory of the creative class as the engine behind economic growth has received a lot of attention, if not acceptance. Florida (2003) states that cities with an overrepresentation of jobs in the so-called creative class have better prospects of continued economic growth;
4. a score for sustainability, as published for the year 2015 by the 'Municipal Sustainability index' (GDI 2016). We have used the 10 sub-scores in the category 'Environment, nature and resources' to rank the largest cities; and
5. the solvency rate (in 2014) as a measure for the financial situation of the municipality, assuming that higher present solvency rates hint at a more healthy financial situation for the near future.

THE NETHERLANDS IN MAPS  
 Cities in the Netherlands (Part 5)  
**FUTURE-PROOF CITIES**

Future proof scores of municipalities with 100,000 or more residents (2015): livability level 2014, percentage of creative jobs 2014, sustainability index 2015, solvency rate 2014 (qualifications based on ranking of scores for municipalities with >100,000 residents)



solvency	livability
sustain-ability	creative jobs



Source: see main text

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For the last four variables, we have calculated the average score for the group of 31 municipalities of 100,000 or more residents (in 2015) and then distinguished two classes below average and two classes above average. For the first variable, population forecast 2015–2040, we used the expected population change values (population growth or decline percentages). In order to be able to put the population growth rates of the larger cities in perspective, we also calculated the population growth for the provinces in which the 100,000+ cities are located – but then, just as in the first issue of this year's series, excluding those larger cities. So the provincial values, also visualised in this issue's map, stand for aggregated population development in municipalities with less than 100,000 residents in 2015.

## RESULTS

The resulting map first shows that almost all cities show a mix of above-average and below-average future-proof scores. Low or high scores on one or two variables do apparently not go hand-in-hand with the scores on other variables. Only the two cities of Enschede and Venlo, both located close to the Eastern border with Germany, have below-average scores for all five variables. Not one city has above-average scores for all variables. There is only one case, The Hague, with a lower than average score for one variable (livability) and above-average scores for all other four variables. Interestingly, in our map on regional capitals (Van Steen *et al.* 2016b), The Hague was not even included as a regional capital because of the relative weak performance as a regional job centre.

A second finding is that 28 of the 31 largest cities are expected to show a population growth that is larger than that of the rest of the province. This is in line with other forecasts that show that a large part of the country's population growth will take place in cities rather than in rural areas (Nabielek *et al.* 2016). Only in the Eastern border cities of Emmen and Enschede, as well as in the city of Zoetermeer (developed as a satellite city for The Hague in the 1960s), a population development is expected that is significantly lagging behind that of the rest of the province. The map also shows that in six of the 12 provinces population decline is expected outside the largest cities. In this respect, the above average population growth outside the cities of Enschede and Zwolle in the Eastern province of Overijssel comes as a surprise.

All in all, cities that score highest on our future-proof index are Amsterdam, Utrecht and The Hague in the West, and Tilburg in the South. A second group of well performing cities includes both cities in the Western region of Randstad Holland (e.g. Almere, Delft, Haarlem and Leiden) as well as cities just outside this core region (e.g. Amersfoort, Ede, Apeldoorn, Den Bosch and Alkmaar). Rotterdam, presently the second largest city in the Netherlands, shows a moderate future-proof score predominantly because of the low scores on livability and percentage of creative jobs in the local economy. The cities that seem to be less well equipped for the future according to our classification include the already mentioned cities of Enschede, Emmen, Venlo and Zoetermeer, as well as Nijmegen and Alphen aan den Rijn.

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