For the Quality of Limburg
PEL2014:

Executive of the Province of Limburg, 6 May 2014
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9 Dynamic, flexible PEL system

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- Limburg Knowledge Axis
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- daily urban system
- triple helix
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- branching
- IBA
- Sustainable urbanization ladder
- Limburg Quality Menu
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4. Visions of the regions

Vision of North Limburg

See also Table 2.

4.1 North Limburg: Profile

The primary spatial, economic, and social characteristics of the North Limburg region are best described by two dominant and defining axes: a fast-moving, highly dynamic East-West axis, and a North-South axis more oriented towards quality of life and experience.

The spatial axis most people know is the hard, dynamic, economically oriented East-West axis. It is the world of infrastructure and logistics, agrofood and market gardening, as well as the creation industry in all its aspects. Partners in the region work to develop the Greenport, promote innovation and education, and enhance cooperation with neighbouring regions. Thanks to its strategic location on the East-West axis and the proximity of major markets, this region makes a significant contribution to the businesses in the Netherlands.

But the region also has another face and a decidedly slower pace of life. A world of peace, quiet and beauty, with the Meuse river as prominent quality axis. The terraced landscape of the Meuse Valley is not the only quality. The landscape is punctuated by river meanders, nature and forest areas, marshy bogs, drained areas, and a rich variety of agricultural activities. It is the variety of landscapes, both large and small-scale, nature and culture, vicinity of cities and towns, economic activities, and facilities that make North Limburg so pleasantly diverse. This is the world of the good life, with fine food, art, culture, history, and, of course, fine living. Here, the economic driver is the leisure economy.
In the orbit of the core city of Venlo, you find the second urban core, Venray, and the (more rural) cores of Horst, Reuver, and Panningen. Each adds its unique strength (living, retail, services, and employment) to the profile of some part, or all of, the region.

At the tip of North Limburg, the Maasduinen municipalities (with Gennepe and Nieuw Bergen as the most important cores) opt for a profile in keeping with the unique natural character of the area (with living and recreation), distinguishing themselves from the more urban cores of the region. This makes them characteristic of the profile of the North-South axis, with a bilateral orientation.

The most northerly municipality in Limburg, Mook-Middelaar, leans primarily towards the Nijmegen-Arnhem region, and consequently is a part of that region.

Together, Venlo-Venray are profiled as a logistics hotspot, with good connections over road, rail, and water and with space for development. Meanwhile, a robust tourist cluster with facilities for day use recreation is developing around De Midden-Peelweg. In the rural area, we see ongoing development of agrofood and horticulture. Around Venlo there is a very strong emphasis on market gardening (particularly greenhouse growing). In the Peel municipalities of Limburg (Horst aan de Maas, Peel, and Maas &Venray), livestock farming contributes to the development of the Greenport. What distinguishes the Greenport Venlo from other greenport regions is the variety and extent of agricultural and farming activities, its crossovers with the creation industry and logistics, its spatial growth potential, and its international setting.

A number of initiatives, some (but not all) in a Euregional context, are intended to combat the negative impact of the border as ‘barrier,’ and in the process enhance the position as a border region. These are generally initiatives on living, tourism and recreation, as well as in other economic sectors.

Two guiding principles distinguish the region’s approach to issues.

The first is the application of cradle-to-cradle principles, in which the region is a leader. Principles of sustainability, and the efforts to ensure that processes no longer generate waste but only by-products that can be reused as raw materials for other processes, are the central focus here.

A second principle is the transformation towards a clear social/sociological profile focused on a more sustainable society. Grass-roots initiatives from local residents and business that make a valuable contribution to a participation society, less dependent on government functions, are encouraged.
Explanation
North Limburg in figures
In its eight municipalities, North Limburg has a total of approximately 280,000 inhabitants. The region is a part of the Euregion Rhine-Meuse North, population of approximately 1.8 million, with its largest cities Mönchengladbach (266,000), Krefeld (242,000), and Venlo (100,000).

Economic conditions in North Limburg are good. In 2008, the GDP was €8.7 billion (in 2000, this figure was just €6.5 billion). The 18,000 hectares of horticultural production in Greenport Venlo represent a production value estimated at €1 billion. The neighbouring agricultural region AgrarregionNiederrhein has a strong horticulture sector.

North Limburg has over 20,000 business establishments employing a total of 140,000 people. Industry is the largest employer, with 26,000 employees, followed by the care sector (21,000), retail (13,000), and agriculture (12,000). Other strongly represented sectors are logistics, recreation, and tourism. At present, there are already large groups of labour migrants (an estimated 20,000), primarily from the new EU countries in Central and Eastern Europe, working in the region, and their numbers are expected to continue to grow.

Important cooperative relationships with neighbouring regions PLEASE NOTE: Maastricht Health Campus must be changed to Brightlands Maastricht Health Campus; Noord Limburg must be changed to Noord-Limburg

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regio</th>
<th>Soort relatie</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brabants Oost-Brabant &amp; 5 sterren regio</td>
<td>Samenwerking binnen de volledige keten van de sector agrofood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarregion Niederrhein</td>
<td>Versterken relatie met de eveneens sterke agrofood sector aan Duitse zijde met de potentie om zich gezamenlijk te profileren als grootste agrofoodgebied van Europa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regio Arnhem-Nijmegen</td>
<td>Veelal woon- en onderzoek/kaderwaarsch, beschikbaarheid, (culturele) voorzieningen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wageningen</td>
<td>Onderwijs en kennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuid-Limburg (Maastricht Health Campus)</td>
<td>Onderwijs en kennis, campus ontwikkeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land van Cuijk / Boxmeer</td>
<td>Samenwerking op het gebied van onderwijs, zorg en economie vooral met gemeenten in de top van Noord Limburg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trends and developments
The census forecasts indicate that the regional population will remain relatively constant in the coming years, and begin falling slightly as from 2020 (by about 14,000 by 2040). A decrease in the number of households will not be seen for the coming 20 years, but will only start to emerge around 2030. Nonetheless, it is a good idea to be prepared for this.

A compensating factor is the positive influx as a result of immigration from abroad. Statistics Netherlands expects this immigration to continue for the coming years, but in the long term it will not compensate for the overall decline in population. The region’s ambition is to receive these immigrants decently and to successfully integrate them.

The demographic trends are already being seen in certain areas. As the population ages, we are seeing numbers of primary school students decline, and this trend is gradually spreading into the higher levels of education. Meanwhile, demands for services are changing in other ways (like increasing demands on the care sector). Vacancy rates in the retail property sector are considerable (partly as a result of the changing population demographics, but also as an effect of the dramatic rise in internet shopping), and will continue to rise unless policy steps are taken to address this.

There is also the acute decline in the working population. The expectation is that within a time frame of three to four years, the impact of a shortage of labour will begin to be felt, perhaps most strongly in the technical and healthcare fields. This problem will be too great to
be solved by tapping every available job-seeker. And it will be of particular concern in a region where employment opportunities are expected to grow in the same period.

The strategic location of the region in combination with the presence of top sectors Logistics, Agrofood and the Creation industry make for a substantial flow of products and goods through the region. And this flow is expected to continue to grow, in part as a result of ongoing containerization and the opening of the Second Maasvlakte (MIRT study, Greenport Venlo 2012). Together with the provincial and national governments, the region is investing in upgrading the port facilities and rail connections (Venlo rail terminal and port facilities at Venlo and Venray). Potential bottlenecks and problem areas in the road infrastructure are being monitored.

Likewise, in the rural area, we see a broad range of developments. A further reduction in the number of agricultural establishments is expected, along with an increase in scale of those that remain. New establishment of agricultural companies is less of a priority than reuse of existing locations. Quality of company, compatibility, and consultation with the local environment are critical success factors – in other words, room for development must go hand-in-hand with investments in the green-blue environment. Furthering the correct economic and spatial/economic development will require establishing the connection with knowledge development; only this will allow us to innovate and increase the sustainability of the agricultural production chains on an ongoing basis.

The qualities of the rural area, and the appealing balance of cities and towns, history, art, and culture make North Limburg an attractive area for tourism and recreation. It this variety that is so distinctive and that makes the area so attractive. The region sees considerable tourist traffic, and this is expected to continue to grow.

Climate change will lead to more weather extremes, with, as a result, both higher floodwaters and shortages of fresh water. Flood safety is an area of attention in the Meuse region process, with a priority on bottlenecks in the built-up areas of Venlo and Mook. Area development, such as the Ooijen-Wanssum project, offers a significant contribution to resolving this and other problems in the region. Fresh water is a primary production factor for the agrofood sector. Adequate availability of fresh water in periods of drought is an issue that merits more attention.

4.1
2 North Limburg: Ambitions
North Limburg has big ambitions. The challenge lies in connecting the strength and qualities of the two axes outlined above and facilitating their reinforcing each other. Where will the region be in 2025-2030?

The region is making optimum use of its strategic position as a logistics hub between the main ports in the Netherlands and Flanders and the German hinterland. Infrastructural connections are good, and the region is home to a variety of top sectors and combines this with a quality living environment. The logistics hub manifests itself not only in the form of important international road connections, but also, with the partners on the Rhine and Ruhr, as a logistics hotspot for the four big ports (primarily Rotterdam and Antwerp, but secondarily Amsterdam and Zeebrugge as well).

The agrofood sector in this region measures up to the best in the world and continues to hold a leading role in agro production, agro business, and agro logistics. It gets maximum benefit from the designation as Greenport and the campus-like development that this entails. Thanks in part to its good location for Brainport, the region has a strong and sustainable economic
structure and holds a leading position internationally in sustainability and the creation industry. It maintains its leading position in the application of cradle-to-cradle principles.

The region has a large flow of visitor traffic, with a heavy emphasis on tourism and recreation. Cluster formation is seen in the tip of North Limburg and De Peel/Peelbergen, but the attractive combination of beautiful nature areas, rural living, and cultural history give rise to initiatives across the entire region. The ambition is to facilitate the continued growth and development of this sector while preserving the area values (as Limburg top sector).

In 2025-2030, the quality of the living environment is high. Cities and towns have developed into vibrant communities with a strong social structure and identity, an attractive cultural climate and adequate services.
It is also a safe region: The economic and residential centres in the region are sufficiently secured against the increasing risks of high water.

The combination of strong economic structure and attractive, vibrant cities and towns encourages young people to stay in the region after finishing school, or return to the region later, and keeps the region attractive for people from elsewhere. This is also a factor in keeping the labour market from negatively impacting the economic functioning of the region. Likewise, it is in keeping with the ambition to maintain a complete spectrum of educational offerings within the region, one that addresses the needs of the business sector.

**The major challenges and tasks**

**General**
The tasks facing North Limburg are primarily in the fields of innovation (better cooperation in combination with the cradle-to-cradle principles), labour market (attracting labour from outside the region), and education (establishment of higher education, good opportunities for work placement or mobility of students in intermediate vocational education, Greenport-related campus development). In all these areas, the challenge is to maintain the focus on the top sectors in the region, being horticulture and agro food, logistics, the creation industry, and high-tech systems (such as document valley).
The region must profile itself better, not only overall but in relation to the Limburg knowledge axis, within the clusters of healthcare (focus on Maastricht), technology (as logical component of Brainport), and food & flowers (in combination with Niederrhein and the growing horticulture sector in East Brabant, important contact with Wageningen University).

**Greenport and Klavertje 4**
The strong presence in the agribusiness sector in this region is made up of the broad chain of primary production (open ground, greenhouse, and intensive livestock farming) with hybridization and processing of agricultural products in combination with the Grubbenvorst auction (and the neighbouring Herungen auction). All these have led to the area's designation as Greenport. Although the various different agricultural functions are found in a broad swath within the area, these functions are concentrated within the ‘Klavertje 4’ area, the quadrant stretching between the areas of the municipalities of Venlo, Peel en Maas, and Horst aan de Maas. From a spatial planning perspective, the initial definition of this area can be found in the PEL supplement Klavertje 4 (2009). This PEL supplement is based on a business plan for Klavertje 4 that was also the basis
for the establishment of a development corporation for the area. In 2012, the municipalities in question
defined a structural vision for the Klavertje 4 area.
Alongside the agricultural functions, the area also has extensive logistics activities, and offers possibilities for
the creation industry.
The site of the Floriade 2012 has been largely set aside as a centre for innovation, research, knowledge
development, and knowledge transfer. Ultimately, the Klavertje 4 area will be subdivided into two areas, a
Work landscape and a Knowledge landscape. BrightlandsGreenportcampus Venlo is one of the four
campuses within the Limburg knowledge axis (see section 5.3.3.1 on Campuses).

Accessibility
Permanently good accessibility by road, water, rail, and air is vital to the region. With the expected increase
in goods transport, it is critical to identify bottlenecks in the infrastructure network and deal with them before
they become problems. Priorities here are:
- the intermodal transshipment points of rail terminal Tradeport, barge terminal Venlo and port
  Venray/Wanssum
- the specific bottlenecks in the main infrastructure A67, traffic flow on the A67- A73 at the
  Zaarderheiken interchange, and the N270 as connection with Brainport and East Brabant/the 5-star
  region
- the Meuse Line rail connection (doubling and electrification) towards Nijmegen-Amhem-Wageningen
  and international rail connection Eindhoven-Venlo-Düsseldorf/Duisburg
- Preserving accessibility of regional transshipment points and economic hotspots

Better accessibility of public services by means of a full-fledged (ideally cross-border) regional public
transportation system is a priority. Integration between transport modalities within the context of the Social
Support Act and conventional forms of public transport presents an opportunity here. This must be worked
out in more detail for the purposes of preparing the new regional public transportation concession.

Marketing rural and cultural qualities
The rural and cultural quality must be marketed better, as a distinguishing tourism product. Particularly at the
Tip of Limburg and around Peel and Peelbergen, the opportunities for the further development of the top
sector position of Limburg's leisure economy must be utilized. Investments in developing and maintaining
people-oriented nature should be primarily focused here.
Investments must be made in an attractive social and cultural climate with adequate services. Opportunities to combine this with an enhancement of the tourism product must be optimally utilized.

Transformation of housing stock
North Limburg is characterized by an attractive environment for home, work, and living. Given that population growth is essentially zero, the existing stock of housing will have to undergo a transformation, primarily involving infilling, modification, and functional change, with only limited expansion in the vicinity of small cores. Expansion via outlying areas only on an extremely exceptional basis, on the assumption of construction for own use. This should address accommodation for special needs groups (urgent housing needs cases) and a response to vacancy levels.

See also Table 6.2.

Tasks in retail sector
Venlo has an important recreational shopping function. The city centre has all the qualities to develop further, and has a good mix of facilities, cultural history, and artisan businesses. The task is to offer development opportunities within the compact city centre. Historically, Venlo city centre has attracted many German visitors. Also, its selection as best city centre for the 2013-2015 period is evidence of its many qualities. Venray, as the second shopping city of North Limburg, has a good mixture of city centre functions. Here, the most important task is to improve the approach (routing).

Likewise, the city centres of Gennep, Horst, and Panningen have bright future prospects. The tasks for these city centres are to retain the general needs shopping function while underscoring the recreational shopping function. One way this is being addressed is by investments in public space.

For the two centres serving urban districts, Blerick and Tegelen, the task is harder. In the past, these centres occupied a superlocal city centre function, with both a general needs shopping function and a limited recreational function. For the future, the task is to retain the general needs shopping function within a compact area.

The four local centres Meijel, Nieuw-Bergen, Sevenum, and Reuver represent a vulnerable category. The task for these areas revolves around offering a compact general needs shopping function within a compact area. These centres are very important to liveability, which is why the municipalities have invested or will be investing in them.

The task for the three clusters of peripheral retail (Venlo Trefcentrum, Inter Chalet Horst, and De Brier in Venray) is to make sure the developments are complementary, and not threatening, to retail in the city centre areas. In addition, they must be sufficiently attractive by offering a complete retail spectrum, and potentially in combination with other functions.

The map on the following page shows the retail areas broken down by service area.

See also Table 6.3.

Space for the Meuse
Broadly speaking, we can say that the region's ambitions are largely feasible in the space already available or set aside in the plans. The only aspect that may ultimately lead to new demands on space is the protection against high water risks. Of particular concern is the Buggenum-Venlo trace, which faces another significant task on top of the measures already called for (Ooijen-Wanssum and MasterplanMaasdalNoord).
The extent to which the space claims may conflict with existing or already allocated space within the various other sectors must still be reviewed.

These ambitions and challenges are not something the government can succeed in alone, although it can facilitate with aspects such as good spatial policy. Province and region support the development, drawing on perspectives from facilitative planning or ‘invitational physical planning’ (*uitnodigingsplanologie*).

See also Table 7.3.

4.2 Central Limburg: Vision

See also Table 2.

4.2 Central Limburg: Profile

Central Limburg is a compact, attractive, and varied area in which to live, work, and reside. It is a region strategically located between the Randstad, Antwerp, and the technology centre of Eindhoven on the one
hand and the European hinterland on the other; moreover, it occupies a central point among the knowledge agglomerations in Limburg, in the Netherlands, and internationally. There are five universities and campuses established within the 50 km around Central Limburg.

The region’s central focus is on the sectors in which the region is traditionally strong: the creation industry, logistics, and agribusiness. In addition to these, Leisure & Retail and Care are identified as economic key focus areas within Keyport 2020. These sectors are important for the employment function in the region as a whole or parts thereof, and are also important in terms of identity. Keyport 2020, also referred to as the triple helix, is one of the partners in Brainport 2020 South-east Netherlands, and has the goal of sustainably enhancing the economic structure of the region and improving the business climate.

The region has a strong SME sector and a number of large companies that are world leaders in their fields. It has an above-average percentage of creation companies that not only are the buoys of the regional economy but also are drivers for development and innovation in the region and beyond. The agricultural sector occupies a major place in the identity and economy of Central Limburg. It is both a spatial and economic cornerstone, as well as a major supply area for Greenport Venlo. Its nature and scope have changed dramatically over the last 30 years. On the one hand, these changes have revolved around identification and increase of scale, and on the other, they have revolved around extensive education and expansion (land-based farming). Nearly 20% of turnover in the region comes directly or indirectly from agribusiness.

Tourism and the leisure economy represent major economic potential for the region (with cross-border impact). On the one hand, the region is an attractive destination for both domestic and foreign tourists, and on the other hand, the leisure offerings are an important draw for attracting and keeping a labour force (including knowledge workers). The region has an attractive tourism profile. The distinctive tourism/recreational character of Central Limburg is defined primarily by the variety of tourist interest and recreational facilities at a relatively short distance from each other. It is made up of a charming tapestry of culturally and historically valuable smaller and larger
core cities, embedded in a natural environment (four regional/cross-border nature parks), an attractive landscape, shopping tourism (such as the Designer Outlet Center), and the central location for the extensive Maasplassen lake region. The Maasplassen is the largest water sports recreation area for the nearby German hinterland.

Small scale, unique to area, the good life, peace & quiet, and accessibility/low threshold are the major underlying values for tourism in Central Limburg. The figure on the next page (taken from the Tourism and Recreational Vision for Central Limburg, Central Limburg, October 2013) summarizes the core qualities and underlying values.

The Meuse Valley, with the Meuse River itself and the Maasplassen, is flanked by a terraced landscape, with on the German side the imposing steep edges leading to an expansive forest and nature area, the heart of the Meuse-Swalm-Nette area, and the river valley landscape on the Roer. On the west side, the terraces gradually transition through a brushy, sandy dune zone into the brooks and meadows of a heathered and loamy landscape, with rolling meadows and wooded areas along the border with Noord-Brabant to the north, finally becoming the peat moors. Every landscape type has its unique core qualities in the form of lot patterns, access routes, fortification structures, rural decor, and architectural style.

The region has a great deal of nature, four regional/cross-border parks, with beautiful nature areas that border on or extend into the province of Brabant, Belgium, and Germany (the national parks Meinweg and
the Grote Peel, GrensParkKempen-Broek, and nature park Meuse-Swalm-Nette, respectively). Additionally, west of the Meuse there is the Leu Valley, and on the eastern bank the exquisite landscape of the Roerdal. The large nature areas and forests along the borders with Germany and Noord-Brabant and on the river dune complexes, together with the major areas along the Meuse, Roer, and in the river valleys, make up the kind of ladder structure that is extremely important to the flora, fauna, and water systems.

The region's two urban centres are Roermond and Weert. Each adds its unique strength (living, services, employment) to the profile of the region. Roermond is the Retail Capital, the attractions of which include its Designer Outlet Center, drawing 4.5 million visitors a year. Weert is a living and working city, with a focus on the creation industry and logistics. Opportunities for crossovers with other sectors like agro food and care are optimally utilized. Weert is oriented primarily towards south-east Brabant (in particular, Eindhoven), while Roermond, in turn, looks towards the German hinterland, primarily with its attractive retail offerings. Heythuysen and Echt are rural main cores with supralocal and regional services. Without its vibrant countryside, there would be no Central Limburg. Village and city depend on each other. This is true anywhere, but certainly in Central Limburg, where the quality of the landscape (including the Meuse Lakes) and the natural environment represent important added value.

The region is easily accessible and connected, with a high density of road, water, and rail connections in the region or close by. The motorways A2 and A73, which come together at the Vonderen interchange, form a Y that conveniently provides a well-connected North-South thoroughfare for the region. For East-West travel, the main connection is the N280, which makes an important regional connection axis between Weert and Roermond, and feeds into the A52 towards Mönchengladbach and the German Ruhr urban conglomeration, with to the west the A2 leading towards Eindhoven/Maastricht. The N564 is the region's connection to Belgium.

Rail connections are the Eindhoven-Maastricht line and the regional Meuse line Roermond-Venlo-Nijmegen. The Meuse and the channels towards Noord-Brabant are the water transport routes, with the inland port of Maasbracht and the number of regional transshipment locations. Good air connections are provided by any of several nearby international airports.

### Explanation of profile

**Central Limburg in figures**

- The region has over 235,000 inhabitants (2013)
- 18,000 businesses
- Size of working population 116,000 (2013) with a relatively high proportion of jobs in commerce (19%), care (17%), and industry (15%).
- Nearly 20% of the region’s turnover comes directly or indirectly from agribusiness.
- Commuters: Central Limburg has a negative commuter balance of -9.3%. 28% of the working population who live in the region work outside of it (Etil, 2011). For the province as a whole, negative commuter balance is -4%.
- Central Limburg’s gross regional product (GRP) is 7.4 billion euros (regions in economic perspective) Expenditures on tourist holidays €62 million (tourism trend report Limburg 2012-2013)
- Number of overnight stays 2,253,000 (tourism trend report Limburg 2012-2013)

**Trends**

There is no blueprint for the future of Central Limburg. There are so many things happening in the region and outside of it that entail challenges for the future. The most significant challenges are described at section 4.2.3.
The numbers of the population of Central Limburg are changing, but the changes in terms of demographics are even more dramatic (ageing population). Central Limburg has been designated by the national government as an 'anticipation region,' a region facing the risk of population decline. The demographic transition will have consequences for Central Limburg in a number of areas, like living (residential vacancies: first an increasing number of households followed by a decrease, meaning that there is still a need for new construction for now, but afterwards there will be a surplus of homes), space, education, care and welfare services, and work. For example, a decreasing working population will mean a shortage on the labour market. This will make finding suitable and qualified personnel one of the challenges. The region already has a shortage of technically trained personnel, not only at the higher education level but at the secondary vocational education level as well.

In a number of areas (homes, stores, offices, agricultural construction, industrial parks), we will be faced with higher levels of vacancy than are desired. Additionally, there will be a mismatch between qualitative supply and demand. The need is not for more of the same, but rather for a different quality.

The increasing vacancy in property across such a broad front, along with the disappearance of services, has consequences for liveability, both in village cores in the rural area and in neighbourhoods and communities in the urban area. Making choices and looking for solutions (new working forms, dynamic stock management, promoting community learning, more initiative in the hands of the citizen) to address vacancy and liveability are two of the biggest challenges.

Like the rest of the Netherlands, Limburg as a whole and Central Limburg in particular are dependent on major macroeconomic developments. The financial crisis put the topic of new and different forms of financing for businesses and governmental institutions on the agenda. Generic control procedures and traditional learning models are increasingly inadequate, government spending is on the decline, and the market is certainly not going to pick up the slack. This represents an interesting challenge in developing new alliances, instruments, and earning models.

The worldwide demand for raw materials is rising with global population growth and increasing standards of living. Supply is clearly lagging, and this drives up the price of raw materials, encourages speculation, and aggravates scarcities. It is not a given that the supply will be able to keep up with demand in the long term. To make our standard of living more sustainable, we must continue to innovate in order to provide for our standards of living within the limits of what the earth has to give. A promising perspective is the circular economy, a systemic innovation that will allow the economy to grow even as it reduces the burden on the ecosystem. Another promising perspective is the transition to a bio-based economy (see 5.1). Accelerating the bio-based economy is a challenge the region faces with its partners.

Climate change will lead to more weather extremes, to greater flood water peaks in the Meuse and tributaries, and also to longer periods of drought. Here, there is a substantial task that has yet to be fully detailed (e.g. between Buggenum and Venlo). This is being incorporated into the Delta programme.

4.2.2 Central Limburg: Ambitions
The core ambition for Central Limburg is retaining and enhancing an excellent climate for residents and businesses; this is entirely in keeping with the ambitions for Limburg as a whole. This makes use of the unique border location between Belgium and Germany, and takes the best possible advantage of demographic trends. The central strategic location of Central Limburg in Brainport South-east Netherlands, between Greenport Venlo in the campuses in South Limburg, in combination with the outstanding accessibility and good living and working climate, is being utilized optimally.
In light of these ambitions, the emphasis is placed on a strong economic structure and the quality of life. The region has leveraged its strength in the creation industry, agribusiness, leisure & retail, logistics, and care sectors to take advantage of the economic opportunities. Crossovers between these sectors and with other sectors are being utilized optimally. The bio-based economy has been further profiled and proven profitable. The agricultural sector has further developed as an innovative sector that is a perfect match for the DNA of Central Limburg.

Central Limburg is known as a cohesive area with a characteristic variety of tourism/recreation offerings within reach: attraction through variation (cross-border, water, nature, culture, shopping). The economic strength is reinforced by establishing the connections between these options. The Maasplassen area is easily accessible and famous as a low-threshold water recreation area.
(including for visitors from the nearby German hinterland), and the economic potential of the lakes is being utilized optimally and sustainably.

Nature lovers know Central Limburg as the green heart of Limburg, with regional and cross-border natural parks, and it is also known as an attractive landscape with peace and quiet, shopping tourism, cultural history, and hospitality.

Total expenditures, number of overnight stays, and employment have grown enormously. The region has set a growth target of approximately 33% in 2030 (as compared to the 2012 situation). The area is perfect for the tourism equivalent of channel surfing: every day something different. Visitors can be hiking one day in breathtaking nature, decide to go waterskiing the next morning, and cap it off with some fun shopping in the afternoon.

The living and working environment in Central Limburg has a lot of appeal; people feel at home here. There are sufficient numbers of homes on the housing market, of the right quality and in the right location. The cities and towns have developed further into vital communities with a strong social structure and an adequate level of services (social, cultural, education), with city and country going hand in hand.

4.2.3 The major challenges and tasks

General
Retaining and enhancing an excellent living and business climate is one of Central Limburg’s big challenges. The PEL2014 focuses on the physical-spatial tasks and choices. Of course, we cannot forget human capital as an important element of this climate. Central Limburg faces (as, indeed, does Limburg as a whole) both a qualitative and quantitative task.
Further strengthening the economic structure with a focus on sectors that are strong for the region (the creation industry, agribusiness, logistics, leisure & retail, care), promoting innovations, and utilizing the crossovers between these sectors and others are important tasks for the region. It can be generally stated that the companies are working well with the existing conditions for establishment (infrastructure and work locations).

**Accessibility**

A good spatial infrastructure is vital for utilizing and enhancing the regional economy. Points for attention are regional accessibility and national and international connections. For Central Limburg, these are:
- The structural widening of the A2 Weert-Eindhoven (for optimum accessibility of Eindhoven, important to serve Weert's orientation on Eindhoven)
- Upgrading the A2/A73 Junction at St. Joost (smooth connection from A2 to A73)
- N280 and N266 are points for improving accessibility
- Improving the Meuse line (public transportation connection, electrification)
- Stations Baexem and Haelen (stations as an anchor point for enhancing the urban interaction area)
- International train connection for passenger transport between Weert and Antwerp

**Work locations**

Central Limburg has an adequate supply of offices and business parks. The regional logistic industrial parks along the A2, BedrijvenparkMidden-Limburg and KampershoekNoord 2.0/BedrijvenparkPannenweg, offer sufficient opportunities to utilize and enhance the regional economy. BedrijventerreinZevennellen offers capacity for wet and heavy industry and opportunities for energy transition and bio-based economy. Enhancing shipping-related industrial parks in Maasgouw also requires attention. It is not just about quantity, but quality is a critical concern. As such, the main task is growth in quality without increasing quantity. Dynamic stock management is a key focus area - the 'new green' (see 3.2.3). This is a vision that is being worked out in collaboration with the region into regional industrial park and office space visions.

**Tourism – recreation**

Tourism/recreation is one of the most important economic drivers for the Central Limburg region. Here, the strength to focus on is the variety of offerings within a short distance (nature, water, culture, shopping tourism, and cross-border).

With this versatility in mind, there is an important task in, on the one hand, further profiling the Maasplassen area as water sports area and top water recreation area in the Netherlands and the Euregion, and on the other hand, further enhancing the existing strong points and ensuring that the variation is recognized (cross-
border, nature, culture and shopping tourism), this last in part by enhancing the main access ports at regional/cross-border nature areas and highlighting existing cultural history.
Extending the season – Central Limburg is an 'all-weather area' – and enhancing the economic strength in connecting various initiatives are also significant challenges and tasks.
The region wishes to market the existing qualities:
- profiling the Napoleonsbaan as a 'slow-down route,' a connecting road between the Meuse/Meuse villages and the hinterland (cultural landscapes and nature).
- the A2 as showcase of knowledge/expertise and sightseeing for the Central Limburg region (not an argument for attractions alongside the motorway, but in order to better bring the qualities of the region to the attention of those passing through).
- image-making of the N280 as leisure route: access road for retail, the Maasplassen lakes, the 'green heart,' and the tourism/recreation developments around Weert.

**Flood protection**
The municipalities have defined an inter-municipality structural vision for the Maasplassen lakes, with the ambition of optimally and sustainably utilizing the economic potential of the Maasplassen lakes and striking a balance between the individual functions. This will facilitate profiling the Maasplassen lakes as a concept.
This vision takes into account the long-term flooding protection measures and the preservation and development of nature and landscape. The Meuse Delta Programme calls for certain extra measures, particularly in the Buggenum-Venlo trajectory (see 7.3).

**Transformation of housing stock**
Central Limburg is characterized by an attractive environment for home, work, and living. It is a differentiated living area that will see a demographic shift over the coming 10-15 years, and it is the task of the housing market to move with this transition. The region has initiated a regional structural vision of home, care, and living environment that answers to the need for dynamic stock management. This comprises working on the quality of the existing stock with quality improvement, restructuring (transformation task for care property and the rental sector), and where required, demolition and newcomers (including labour migrants). It also means scaling back the plans not yet in implementation that do not contribute to the vision of the future (see 6.2).

**Facilities**
The demographic transition will, in due course, also have a significant impact on the services at the municipal and regional levels. To gain insight into the mismatch between demand and supply, and the optimization options with the applicable criteria and values, the region has begun compiling a Transition Atlas of services, to cover the themes of education, sports, care and welfare, and culture.
Like elsewhere, the Central Limburg region is facing rising demand for care and rising care costs. This is forcing us to think about innovation and crossovers with other sectors to enable us to offer that care more efficiently and cost-consciously. Clustering is found around the CIRO (in Horn) as expertise centre for chronic organ failure and Daelzicht (Heel), working to establish innovative connections between care, daily activity, and recreation for people with disabilities.

**Border location**
The location of the border offers many opportunities in Central Limburg. The Euregional daily urban system, which extends between 30 and 40 kilometres beyond the borders, is of particularly great importance to housing, industry, the labour market, shopping and recreation. For Central Limburg, it is primarily relevant to
the relationship Weert-Eindhoven and the interaction with the dense population concentrations of the adjoining German territory. In some locations, the opportunities are being fully utilized, for example in shopping (DOC-Roermond) and recreation in nature areas (the national parks Groote Peel and the Meinweg and GrensParkKempen-Broek, and nature park Meuse-Swalm-Nette). But there are still many areas in which the border continues to present various barriers (administrative, linguistic, and perhaps most significantly, cultural). The challenge is to eliminate these barriers. One way to do this, for example, might be for each country to make the many potential short-distance jobs abroad more accessible (including physically).
4.3 VISION OF SOUTH LIMBURG

See also Table 2.

4.3

1 South Limburg: Profile

A significant part of South Limburg's attractiveness lies in the presence of densely populated urban areas at relatively short distances from each other (comparable to the density of the Dutch Randstad urban agglomeration), interspersed with the unique South Limburg National Landscape. This hilly landscape in combination with Maastricht's historic city centre bestows an extraordinary quality on this region. South Limburg is home to over 60,000 people, more than half of all inhabitants of the province. It is a part of a European region with a rich palette of economic top sectors. The sectors that support the South Limburg economy are Chemistry & Materials, Life Sciences & Health, and Smart Services. The BrightlandsChemelot Campus in Sittard-Geleen and the Brightlands Maastricht Health Campus serve as the two major growth engines of the region, and make a substantial contribution towards developing the Brainport South-east Netherlands and Knowledge Axis into an innovative, sustainable, and international economic top region. They contribute to an excellent business climate, and as such are an important support for the structure of the Limburg economy. Additionally, South Limburg is strong in new energy, logistics, retail, and leisure.

In short, South Limburg is a very attractive region in which to live, work, and play. At the same time, there are threats to this potential. Nowhere is the impact of the unique border location and the demographic trends in Limburg felt so strongly as in the south of the province. Economically, South Limburg can be qualified as an 'intermediary region' between the metropolitan regions of the Randstad, the Ruit (Flanders), and the Ruhr (Germany). There are relatively few accessible jobs on the Dutch side, which limits the resilience of the regional and local economy. This is compounded by South Limburg's vacancy problem (housing, offices, overnight recreation, business parks, and retail): there is too much of everything, and this demands a clear vision and, above all, direction. The present vision for the region has been drafted based on this broadly supported observation.
Nonetheless, the region’s unique location in Europe also offers major opportunities: At the province’s narrowest point, South Limburg has 6 km of border with the rest of the Netherlands and 220 km with neighbouring countries. Thanks to its international position, there is huge potential for the economy, the labour market, and tourism, and South Limburg can potentially make a massive contribution to the Dutch economy. There are clear opportunities in cross-border relations, with Liege, Hasselt, Genk, and in particular Aachen, the nearest densely populated region, which itself already has a robust and steadily growing knowledge economy.

Increasingly, South Limburg is growing into a daily urban system, with a high density of links between the urban and rural areas. Travel distances in South Limburg tend to be relatively short. Additionally, economies of scale and reorganizations in the care sector (including hospitals), culture, and leisure more frequently necessitate people travelling to another city, core, or municipality to make use of them. There are also structural partnerships emerging between educational institutions, governmental institutions, and the private sector (triple helix) within the same daily urban system.

**Explanation of profile**

**South Limburg in figures**

The eighteen municipalities of South Limburg are home to a total of 608,000 people. A total of 3.9 million people live across the entire Euregio (50 km radius around South Limburg, within a maximum travel time of one hour). The region’s GRP is €19.4 billion.

South Limburg has over 40,000 business establishments, representing approximately 277,500 jobs. The healthcare sector is the biggest employer, with 51,500 employees, closely followed by industry & construction (51,000), financial institutions, business services & ICT (50,000), and wholesale & retail (36,000). Other sectors of some significance are education (19,500), government (15,500), hospitality (14,500), and transportation (12,000). Finally, there are the sectors culture, sport & recreation (6,500), other services (6,000), and agriculture (3,000). Approximately 20,000 jobs of the numbers cited above are active in the tourism and leisure sector.

**4.3**

**2 South Limburg: Ambition**

Within the integral area task for South Limburg, economic structure enhancement will be the priority for the coming years. As an element of Brainport South-east Netherlands, the ambition is to further develop the area as a strong knowledge region in contact with the knowledge regions Eindhoven, Aachen, and Louvain/Hasselt. This promotes the bundling of technological knowledge and the worldwide export of innovative products it generates, and also directly or indirectly accounts for a great deal of employment in the local and regional economy.
The ambition is to arrive at a single, strong, cohesive area, an urban and rural network with:
- strong economic campuses and clusters that make a substantial contribution to the gross national product.
- attractive urban centres as drivers of the economy and magnets for the knowledge economy.
- high-quality and varied offerings of living environments for inhabitants, the regional workforce and knowledge workers.
- outstanding connections between services, knowledge clusters, and living areas, both within and outside the region; strengthening the daily urban system and expanding the dynamics within it to make a larger number of jobs accessible at the Euregional scale, ultimately making the labour market in South Limburg more attractive.
- a high-quality and distinctive landscape that is a good environment for living, working, and playing.

All this must be achieved sustainably, with special attention for climate adaptation and energy transition. This last task in particular demands regional coordination and also offers opportunities from an economic perspective.
The ambition for South Limburg is depicted in the following map.

### Explanation of ambition

#### Powerful economic clusters

The two campuses in Sittard-Geleen and Maastricht are central in the cluster development around the national top sectors Chemistry, Life Sciences & Health, and High-tech Materials & Systems. These are driving clusters, of major importance to the regional and national economy. Partnership with the RWTH Aachen (the university in Aachen, with over 30,000 students of technical fields) can make a major contribution to the development of the South Limburg knowledge region, with a particular focus on complementarity (marketing on the one hand and conceptualization on the other) between the universities of Maastricht and Aachen. In addition, Aachen is a good match physically with the urban aspect of South Limburg. This means that the intensification of the relationship with Aachen can have spatial and economic implications for South Limburg; for example, the housing market in Parkstad and Vaals and the further development of the Avantis business park, in part through spin-off of the enhanced cooperation between the RWTH, Maastricht University, and the chemical and automotive sectors in the Western Mijnstreek. On the South Limburg scale, further work is being pursued on an intensive cooperation between service-providing companies, knowledge institutions, and government organizations (Smart Service Hub), with a strong concentration of financial-economic and administrative services in Parkstad. The knowledge economy generates a multiplier for all other economic sectors.

In addition, South Limburg contributes to the supporting economic top sectors Energy and Logistics. In knowledge development, valorization, and automotive production, the emphasis is on the Eindhoven-Sittard connection (VDL)-RWTH. Further, the region is one of the most popular domestic holiday destinations, making tourism & leisure a sector to be reckoned with, and one that still offers growth potential. This sector presents Maastricht as a historic place to visit, the hill country around it that draws people to relax and slow down (overnight stays), and Parkstad as the fastest growing tourist region in the Netherlands, with a concentration of intensive forms of leisure activities.

#### Attractive urban centres

The importance of 'more city' and attractive urban centres is described in chapter 3. The urban environment is the spatial condition that facilitates face-to-face meetings between different types of people in the public space. Along with the connection to global networks, it is important for people to be able to live in the vicinity of an attractive city centre with an interesting mix of knowledge, culture, and...
services. The further development of the three South Limburg city centres (Heerlen, Sittard, and Maastricht) can therefore not be seen independently of the integral task for South Limburg. This makes these areas, and South Limburg in general, more attractive to its inhabitants, labour force, knowledge workers and national and international businesses.

**Variety of high-quality living environments**

South Limburg is home to a total of 608,000 people, 30,000 of which are higher education students. South Limburg has a lot to offer as a place to live. Fans of urban living will find what they are looking for in and around the urban centres of Heerlen, Maastricht, or Sittard, and there is also a broad and varied range of suburban living environments to choose from. Between these urban areas lies the green heart of South Limburg, a very special rural living environment. The ambition is to move towards high-quality living environments with a viable level of services, working from a quantitative transformation perspective.

**Excellent connections**

In terms of connections, we can identify three levels:

1. South Limburg’s connection to the international network of airports, HST stations (EXPLAIN BRIEFLY), and motorways.
2. At the regional/Euregional level, the road network and public transport connections.
3. The logistical relationships, with a focus on waterbound logistics.

At the regional level, the ambition is to make the centres and clusters where the knowledge economy and services are located multimodally accessible from the living space and other areas, i.e., with good connections by car and with high quality regional public transport. Future spatial developments and junction development (infrastructure) must be coordinated.

**National Landscape South Limburg**

The National Landscape is the green heart between the three urban agglomerations of Maastricht, Sittard-Geleen, and Parkstad. The National Landscape South Limburg is, coupled with the cities and cores, a prosperous area with a good environment for living, working and playing. It presents an attractive and varied South Limburg landscape that projects peace, quiet, and quality, in which all activities are a joy for the surroundings and which is accessible and liveable as an escape and recreation area for its inhabitants, the inhabitants of the cities around it, economic top sectors, and tourists from far and wide. The social and tourism facilities are of a high level, and the care for and augmentation of the rural, cultural-historical and ecological core qualities is ensured in a sustainable way. The ambition is to retain, manage, develop and experience this outstanding landscape (in all its core qualities). The economic top sectors see this National Landscape as an important factor in the decision to establish themselves here.

**Energy transition**

Energy transition is a topical theme in society, and demands a new perception of and perspective on our energy use. While we still currently rely on fossil fuels to such a great extent, we must, partly in consideration of the finite nature of these resources, rapidly make the transition to renewable energy generation if we are to be able to provide the people of South Limburg with clean, reliable, and affordable energy in the future. Energy transition is also, by definition, a spatial issue, because forms of sustainable energy inherently entail new demands on space. A regional spatial vision on energy, on the basis of which issues like landscape integration can be coordinated in the near future, is called for. Along with renewable energy generation, we must also focus on energy conservation (such as in commercial buildings, shops, public buildings, and especially housing). Energy transition must be taken up as an issue in cooperation with all social partners, including local inhabitants. Handled correctly, it offers enormous potential for strengthening the regional economy.

4.3 3 The major challenges and tasks
4.3

3.1 Development of a sustainable framework of centres, infrastructure, and landscape

In the longer term, the task is to build on a robust framework consisting of vibrant centres and interaction environments that are multimodally accessible in an attractive landscape. The attraction of the climate for establishment, knowledge economy and the inhabitants all benefit from attractive centres with an interesting mix of knowledge, culture, and services in which people can meet face-to-face. These interaction environments depend on proximity, quality of the public space and 'placemaking'. (EXPLAIN BRIEFLY)

For the South Limburg region, the city centres of Maastricht, Heerlen, and Sittard are the biggest meeting places where this mix can be found. But lively meeting places have also emerged outside of the city centres. We can identify five different interaction environments: urban centres, campuses, other regional facilities, public attractions, and logistic hubs (see sidebar).

As work and services are increasingly being bundled into a number of centres and hubs, direct interconnections and good accessibility from residential areas become more and more important. In order to guarantee accessibility (cope with traffic congestion) and also protect visibility and the quality of the environment (handle parking pressures and environmental impact), along with good accessibility by car proper accessibility by regional public transportation is also a requirement (multimodality).
The biggest hubs/interaction environments in South Limburg of regional supra-regional importance (including Aachen)

**Urban centres:** Maastricht and Aachen: centres with international appeal  
Heerlen and Sittard: centres of regional importance with varying scales and a distinctive profile  
Valkenburg: historical core and central meeting place in the Heuvelland

All these centres are compact, vibrant, open in character, and have a mix of small-scale and large-scale programmes, but lend themselves to incorporation into the urban environment; we see functional blending, particularly in the home and living domain, with inviting streets, squares, and parks. These areas are larger than the city centres and extend beyond the neighbouring living areas.

**Campuses:** Campuses are also vibrant areas, but have a more limited functional profile than the city centres. Here, the focus of the activities is on knowledge transfer and development and personal growth.  
Brightlands Maastricht Health Campus, BrightlandsChemelot Campus, and RWTH (with locations: Melaten, Super-C, Aachen-West). Smart Service Hub is not a campus in the physical sense, but a joint venture between a large number of institutions, companies, and knowledge institutions.

**Regional Subcentres of regional significance are:** Sportzone and Orbis MC in Sittard-Geleen, Teaching Boulevard, and Care Valley in Heerlen.

**Services:** Care Valley in Heerlen There is a significant amount of catching-up to do in terms of the quality of public space in the campus areas and subcentres. Likewise, in many cases, the compatibility with the urban structure and the landscape must be improved. Multimodal connection is essential.

**Public attractions:** These are strong (generally thematic) areas of international and regional supra-regional significance. A big public draw at the international level is the furniture retail zone Woonboulevard Heerlen. Alongside the National Landscape, the various tourist attractions/destinations in Parkstad are regional and supra-regional attractions.

**Logistic centres:** The logistics hub South Limburg (trimodal) is located in Sittard-Geleen and comprises the ports and rail terminals in Born, Stein, and BrightlandsChemelot. The emphasis is on logistics and production, with knowledge spin-off. Maastricht-Aachen Airport serves as a regional airport for passenger and (more importantly) goods transport, and consequently is also a logistics hub. The region is also home to a number of other logistic business parks of supra-regional significance (see industrial/business park map).
Regionaal raamwerk 2030

**Centra**
- Stedelijke centra: versterken en intensiveren
- Stedelijke interactiegebieden: stimuleren creatieve/innovatieve milieu
- Internationale (binnen) campus: duurzaamheid en verbeteren vestigingskwaliteit
- Regionale campussen: verbeteren vestigingskwaliteit in parkachtige setting en OV bereikbaar maken
- (Binnen) regionale thematische trekkers: thematisch vestinken van de aansluitende in een leefbaar landschap
- Transvoedelijke bedrijven: verbeteren profielen logistiek en productie baseseerend multimodaliteit
- Transmateriegebied: verbeteren en versterken groenstructuur

**Infra**
- Streef streven: infrastructuur auto optimaliseren
- Nieuwe autowegen: ontwikkelen/verbeteren A2
- Nieuwe autowegen: karakteristieke economische en infrastructuur
- Spoorverbindingen: internationaal verbinden, regionaal ontwikkelen
- Nieuwe spoorverbindingen: nieuwe/angepaste verbindingen
- Betreksgebieden: stations als aanspunt ter versnelling van het stedelijke interactiegebied
- Vliegveld

**Landschap**
- Nationaal Landschap: bescherming gebied
- Ecolgiech recreatieve beekdalen: continuiteit beekdalfunctie met lagendere aandacht voor cultuur/historie
- Groenoverschijndeling stadsplan: Maasvallei
- Groene (belede) gebieden
The urban centres are currently well-connected by car and regional/IC public transportation, but the international links are not there. Regional accessibility by public transportation, and regional services for certain knowledge clusters/campuses are not yet optimal, because they are too heavily oriented towards the motorway. This calls for a vision for the longer term. An accessibility analysis on the scale of South Limburg and the most relevant areas of the Euregio should contribute to a cohesive vision for city centre and hub development.

From the perspective of transportation and logistics, alongside rail and road connections there must also be good connections over water and availability of utility network connections (trimodality/unhindered logistics system).

MAA (Maastricht Aachen Airport) has limited capacity, and at present it is primarily important for the handling of goods. We want to enhance the position of MAA for both passenger and freight transportation. See also Table 5.4.

The National Landscape is located within the Euregional metropolis Liège-Eupen-Aken-Parkstad-Sittard-Genk-Hasselt-Maastricht as an element of the cross-border Tri-Country Park. It is an escape from the city, and it offers a quality of life that is vital for the South Limburg living environment and business climate. The area has a high density of cultural-historical heritage, including many historic buildings. It is also a very attractive area for the leisure economy, thanks to its being criss-crossed by numerous rivers such as the Jeker, Voer, Gulp, Geul, Geleenbeek, Worm, and RoodeBeek. It also contains a groundwater supply that is of vital importance for human consumption and regional industry.

Visitors and tourists from far and wide, as well as the labour force, knowledge workers, and city dwellers in South Limburg come to this area to enjoy the peace, quiet, and variety in landscape. This is of major significance for the gross regional product of South Limburg.

The unique landscape is a big asset to the business climate and quality of life and living environment of the region. We can identify a number of important tasks in the South Limburg National Landscape, all of which demand an integral approach:

1. Preservation, management, development, and experience of the rural core qualities
2. Strengthening of the relationship with neighbouring urban areas, Maasdal and Drielandenpark, using the beacon structure as guiding principle
3. Development and innovation in the tourism sector in balance with the qualities of the environment
4. Preservation of a sustainable, land-based agriculture and horticulture in balance with the environmental qualities
5. Good living environment and quality of life in towns and cores
4.3
3.2 A fundamentally different task: Programme-based management

For many functions, as population shrinks South Limburg will have sufficient space for many functions - indeed, to an increasing degree, too much space (see 2 and 3). Too many homes, stores, offices, and business parks, or plans for more, are just a few examples. It is primarily in the urban areas that vacancy of buildings and sites emerges and becomes a detriment to the economic vitality and liveability of an area. In South Limburg, old-style spatial planning ('programme seeks space') has given way to a new style of planning: 'space seeks programme'. This will lead to a sea change in spatial planning.

This new reality demands a new approach, the search for new ways. First and foremost, it demands clear visions and bold choices. Where do we offer space for new developments, where should we increase intensity, where do we need to accept vacancy, and where do we need to do something about it? We will be doing this in several ways: with the system of dynamic stock management (see 3.2.3) and the use of appropriate tools. We will also be doing this with experiments, flexible planning formats, and temporary use. What emerges is a search for projects and concepts that are innovative, creative, and sustainable. Examples include MaastrichtLab and the IBA Parkstad.
For the individual programmes (living, business parks, offices, retail, and leisure economy), below we briefly describe the vision with the most important premises and management principles, which generally assume a distinction between concentration areas (enhancing and stimulating promising locations), balance areas (quality improvement through rebuilding and renovating), and transition areas (discouragement, functional change, and/or demolition). The quantitative task is interpreted as managing for quality. Enhancing the qualities of both the cities in the landscape in South Limburg is always the underlying premise. This means choosing real cities and real landscape (‘more city, more countryside’). The ladder of sustainable urbanization supports this approach. A side effect of the addition of programmes in concentration areas may also be emerging vacancy elsewhere. This will have to be addressed within the principles of dynamic stock management, particularly from a liveability perspective.

Residential

Broadly speaking, we can identify three living spheres within South Limburg: urban, rural, and suburban. Each of these spheres can be broken down into multiple living environments.

The urban living sphere is found in Heerlen, Maastricht, and Sittard, and just over the border in Aachen. These areas are prime space for the city dweller who considers it important to live in the vicinity of the city centre (culture, meeting place, services, recreation, etc.). Interest in the living environments in and around the urban centres is and remains high. Policy tasks that are relevant here are: concentration and infill development, combining functions, and reuse of existing property (characteristic and cultural-historical).
On the other side of the spectrum, there is the rural living sphere, in the countryside and in small cores. This, too, is a hotly desired living sphere, both among current inhabitants of South Limburg and for newcomers arriving from outside the region. Village life, the quality of the landscape, the small scale, relaxation, peace and quiet, and cultural history, and identity are all important parts of the appeal. It is an increasingly accepted tenet that for certain services, you simply have to be in certain larger rural cores or the nearby city centres. Policy tasks that are relevant here are: balance in the stock of homes and preservation and reuse of culturally-historically valuable buildings, with the object of maintaining liveability and identity.

The third living sphere is the suburban living environment, which is found in the urban areas and in parts of the larger rural cores. This is where most people live. The large variety of qualities (location in relation to centres and rural environment, structure, level of services, identity, and cultural-historical features) does not, however, result in sufficiently distinctive living environments everywhere, and this means that some areas of this living sphere in fact lack character and orientation. The suburban living sphere generally provides for all day-to-day needs within walking or cycling distance. One does not always feel the presence of the rural landscape, but it is easily accessible from the living environment. Parts of the suburban sphere offer the best potential to improve the living and environmental quality through dilution, renewal, and replacement. This is also the potential to bring balance to the supply of housing.

The tasks for South Limburg in the area of housing are presented in more detail in sections 4.3.3.3 and 6.2. The major premises for housing are: no new construction 'out in the field,' concentration around the urban centres (Heerlen, Maastricht, Sittard), balance in small cores, with retention of cultural heritage, and focus on transformation of the suburban living sphere. This qualitative management conducted within the framework of the quantitative tasks in each municipality.

*Industrial and business parks*
Looking at the supply of business parks, at present, based on current residual capacity (approximately 486 hectares), South Limburg has an issue horizon that extends to 2029. This means that no development of new business parks will be necessary. Based on that knowledge, it is important to manage for quality of business parks and to identify and utilize opportunities, based on regional importance and with a coherent approach to logistics, urban living, and landscape, both for support of the top sectors and for the local and regional economy and employment.

For logistics and production, the city has little attraction; these activities have their own dynamics. The trimodal areas (road, water, and rail) are in the Meuse Valley. A vision will be developed for a sustainable and economically optimal connection of VDL Nedcar in Sittard-Geleen, with rail connection of this industrial park to the main rail network, in conjunction with the further development of the industrial park and the potential regional improvement of the Holtum North rail connection. Given the national economic and regional employment interest, the priority is the connection of VDL Nedcar to the main rail network. An assessment of utility and need, costs and benefits of potential improvements of the rail connection of this area will be developed for the purposes of this vision.

The sites in Parkstad have their best connections by road, and the same goes for Aviation Valley and Eijsden-Maastricht. It is vital to the economic strength of South Limburg to optimally utilize these areas for logistics and production, and to not open them to any other functions. At other business parks, which have primarily local or regional importance, the impetus is for further quality improvement of the existing supply.
For some business parks, for example those with a particularly rural location, 'greening' or transformation may be called for. For example, business parks on the east side of Parkstad could be converted to leisure activities (for example, the possible development of Nature Wonder World) to generate a new economic dynamic. Enhancement of the continuity in the Geul Valley would be another example. On urban business parks in the immediate vicinity of city centres, there may be space to be offered for combined functions. There are, for example, cross-border opportunities around the Albertknoop area.

To sum up, the major premises for business parks are: no new business parks (designate reserve locations and write off soft plan capacity), concentration of logistics and production at well-connected (trimodal) locations, quality improvement of existing supply, combining or changing functions only at urban business parks at the periphery of city centres, and sites with a particularly rural location.

See also Table 5.2.

Offices
In South Limburg, the goal is to achieve high-quality existing supply, for which the office locations in and around the city centres and station locations are particularly attractive in consideration of the multimodality and the degree of interaction and contact. On the office market, the need for vibrant and interesting meeting locations is increasing, while motorway locations of a certain volume of office space struggle with higher-than-average vacancy rates. On the BrightlandsChemelot Campus and Brightlands Maastricht Health Campus, there is room for theme-specific offices.
The goal for other office locations is quality improvement without increasing the quantity. In view of current vacancy levels and the structurally lower demand for square footage of office space, what is now called for is to reduce the existing actual planning capacity (being office zoning of lots where no offices have yet been built) outside of the concentration areas as much as possible. The existing planning capacity (where of any relevant size) may be taken into account in the dynamic supply management.

New offices will only be permitted if compatible with the qualitative, flexible trends for use of building and office space. New office buildings also have to be made more future-proof (i.e., reusable), with a view to transformation to other types of business operations or other functions. At the regional and municipal level, the main consideration is preventing further increase of the total volume of office space and the emergence of vacancy in the wrong places.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Limburg</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concentration areas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sittard-Geleen: City centre/station area, Office Park Sittard, BrightlandsChemelot Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maastricht: City centre/station area, Office Park Randwyck/MHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heerlen: City centre/station area, Office Boulevard Heerlen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance areas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maastricht Ceramique, Geusselt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heerlen: Coriopolis, ABP Heerlen</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transition areas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritspark (Sittard-Geleen), Office Zone Airport (Beek), Zeswegen, and Valkenburgerweg (Heerlen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To sum up, the major premises for offices are (see also table): Concentration in urban areas, in the vicinity of stations and both international campuses, as long as theme-specific. Balance in vibrant urban areas not in the vicinity of stations and transition to motorway locations and areas outside the central urban area not in the vicinity of stations. Otherwise, no new office locations in other places (such as exit road locations, motorway locations, and solitary office buildings) and reduction of planning capacity where financially and legally possible.

See also Table 5.3.

**Retail**

Retail is important to the economy (employment), liveability (in residential areas and elsewhere), and leisure time. The shrinking population, in combination with other factors such as the historical overgrowth in supply, as well as increasing consumer spending on the internet, succession issues among independent businesses, and economies of scale have left South Limburg with many empty retail locations and an impending decline in liveability and the living experience in residential areas.

The three attractive city centres in South Limburg profile themselves, alongside other functions such as culture and hospitality, as recreational shopping locations, and as such offer atmosphere and experience for residents of the region and visitors from elsewhere. It is also important to retain and, where possible, increase cross-border purchasing flows. Further, with their existing population base, cities should be focusing on complete neighbourhood and community shopping centres to provide for local residents’ everyday shopping needs. The retail offerings in the rural area will also be primarily oriented towards offering good, accessible facilities for everyday use. In order to arrive at a healthy shopping market, it is important to make a distinction between high-potential and low-potential shopping areas. This means that at the local and
regional level, choices have to be made (for example, in village cores/communities, as well as functional or thematic choices) to lead to a sustainable spatial structure of retail areas for the future.

To sum up, the major premises for the retail domain are: No new solitary or distributed shopping areas, focus on compact shopping areas, allow feeder streets to shift focus naturally, no retail permitted on business parks (bulky goods excepted). Concentration on regional and supra-regional meeting places (city centres) and thematically on Woonboulevard. Keep local and supra-local full-service centres compatible and in balance with existing, vibrant meeting places (generally historic cores with combined functions). For other retail concentrations, choices must be made at the local level addressing the level of services in neighbourhoods and cores. This can lead to shifts and transitions and spatial planning.

The premises outlined above must be further elaborated in the regional vision for retail (see 6.3). The chart below gives an indication of the position of the biggest shopping centres in the region.

Leisure economy
One of South Limburg’s biggest strengths is the leisure sector, both for the regional economy and the living environment and quality of life. This sector, however, is extremely fragmented, with little cooperation within it, as a result of which there is too little attention to synergy between individual enterprises and governmental authorities, and economic and other potential goes underutilized. Another increasingly relevant factor in the sector is changing requirements and needs of the consumer. The task lies in strengthening the identity of the Limburg leisure economy and utilizing and connecting the individual strengths and qualities of distinct sub-areas.

A feature of South Limburg is its unique, complementary regional profile: Maastricht as historic national and international tourist destination (the mix of high-quality functions), the quality of the National Landscape South Limburg as hiking and cycling paradise, with within it Valkenburg as historic meeting place (relaxation and recreation), and the major events and tourist attractions in Parkstad (Pinkpop, GaiaZoo, Snowworld, Creative City, Mondo Verde, etc.). Additionally, the proximity to interesting Euregional cities just over the border represents a clear added value for the tourism profile of the region.

To sum up, the major premises for the leisure economy are: enhanced cooperation between enterprises and governmental institutions, concentration of accommodations, and promotion of a tourism profile (in inner cities, with Maastricht as historic tourist destination, large-scale attractions in Parkstad and small-scale initiatives in the Heuvelland, with special attention for the preservation of cultural history). Balance in the National Landscape, i.e., no expansion in terms of total square metres of accommodations, but qualitative improvement, with the premises of preference for establishment within existing cores and high-value cultural-historic construction. Transition (greening, extensification) in rural and ecologically sensitive areas.

See also Table 6.4.

### Explanation of sustainable framework of centres, infrastructure, and landscape

**IBA Parkstad: experimental area for innovative ideas factory**

The Internationale BauAusstellung Parkstad Limburg (IBA Parkstad), organized by the Parkstad municipalities in cooperation with the Province of Limburg, is a unique opportunity to become the leading experimental environment during the project term (through 2020), with the goal of deriving the best approach for dealing with major restructuring and transformation issues. The contributions of an IBA consist of creating exemplary, visionary, and innovative projects that do justice not only to the international podium that is an IBA, but more importantly also are followed up and have an impact in the surrounding region, and even at the national and international levels. Within the themes of Flexible City, Energy City, and Recycle City, the IBA seeks creative solutions and breaks new ground in the transformation assignments dictated by vacant property, in transformation issues relating to themes such as retail, quality of life, living and care, offices and industrial/business parks, and in new transformation tasks prompted by climate change and the exhaustion of scarce natural resources, such as energy transition, food supply issues, and climate adaptation.

4.3

### 3.3 Living in South Limburg

South Limburg has many good qualities. However, there are also threats. The demographic swing and the mismatch between supply and demand is creating a lack of mobility and an imbalance in the housing market. To identify just one symptom, at present South Limburg is adding approximately 6,000 new homes under development plans that have become irrevocable based on urban planning considerations, even as the need for housing is declining because of trends in household demographics, and while vacancy is, even now, becoming an issue. Falling house prices, increasing vacancy, urban decline, and social isolation are
problems that are rearing their heads. South Limburg’s ambition is to preserve and increase the quality of the living environment in the region. The restructuring task this puts before South Limburg is so complex, unique, and urgent that it can only be addressed by concerted action - action that can only succeed if there is a high degree of shared understanding of the social interest in the solution without internecine competition.

Living spheres and living environments
South Limburg has, broadly speaking, three different living spheres, as already described in section 4.3.3.2: urban, rural, and suburban. Each of these spheres can be broken down into multiple living environments.

In order to fulfil the ambition, the balance on the housing market must be restored and the living and environmental quality in the three spheres must be augmented. Further differentiation is required to optimally utilize each living environment.

Qualitative and quantitative task
In South Limburg (even more so than in Central and North Limburg), the transformation task per municipality (as set out in the Woonmonitor) is qualified as a hard, quantitative assumption in the construction and demolition task. The sooner the 'excess fat' is cut away, the sooner the housing market will regain its balance. The South Limburg Living Ordinance, which has regulated further spatial planning growth since mid-2013, is a first step in this direction.

The assumption is for South Limburg to gradually revert all its special planning capacity at outlying locations by 2018 to conform to the actual transformation assignment. The details are set out in a structural vision for
Housing agreed jointly by the municipalities of South Limburg, differentiated to the maximum possible extent by segment and target group, and based on the qualitative living environment approach.

In the regional Housing structural vision for South Limburg, the choices that will be necessary on the regional level are presented in more detail, taking into account the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the individual living environments, and based on a shared analysis in the living environment map on the South Limburg scale. This more qualitative route is the basis for interpreting the more city, more countryside" principle and the underlying, hard transformation task. This places the control aspect with the qualitative task, with the quantitative task as the hard-and-fast premise.

Based on a joint analysis, differentiated choices are made in this structural vision for the development trajectories, including programming of demolition, restructuring, and new construction as replacement. A preemptive clause in the provisional Environmental Decree forces compliance by the municipalities with commitments made in the structural vision.

**Premises and ground rules**

The impetus is focused primarily on:

- enhancing promising living areas, i.e. concentration around the urban centres of Heerlen, Maastricht, and Sittard.
- seeking a balance in small cores, with retention of cultural heritage.
- transformation of the (currently or soon-to-be) less promising living areas, which are expected to be primarily in the suburban living sphere.
The following basic principles and ground rules, together with the 'ladder for sustainable urbanization,' are the guidelines for the development into a regional structural vision:

- Residential construction belongs within existing built areas, with a priority on reuse and rezoning of existing property (including vacant) and restructuring. The cores remain within the existing built area.
- Wherever possible, transformation of suburban living environments, including dilution, renewal, and 'greening,' in order to meet the need for space and green living environments offering peace, quiet, space and privacy.
- There is no further place for residential construction in the outer fringe (with the exception of necessary company residences); no new construction 'out in the field' (only within existing built area). This also applies to the monetization of (sometimes vast, often former agricultural) buildings in the outdoors by converting them or replacing them with homes. Municipalities could also put a time limit on the use of existing construction permits. The indication here would be a term of up to 2018 (or a maximum of five years after the adoption of the POL2014). Municipalities do not enforce a lower limit here. Where faster construction completion of planning capacity is possible in a responsible manner, the opportunity must be utilized, and the completion period must be shorter.
- Following on from this, housing on recreational sites will be further limited in various forms. Permanent habitation on recreational sites is not permitted. Likewise, conversion of recreational homes on sites intended for recreation into residential units intended for permanent occupation is not permitted. Stricter enforcement must counteract the emergence of endless new types of situations. Likewise, the conversion of vacation homes outside the recreation areas into regular homes is undesired.
- Because there are still comparatively few homes in South Limburg, it must be added that in order to meet demand, it is clear that the focus in regard to the stock of homes/housing market the focus is on the existing stock. Here we can identify two different tracks.
  - replacement, demolition of the existing non-suitable stock
  - making viable (future-proofing) the existing housing stock
- In reference to the cross-border housing market, the Province is not taking over the inter-municipality exchange (Kerkrade-Herzogenrath, Vaals-Aachen, Maastricht-Lanaken/Riemst, etc.), but supports these processes secondarily with a Euregional perspective by collecting and offering specific knowledge of the housing markets.
- Issues of private home ownership.
  
  See also Table 6.2.

4.3

3.4 National Landscape South Limburg

*Strengthening relationship with neighbouring urban areas, Meuse Valley, and Tri-Country Park*

Enhancing the qualities of the National Landscape depends on a collective impetus and vision shared by the rural area and the surrounding urban ring. Likewise, the spatial relationships between the National Landscape, the neighbouring urban area, and the Meuse Valley must be strengthened. With the construction of large-scale North-South oriented infrastructure (motorway, rail, channel), the relationship between the Meuse Valley and the South Limburg landscape has partially been lost. The spatial relationship with the Meuse Valley can be improved, both from the Heuvelland and the urban areas (for example, at the Geuldal line, with the Landgoederenzone programme).
Particularly in the areas of Parkstad Limburg and the Western Mijnstreek, the transformation task in the living domain offers an excellent opportunity to improve the spatial quality and restore rural structures. In Parkstad, the regional stream structure can serve as a guiding principle, and in the Western Mijnstreek, the design task lies in the transition between the National Landscape and the Meuse Valley (Central Limburg).

Reservation through development; ten core values as basis
The unique character of the National Landscape must be restored, maintained and further developed. The focus must be on ten core values in the central section of the area, the protected National Landscape area (green shading on the map).

The environment policy is oriented towards preserving, managing, developing, and experiencing the present rural core qualities as a component of the core values of the National Landscape. Developments within the space that the policy offers for the various themes are permitted, so long as the core qualities are retained or enhanced ('yes-if').

We work based on general quality principles such as dynamic stock management, the ladder of sustainable urbanization, and the reuse of historic cultural heritage.

In the Environmental Ordinance, we will include an argumentation obligation, requiring the municipalities to indicate in the explanation to new zoning plans (for components of the protected area) how the plan is intended to protect and enhance the core qualities in the area in question. For the overall spatial designation of the core qualities, inspiration may be found in the analyses from the Landscape Vision South Limburg. Compensation is appropriate in the event of loss of objects of conservation value in the South Limburg National Landscape, which can be further elaborated in the Mitigation and Compensation of objects of conservation value policy regulation.

The Environmental Ordinance prohibits establishing wind turbines in the National Landscape.

We will make procedural arrangements with municipalities and other partners on a collective approach to enhance the quality of the consideration processes (see 3.2.5). Proper application of the 'yes-if' policy requires that we distribute the knowledge and expertise on nature and landscape among all parties.

Renewal of tourism-recreational sector in balance with environmental qualities
Maintaining the attractiveness of the National Landscape is of critical importance to the regional economy. In addition to city visits, shopping, and major attractions, the leisure economy sector in South Limburg is largely dependent on the attractive and varied landscape.

The Province assumes that the development of new combination arrangements between city-country (and also national-international, via the Tri-Country Park) in the innovation of the tourism-recreational offerings (including new access and experience options) will contribute to scaling up the income flow in this sector. The task is to offer this sector sufficient development space, without upsetting the balance with the rural core qualities.

Facilities for overnight recreation in the area must be the object of a quality impulse, the precise details of which can be elaborated in the region vision.

**Preservation of sustainable, land-based agriculture and horticulture in balance with the environmental qualities**

See 4.3.3.5, Agriculture/Horticulture in South Limburg

**Preservation and improvement of groundwater resources**

See 8.2

**Good living environment and quality of life in towns and cores**

Living in the rural area is expected to remain attractive, in consideration of the unique qualities of the landscape, the cultural-historical values, and the close proximity to the cities.

Tasks, premises, and approach are presented in more detail in the regional Living Vision South Limburg.

One particular point of attention is liveability, partly as a consequence of the demographic and economic trends. It would appear to be apparent that services must be unavoidably restructured to allow for accessibility.

See also Table 6.1

**Specifics of shared responsibility via Region Vision National Landscape South Limburg**

Together with the region, we will further coordinate the tasks and approach for the National Landscape as identified here in a regional vision, following on from the POL2014.

In so doing, we will establish a link between the approach to the marketing of the National Landscape South Limburg ‘brand’ (examples: cooperation with National Landscapes Service, the three Limburg National Parks, and Branding Limburg/South Limburg) and the organization of Limburg Economic Development (LED).

**Explanation**

**National Landscape as component of cross-border Tri-Country Park**

The National Landscape is, from a landscape perspective, the logical element of the cross-border Tri-Country Park. This area is situated around the cities Hasselt, Genk, Sittard-Geleen, Heerlen, Aachen, Eupen, Verviers, Liège, and Maastricht. Tri-Country Park is also the name of a platform for cooperation in the Meuse-Rhine Euregio: Ten governmental organizations from Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands, including the Province of Limburg, have been working together since 2001 to preserve and enhance the open space, maintaining a constant relationship with the surrounding urban areas. We see continuation of this partnership and the initiation of cross-border projects under it as a valuable method of strengthening the cross-border relationships.
National Landscape South Limburg's ten core values

To successfully achieve preservation, management and development of the National Landscape South Limburg and expand the regional experience, we must adhere to the following ten core values of the Region Vision South Limburg and the existing rural studies as our premises. The ten core values consist of the four rural core qualities plus the six socio-economic values.

Core qualities, landscape

1. Relief

The diversity of surface of the earth on which human, plant, and animal live, and the animal, plant, and human qualities linked thereto. This diversity arose initially through the lines etched into the land by the numerous watercourses, like the Meuse, the Jeker, the Voer, the Geul, the Gulp, the Geleenbeek, the Worm, and the RoodeBeek. These gradually shaped contours in a primarily flat and dry area, releasing groundwater in a number of different springs, and exposing raw materials such as flint, limestone, sand, and gravel. These have been employed by humankind at various different times, as evidenced by relics such as the world-famous flintstone mines, the subterranean limestone quarries, and the Roman roads. The presence here of numerous rare species found nowhere else is, in many cases, the consequence of the many transitions in this area (gradients in relief, microclimate and substrate). Secondly, the contours offer a look back in time at how this area was formed.

2. Cultural-historical heritage

Thanks to the many watercourses, vital raw materials, relief, fertile soil, and flatter areas, this area has been inhabited virtually without interruption since the dawn of humankind: from pre-Neanderthals to Neanderthals, the first LBK farmers, the Celts, the Romans, the Merovingians, the Carolingians, through the Middle Ages to the present day. This gives South Limburg an ancient and rich cultural-historical heritage, full of archaeological and cultural-historical object and elements. The landscape elements that have been retained are primarily typical of the South Limburg small-scale loess landscape and are extremely rare in other parts of our country.

3. Green character
In connection with the substrate, relief, soil use, and climate, South Limburg has plants and animals unique to this area, and living communities that contribute to its green character, such as spring forests, sloping woods, limestone grasslands, heather grasslands, marshes, and wet scrub grasslands in flood zones, springs with calcium-rich flow, and field complexes with typical South Limburg meadow fauna.

4. Open-closed

A characteristic visual landscape value for South Limburg is the openness of the plateaus as opposed to the closed character of the villages and valleys. On the open plateaus, the residential cores are found within a shell of hedges and orchards. The dry valleys and their sloping sides have taken on the many small-scale landscape elements of their overgrowth, and the cultural-historical heritage here is of a pronouncedly enclosed character. This increases the variety and attraction of the area.

Socio-economic core values

5. Accessibility

Accessibility of the area via water, rail, air, road, public transport, bicycle, and walking (over farmlands) is excellent.

6. Land-based agriculture

Characteristic of the region is the presence of a land-based agriculture and horticulture sector, primarily consisting of arable farming, dairy farming and fruit growing, but also the production of local products such as wine, syrup, cheese, fruit, beer, vlaai (sweet fruit tart) and meats.

7. Metropolitan inner court

The location of an old and non-urbanized cultural landscape in the middle of a highly urbanized metropolitan ring. The National Landscape South Limburg is located within the Euregional metropolis Liège-Eupen-Aachen-Parkstad-Sittard-Genk-Hasselt-Maastricht and is an element of the cross-border Tri-Country Park. For tourists, residents, and visitors, the variety between natural, cultural-historical, and rural qualities in both the urban and rural area is extremely attractive.

8. Experience

Unique is the presence of complimentary facilities within short distances, such as shopping, museum visits, city trips, and large-scale overnight and day recreational facilities, as well as peaceful getaways, hiking, cycling, leisure, adventure, digital experience, and small-scale overnight recreation and day recreation in the countryside.

9. Cultural offerings

In the region, a number of different national and international cultures occupy a relatively small space, each maintaining their own authentic customs and traditions alongside each other.

10. Liveability

The region is characterized by vibrant cores with an authentic and hospitable character, often characterized as epicurean, with an emphasis on living well and enjoying the good life.

For a description of the core qualities and a global spatial description, please see the Environmental Ordinance.

Explanation of choice of protection area

The protection area within the National Landscape is the area in which preservation, management, and development of the core qualities is applied (see green shading in 4.3.3.1). The boundaries of this area have been selected based on the areas of South Limburg in which the core qualities are found in a logically and landscape-based unit in the highest densities (Hill Country), and so as not to overlap with other areas where specific area programmes and designations apply (Grensmaas).

4.3

3.5 Agriculture & Horticulture in South Limburg
The agriculture and horticulture sector is vital to the South Limburg landscape. The land-based agriculture and horticulture has historically contributed very strongly to the development and management of the attractive and varied cultural landscape in South Limburg. We consider it of major importance that the sector can continue to be able to fulfil this role in the future, in a good balance with the environmental qualities and small scale of the cultural landscape. One particular point for attention is the maintenance of field access for cattle, and preservation of grasslands to contribute to a varied and living landscape (the latter is also important for fighting erosion). One specific point of attention will be the impact of the manure legislation on soil fertility in Limburg.

Field access and further sustainability will be promoted by the dairy chain through measures such as field and sustainability premiums and the Sustainable Dairy Chain cooperative association. Subject to a number of conditions, such as permanent preservation of grasslands, the sector is eligible for EU income subsidies. A substantial part of the provincial goals for nature, water, and landscape can be achieved through the use of agrarian nature and landscape management.

Room for dynamics
We want to provide the room the sector needs to maintain its dynamics in proper balance with the qualities of the area: not only the environmental qualities, but the core qualities of the National Landscape. Development of new activities or functions is possible, so long as they preserve or enhance the core qualities (the 'yes-if' policy).
This is formulated in the Limburg Agricultural and Horticultural Ambition Memorandum as follows: ‘Agriculture and horticulture in Limburg will continue to develop as an innovative sector with economically healthy companies and progressive entrepreneurs, in touch with local society and producing sustainably.’
This demands careful considerations, taking into account the economic development of the agriculture and horticulture sectors leading to increasing scale in commercial farming. Particularly in the river valleys and on the slopes, the space for development must be coordinated with what the landscape can support. The plateaus, by contrast, offer a much larger scale. Openness and perspective are important core values. These areas offer the space for development towards larger-scale forms of land-based agriculture.
We therefore promote clustering large storehouses and similar buildings (as required, for example, for potatoes) at less vulnerable points of the landscape, such as adjacent to existing construction or on business parks. The options to do so are worked out in more detail in the regional vision, in consultation with the stakeholders.
The implementation of crop-supporting facilities such as hail nets and span greenhouses requires an analysis of the impact on the landscape. Municipalities have incorporated rules for such facilities into zoning plans, following on from the policy rules for crop-supporting facilities and hail nets.

We strive for the re-use of agricultural construction that becomes available, potentially assigning it other functions but only where appropriate within dynamic stock management for the function in question. If the options for responsible reuse are insufficient to prevent permanent vacancy, demolition is the next option if this will contribute to the preservation and improvement of the core qualities of the National Landscape. This applies primarily to construction dating from 1970 to 2000 with minimal historic value, such as obsolete cubicle stalls (see also the section on agricultural vacancy).

As tools to give structure to this careful approach, we focus on:
- Promoting dialogue at an early stage, for example with a design-oriented approach. The impetus must be to arrive at a consensus on the future of our outdoors.
- Promoting sustainable economic development in a fragile environment, specific to businesses in historic and profile-making agrarian built areas (‘Modern farming on old farmsteads’ project).
- Development and application of new financial arrangements and earning models alongside existing instruments like green-blue services. This can also involve the opportunities presented by the new Community Agricultural Policy.
- Application of Limburg Quality Menu (by municipalities).

Intensive agriculture and horticulture is not compatible with the scale of South Limburg and the National Landscape. There is no room in South Limburg for the new establishment of intensive livestock farms (pigs, poultry) or greenhouse horticulture. Limited continued development of existing intensive livestock farming and greenhouse horticulture is possible based on operative regulations, if the core qualities at the site permit, and if they can be improved by implementing extra quality-promoting measures. All livestock farms are also subject to the national zoning surrounding fragile nature areas as dictated by the WAV (Ammonia and Livestock Act, with its accompanying Very Fragile Areas Decree).

Naturally, the clean sheds approach, designed to ensure that every agricultural and horticultural business is an asset to its local environment, also applies in this area. The Livestock Farming Ordinance and Natura2000 (now included in the Environmental Ordinance) are part of this approach (see also 7.6).

The draft EIA reveals that the development of livestock farming in South Limburg has the potential to conflict with the preservation goals for Natura2000 areas. This merits further development in the vision document to be drafted for the National Landscape (including agriculture).

**Explanation, Agriculture/Horticulture in South Limburg**

In 2013, there were over 1,100 agricultural companies in South Limburg. Over half of these can be qualified as full-fledged agricultural companies. This number includes over 300 arable farms, 150 dairy farms, and hundreds of fruit growers. There are also about a dozen intensive livestock farms established in South Limburg.

Of the regular labour employed on agri businesses in South Limburg (2664), only 15% come from outside the family. In North and Central Limburg, this figure is 56% and 27%, respectively. A decline in land area for fruit growing can be observed.

The number of animals (dairy cows) in South Limburg is usually around 13,000; the percentage with field access has remained fairly constant in recent years (75-85%).

Businesses use different strategies to maintain their continuity. In the land-based farming sector, a number of trends can be seen. Broadly speaking, increasing scale and expansion can be identified as the primary trends. The agricultural businesses in the National Landscape are, as a rule, smaller (NGE?) than businesses elsewhere. The agricultural businesses in the National Landscape tend more towards expansion; this means side activities in nature and landscape management, recreation, and other semi-agricultural or non-agricultural activities. Both the expansion and the side activities allow agricultural businesses to continue to exist and manage their agricultural lands.

**Trends**

The expectation is that the elimination of the European milk quotas on 1 April 2015 will take the brakes off of regional milk production, and we will see growth in milk production of 10-20% and continued increases of scale. A large part of the expansion of stall capacity for this expansion of milk production has already been built or permitted. Dairy farms in South Limburg are intensifying their number of
animals per hectare. However, the businesses remain tied to land for sale of manure and feed production, driven by an entrepreneurial vision and overriding legislation. The percentage of pasture grazing is fairly constant, although this grazing will come to be more centred on the remaining dairy farms. When dairy farmers cease operations and sell their grasslands, the new owner may opt to split up these plots and use them as construction land for their earning potential. This means it would be prudent to keep tabs on how much acreage of grassland is being developed.

The Fertilizers Act stipulates a manure processing obligation for manure that cannot be placed in the company itself or with another agri business. Entrepreneurs who have exceeded the reference level for phosphate production must demonstrate that they are in compliance with the supplemental condition (land or processing). The concrete approach for land-based farming will be regulated in a legislative amendment at the end of this year. The administrative strength of the mandatory manure processing/land requirement limits the growth in milk production. Disposing of surplus manure entails high costs for the entrepreneur.

The options for disposal for manure in South Limburg (under European rules: derogation decree/Fifth Nitrate Action programme) are higher per hectare if at least 70-80% of the agricultural area of the business consists of grassland.

Vacancy of agricultural buildings is also expected to increase in South Limburg in the coming years. The report 'Released agricultural construction in the rural area' (Innovatienetwerk, March 2014) forecasts vacancy of agricultural buildings in the southern municipalities up to 2030 at generally less than 50,000 m², with a few outliers in the municipalities of Gulpen-Witten (50,000 m²-150,000 m²) and Eijsden-Margraten (150,000 m²-300,000 m²).

New agri activities and new other economic activities (insofar as space is available for such activities, and considering the vacancy in other sectors) will lead to reuse of a portion of the agricultural construction being released.