



TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE URBAN RENEWAL IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Abstract

Cities and the neighbourhoods within are dynamic and change continuously. Vital neighbourhoods can cope with changing circumstances like outdated use, changing household compositions, consumer preferences and fashions, political turnovers, global trends and economic cycles. Sustainable areas are vital and flexible to changes. Sustainable urban renewal results in sustainable areas. However, what is sustainable urban renewal, and why is quite a lot of renewal policy, as history shows, not very sustainable? European urban renewal policy can be divided into three separate periods, in which different ideas prevailed. This article shows these three periods on four points of view, the contents, the process, the area and a time-focus, and elaborates these on one particular country, the Netherlands.

Keywords: *Urban Renewal, Sustainable Areas, Housing, Urban Policy, Sustainable Urban Renewal.*

INTRODUCTION

Neighbourhoods are no static entities. They change when being used by residents, visitors and local entrepreneurs. They 'age', wear out and need maintenance and renewal. Some neighbourhoods are continuously doing well, while others face decline. In the latter case they get branded as 'problem', 'disadvantaged', 'deprived' or 'concentrated' area, low-income neighbourhood and poverty district. This refers to a downward process in which people who can afford it are moving out and make place for people at the lower social strata, where dwellings and streets are deteriorating, crime and non-social behaviour rise, facilities leave or go out of business and the image is worsening.

Governments develop policies to renew existing neighbourhoods when these do not match with future ideas for the area. Considering a range of countries across Europe during a long time period, we can distinguish comparable goals and strategies on urban renewal processes. We will elaborate on these, but providing such a wide overview, this raises the question why some areas do need the help of an active urban renewal support, while other areas are more or less able to adjust to the -often same - changing circumstances. While urban renewal activities differ enormously between areas, their results differ as much. Some

urban renewal efforts result in the intended vital neighbourhoods, while in other areas urban renewal activities take place year after year, placing doubts at the effectiveness of earlier efforts. In the latter areas, urban renewal obviously is not very sustainable, as results don't sustain for a long time. Why are some approaches successful and others not? Or why do results differ from apparent similar approaches? It is intriguing which renewal approaches are more effective than others.

These considerations result in the following overall question: What characterizes a sustainable urban renewal approach?

SUSTAINABLE URBAN RENEWAL

The word 'sustainable' has been subject of numerous debates. It can be used in a more ecological sense, referring to the exhaustibility of our natural resources and following the original meaning provided by the Brundtland Commission in 1987. Sustainable urban renewal focuses on improving the housing stock in an area to decrease energy consumption (see Van der Waals, 2001; Sunikka, 2006; Beerepoot, 2007). Measures on ecological sustainability aim to improve insulation, save energy consumption, generate local electricity, smart grid technology, etc.

Sustainability also can be used in a wider sense including physical attractiveness, safe and clean streets, involvement and collaboration and a mix of functions. In the widest sense a sustainable urban area is functioning according to needs and expectations, and urban renewal is meant to make such a good area. An important characteristic is that a sustainable area doesn't need drastic renewal activities, but has an internal vitality and quality to gradually adjust to changing circumstances over time. A sustainable urban area functions well on physical, social, economic and ecological terms and has enough internal vitality and flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances, use and preferences. Sustainable urban renewal refers to an approach that leads to a sustainable area, an area that functions well.

However, many urban areas do not follow the track of gradual adjustments. These areas have been subject to urban renewal processes, defined as policies and strategies that are formulated to alter the area. Motives can be found in perceived deterioration, or in plans for other uses or functions.

All European countries have policies to renew cities and neighbourhoods. We will share all policies to renew an area under the umbrella term of 'urban renewal': this includes urban regeneration, urban revival, area development and any similar term. Moreover, in all different languages specific terms are used, often with their own political connotations. Not seldom, when a new national administration arrives, new policies are implemented, using a different terminology, and only changing the final activities in a minor way. We don't make difference between any of those related terms and use all these terms equal, as referring to activities that change existing parts of the city.

Three periods of urban renewal policy in Europe

The renewal of urban areas has been a process almost as long as cities do exist. Obviously, by far not all urban areas are able to gradually adjust to changing circumstances. Moreover, many earlier renewal efforts don't result in sustainable areas. What went wrong? What can we learn in current debates and future policies from processes in the past? Therefore we return to earlier urban renewal policies. We focus on urban renewal processes in Europe since World War II, which can be divided into three major periods, distinguished by rather

clear changes of policy (Droste et al, 2008).

The first period of urban renewal policy in Europe starts some years after the Second World War. After having overcome war damages, the central parts of the existing cities were completely rebuilt and remodelled for future use during the following decades. Old areas were cleared to provide opportunities for future urban developments. Dwellings were built in new neighbourhoods (the then suburbs) in order to provide housing for displaced inhabitants of the old derelict slums near the city centres. National governments played a predominant role, providing the political framework and major subsidies for implementation at the local level. National governments took the lead in ordering the country and developing welfare states, where housing was considered as a major element of these new welfare states (Levy-Vroelant et al, 2008). This could be social housing for the working classes in countries in North and Western Europe, state housing in Eastern Europe, or individual support to facilitate ownership in Southern countries.

The turning point was the worldwide reaction against the establishment in the late 1960s, with slogans like 'flower power' and 'power to the people', student revolts and demonstrations against the Vietnam War. Urban renewal of those days came under pressure in the early 1970s. Prestigious large-scale road development, ambitious city-centre plans and high-rise housing construction stopped rather suddenly (Turkington et al. 2004). Large-scale top-down plans were replaced by small-scale neighbourhood renewal, based on bottom-up processes. The wave of anti-establishment thinking led to a new focus on popular demand and social needs: urban renewal became more demand-oriented and focused on provision of social infrastructure, including affordable housing.

This change in priorities and ideas marked the transition to the second period of urban renewal, which started early 1970s and lasted until mid 1990s. Urban renewal before had been led by urban planning, but now it was led by housing issues. The strategy changed from area clearance to housing renewal in favour of existing local residents and the strategy was to build for the neighbourhood and its people. The participation of inhabitants in planning and renovation was considered essential.

During the 1980s, the theme of urban

renewal broadened from housing alone to the overall residential environment, in order to address problems of pollution, vandalism and safety. As the environment proved to be worst in recently built high-rise estates, the schemes also targeted these areas. Both the dwelling and the environmental strategies were mainly physically oriented, but included also social and physical policies developed in association with residents.

Urban regeneration was mainly a top-down issue in all countries during this second period, with the national governments formulating the goals, the policies and providing the money. Increasingly, local responsibilities grew and larger municipalities got responsible for planning and implementation of urban renewal strategies, mainly physical oriented. The focus of urban renewal policy evolved from the improvement of housing in the 1970s to the improvement of the residential environment in the 1980s. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, social and socio-economic programmes were introduced. These policies had a new aim: to integrate deprived people and to increase social relations between different groups in society. These blazed the trail for subsequent policies and can be seen as the turning point to the third period.

The third period of European urban renewal starts in the 1990s and is characterised by integrated policy. It was recognised that urban problems could not be solved by physical improvement alone, nor was the addition of social measures enough. All across Europe there was an increasing mismatch between the labour market and the urban structure: the working (middle) class commuted each day from the suburbs to the cities, while the people who lived in the city had no jobs, as low-wage jobs had moved towards the outskirts (and abroad). Neither hostile housing design, nor bad housing quality, nor management deficits were sufficient to explain social problems in deprived areas. The city as a whole would end up segregated: lower-class people would live in social housing in sober and inexpensive neighbourhoods, while the middle classes, including families with children, would have moved to suburbs with detached family houses or to neighbouring towns. The least popular areas proved to be not the old pre-war neighbourhoods (with their central location and improved housing stock), but the post-war areas dominated by standardised mass housing. Residents consider both buildings and environment

as unattractive, making them areas of 'minimal choice'. Unemployment, social exclusion, crime and tensions between groups are common. Urban sociologists labelled this process the doughnut city (Schoon, 2001): an expensive core in the city centre surrounded by poor neighbourhoods, with wealthy areas surrounding the city.

In most European countries urban regeneration gradually became an integrated policy during the 1990s: City Policy (*Politique de la Ville*) in France, the national Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal in England, Big City Policy (*Grote Steden Beleid*) in the Netherlands, the Metropolitan Development Initiative in Sweden and the Socially Integrative City (*Soziale Stadt*) in Germany. These territorial and integrative programmes combined physical, economic and social goals and strategies. In these programmes increasingly the strategy was to keep the residents in the urban regeneration areas. Policies developed in a new way: towards a social mix of the population, to be achieved by a differentiated housing stock. There were two main approaches: either to build social housing in areas where it was scarce, or to replace social housing in areas where it was dominant by middle class housing. Richard Florida's ideas (2002) were welcomed everywhere, and cities tried to stimulate the 'creative class' to live within their city limits.

Moreover, years of urban centre upgrading paid out: in most European cities there are more shops, terraces and restaurants, car free zones, and lots of festivals and attractions than twenty years ago. City life has just grown nicer. The urban popularity coincides with major international trends like a growing number of small households, divorced people, retiring elderly, people having a job of their own, groups that often prefer city life.

The national governments gradually lost their leading role during this third period of urban renewal, although they still keep the responsibility for urban renewal programmes (in terms of budget and policy development). The municipalities grew in importance, but even more the non-governmental actors. Policies are made and implemented in collaboration with a range of actors, in what is generally referred to as a shift from government to governance (Healey, 1997; Van Kempen et al, 2005). These other actors include housing associations, private developers, local service organisations, and not in the last place inhabitants.

The historic overview shows that the areas

where urban policy focuses on have been renewed, dependent on changing interests, policies and historic circumstances. The object of urban renewal differs per country. When global forces changed the worldwide industrial landscape, former heavily industrialised countries such as Britain, Germany and Belgium had to cope more with vacant industrial plots, that obviously needed transformation and restructuring. In France, Sweden and the Netherlands relatively many inexpensive and sober social housing was produced in the three decades following World War II. When prosperity rose and people could afford other types of housing, these mass housing neighbourhoods increasingly proved to be unpopular resulting in a renewal focus on these post war areas. In southern European countries owner occupancy rules and urban renewal activities focus on the upgrading of central districts. In Eastern European countries, all changes started only from the 1990 onwards after the political turnover. Despite general trends across Europe, local and national circumstances, histories and interests influence outcomes of the process of urban renewal (see Levy-Vroelant et al, 2008).

GENERAL TRENDS AND DEBATES IN URBAN RENEWAL POLICIES

Urban renewal has over time changed from a technical discipline to a complex process, integrating more aspects and involving more actors. More activities are carried out on different scales and on different moments in time, and more strategies and methods are used. Several authors identify different features of the resulting changes in governance, contents and organisation of urban policies (Couch et al, 2003; Van Kempen et al. 2005; Czischke & Pattini, 2007; Droste et al, 2008; Van Gent, 2009). Before analysing any urban policy, it is useful to point at the limits of it. Urban policy is just one kind of policy, dependent on both external developments and policy processes in general. Worldwide megatrends such as globalization, economic industrialization shifts, increasing competition between urban regions, ageing of the population, climate changes, developments in ICT, and other trends all have implications for any local or national urban policy, implications we don't discuss here, but one should be aware of. Another set of overall factors are national or European policies. EU-climate reg-

ulations limit the construction of (new) housing close to motorways and within dense conurbations, EU-enlargements lead to higher immigration levels and national policies on allowances, tax regulations or incomes influence local urban renewal schemes. Urban policy and urban renewal policy in particular, has a limited influence.

Nevertheless, there are many commonalities in the diagnosis of urban problems, in policy goals and often in methodology. We distinguish four dimensions that are particularly relevant: (1) the area based approach, (2) the integrated approach, (3) the ecological inevitability and (4) the shift from government to governance. We elaborate on these four dimensions, and mention some of the debates that play around these dimensions across Europe. Next to that, we focus on the Netherlands, and describe how these four dimensions work out in this particular country.

(1) The territorial (area-based) approach: problems don't stop at the border, so why should the approach do so?

The area approach is a way to focus activities and to connect policy-making more directly with implementation. The neighbourhood often seems a natural, logical scale to assemble the actors in the urban renewal process, both those within the area (residents and other users) and those with wider responsibilities (municipality, police, social care, housing associations, etc.). Area-based approaches have gained prominence across Europe, largely because they create a good framework for concerted action to counteract multiple deprivation. Area-based approaches can be successful: many problems are solved, the environment looks better, property prices increase and residents are happier in their improved houses and environment - at least immediately after the interventions (see Wassenberg et al, 2007).

But there are critical accounts of area-based approaches as well. It may produce negative side effects: some problems are displaced to other, often adjacent areas. Dealers and burglars just move. These areas may originally have enjoyed somewhat more favourable conditions than the target neighbourhood but then get pushed into a downwards spiral of socio-structural development. Any area-based approach thus should take account of side effects on nearby areas and incorporate plans for adjacent areas.

Another point of discussion is that some problems indeed concentrate in an area, but hardly can be solved on the neighbourhood level. Clean streets, derelict housing and social cohesion can be improved locally, but it is more efficient for issues such as unemployment, inadequate schooling, organised crime or energy use to work on a higher scale level. It is counted that just a mere 1% of all jobs is provided within the own neighbourhood (Marlet, 2009). So, the chance that any jobless finds a job is much larger somewhere else in the city, or in the region.

(2) The integrated approach: the paradoxal balance between place and people

In most Western European countries there has been a shift from sectoral to more integrative policies that require cross-departmental work. The historic overview shows that urban renewal has broadened from physical to social and economical issues in most countries. There has been one or more swings in the focus of urban regeneration among three objectives: socio-economic, socio-cultural or physical-economic. These occur at different times depending on local political priorities.

The integrated approach understands that problems are often 'wicked' problems with no easy solution or one universal remedy. Completely eradicate unemployment, crime or marginality from problematic areas is impossible as these are part of urban life, but they can be made less persistent. It is an open question what the aim of any renewal approach should be: should it lead to an average functioning urban neighbourhood, according to a number of features (safety, jobless, pollution), or could districts at the bottom of the housing market play a vital role in the function of the whole city? The first strategy aims at a social mixed neighbourhood and provides opportunities to keep successful social climbers within the area. The latter strategy aims at solid basic circumstances and to concentrate both control and help opportunities within the area. These are two strategies with totally different management consequences.

A related debate among scientists is whether urban renewal policies should be area-based, focussing on a better place to live, or people-based, focusing on better lives for residents. Physical renewal upgrades the area, but offers no guarantee that residents' daily lives will improve, a situation that was found during the 1980s in west-

ern European countries. Socio-economic measures may improve residents' personal situations, but if successful people continuously move out of the area it will stay deprived. This we can call the paradoxical relationship between territorial action and residential mobility. The challenge is to find the right balance between the two approaches, given the particular context of each area.

This balance is dependent on the geographical context and may change during the years. German policies in the eastern part of the country differ from those in the west. Due to the different urban and social contexts and different tensions on the housing market, the eastern Länder do face more physical measures than the western Länder. In France a more physical approach is becoming increasingly popular, while in the Netherlands the movement is away from the physical and towards more social and economic measures (Droste et al, 2008).

(3) The ecological inevitability: from scepticism to action?

It is clear for most people that the climate is changing, despite some few sceptics. Natural resources are limited, energy prices are rising due to scarcity, the planet is warming and biodiversity is shrinking. Al Gore's movie accelerated the global opinion on the theme. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of the UN presented its fourth report in 2007, in which all leading scientists state that global warming most probably is caused by human activities.

Concerning urban renewal, the main issue is not whether ecological measures are inevitable, but how these should be implemented. Who should take the lead, should invest and implement necessary measures? Should these be national governments? But all across Europe governments are stepping back, leaving more responsibilities, and investments, to the market. Moreover, the financial position of most governments is weak, making them shortcutting on budgets instead of investing. Should the market invest? These will only act when they have to, to avoid competition disadvantages. So, should it be people themselves? Despite some enthusiastic forerunners, the large majority of the population seems not interested to invest much in ecological measures, only when measures will pay back by decreasing energy bills. So, who will act?

(4) Governance: who acts when the government steps back?

The last major shift in European urban renewal policy is the shift from government to governance. Top down and blueprint plans from central governments are replaced by programmes and processes, and the one actor approach is replaced by a game with multiple players. There is an increasing trend towards public-private and other partnerships, cooperation of different actors, local contracts and the inclusion of citizens in decision-making processes. Policies are not to be imposed on people but developed together. This implicates another role for governments, less expectations from laws and subsidies, and more emphasis on individual (residents) and private (market) involvement. For governments this leads to delegation, mandating, service orientation and process orientation.

Countries differ in the compositions of partnerships, in the relations between central and local governments, in the form of citizen participation and in the aims of urban renewal. In Germany and the UK the focus is on integration of the individual, in France on improving social mix as a condition for social cohesion, and in the Netherlands and Sweden the goal falls somewhere between these two. While it is clear that the almighty role of governments had shrunk, it leaves open the debate which other actors should do what. This can be residents, and raises questions about participation, representation and empowerment. It also could be commercial actors, but in times of economic recession few activities are taken, while in economic prosperous times the market is overstressed. Countries that gained from economic prosperity only a couple of years ago (Spain, Ireland, UK, Greece), are hit most by the contemporary economic crisis. Economic downfall has consequences for incomes and jobs, property prices, market demands, economic confidence and on urban renewal in general. Urban renewal that involves major refurbishment or demolitions is slowed down, despite intensive social plans for, and with, inhabitants. Rehousing schemes are delayed by the lack of available housing. These delays bring urban renewal itself into disrepute and raise questions about whether it is better to continue with less intensive upgrading schemes or leave the neighbourhoods as they are.

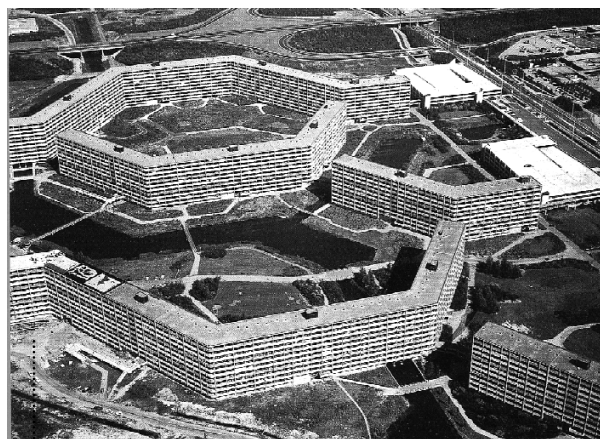


Figure 1. Contemporary urban renewal in the Netherlands often focuses on post war built flats owned by housing associations, built in the 1950s and 1960s.



Figure 2. Typical urban renewal project from the late 1970s, with 100% social sector rented housing developed in consultation with inhabitants.



Figure 3. Demolition of outdated blocks to create opportunities for other kinds of dwellings.

DUTCH URBAN RENEWAL POLICIES

How do the four selected dimensions work out in Dutch urban renewal policies?

The distinction in three periods of European urban renewal since World War II coincides with 60 years of Dutch renewal experiences. Is this also true for the four distinguished major shifts in European urban renewal approaches? How do these shifts work out in the Netherlands?

The first dimension was the shift towards area based approaches. During the first distinguished period, the post war decades, any area based approach hardly existed. Urban renewal was initiated by sectors like transport, traffic, city enlargement and industrialisation. During the second period, from the 1970s onwards, urban renewal can be characterized as area based, with small scale processes to regenerate neighbourhoods, in consultation with inhabitants. During the 1990s the vitality of the whole city came into the foreground. However, in the beginning of the current millennium the need for a spatial focus was stressed to approach more efficiently concentrated urban problems. In 2003 56 deprived areas in 30 cities were pointed out for urban renewal approaches. These 56 were chosen by the cities themselves, on two arguments: backward areas where progress was expected. Later, in 2007, a new selection of deprived areas was made, based on objective criteria to select the countries' most deprived areas, similar to the way in England 88 problem areas were selected. As a result, 40 deprived areas were selected in 18 cities throughout the country, about half of these the same as those 56, and the other half new areas. Contemporary Dutch urban renewal policy ('wijkenbeleid') focuses on these 40 areas, where almost 5% of all Dutch residents live.

The second dimension is the integrative urban renewal policy. On a national scale, several departments have combined strategies in two related policy programmes: the Big City Policy (Grotestedenbeleid, GSB) and Urban Renewal Fund (Investeringsbudget Stedelijke Vernieuwing, ISV). The goals of contemporary Dutch urban renewal policy are differentiation, social mix and housing mix. Integrated policy is a key term, meaning that physical, social and economic issues are considered, as well as issues of integration and safety (see Priemus, 2004).

The third dimension is the necessity of sus-



Figure 4. In the Bijlmermeer high-rise district some of the blocks are being demolished and replaced, the remaining are being refurbished.



Figure 5. Inhabitants are involved with/in the future of their dwellings.

tainable urban renewal in an ecological way. Until now, a range of smaller initiatives is taken, mostly by local governments (like: Rotterdam and The Hague aiming to be a climate neutral city) or housing associations. Initiatives from residents are limited, except of some advance guards, and driven by financial considerations of decreased expenses for energy costs.

The fourth dimension is the shift from government to governance in urban renewal. This results in a decreased role for both national and local governments, and more possibilities and responsibilities for market actors, housing associations and residents. Of these, particular housing associations are worth to mention, as they have a strong position in the country and in the urban renewal areas in particular. For now, we will elaborate on these actors.

Actors

Contemporary urban renewal policy in the Netherlands involves many local players, from the municipality to police officers, from inhabitants to social workers and from shopkeepers to housing associations. Urban renewal is no longer just a government issue or even a municipality issue, but a governance issue, with actors participating and collaborating.

Local governments make agreements with the national government about their share of the state budget for urban renewal, which at present is 1.2 billion for five years (2010-2014). The government has formulated three objectives for urban renewal (ISV): (1) more quality and differentiated housing stock, (2) a better quality of life in the physical environment and (3) a more healthy and ecological sustainable environment. Local governments have to collaborate for both policy making and implementation of urban renewal. The role of local government is no longer the decision-maker, it is now the mediator between local interests.

An important urban renewal policy maker are the housing associations. These own 2.3 million dwellings, a third of all Dutch housing, and three quarters of all rented housing. There are about 500 housing associations in the country, varying from 200 to 80.000 dwellings each. The larger ones are professional and powerful organisations, often better equipped to deal with housing issues than their local government counterparts, especially outside the major cities. Housing associations position themselves as hybrid organisations, social entrepreneurs with a social or non-profit aim. Housing associations have major assets in all 40 appointed urban renewal areas. Although housing association tenants are generally below the welfare average (on many points on the scale), they are not on the whole poor, deprived or stigmatised.

Since 1995, housing associations have offi-



Figure 6. Refurbishment of low rise flats.



Figure 7. Housing mix as a base for social mix, which implicates creating more diverse housing types in monotonous areas.

cially been independent of state subsidies. No government money goes to housing associations, and since 1995 the government has not paid for any new social housing. Since gaining financial independence their economic position has improved, due to the general rise in house prices, which increase the value of their stock (Ouweland & Van Daalen, 2002). Overall, the financial position of the housing association sector is strong, although recently weakened by the economic crisis and the decreased possibilities to sell some of their housing stock and generate financing for expensive investments for renovation or social amenities in the neighbourhood.

There is a debate going on about the role of housing associations. This role goes beyond the provision of only (better) housing, but also an improved environment and a better social milieu for the residents. But how far should a housing association go? Should they take the lead in urban renewal, as they own most of the property in the area? Should they invest, take financial risks, and make financially unprofitable investments? What

should their role in society be? New suggested roles include caring for the local environment, ecological investments, providing houses for groups other than their traditional clients, which might include the homeless, handicapped, elderly, students or key workers. Housing associations are probably the most important player in urban renewal for policy making and implementation (Boelhouver, 2007; Wassenberg, 2008). However, the current debate on extended roles for housing associations in times of reduction of financial possibilities makes housing associations reserved to implement several proposed measures, including energy reduction programmes, insulation and energy production.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE URBAN RENEWAL APPROACH

A sustainable urban area gradually adjusts to changing needs, uses and preferences of inhabitants and other users. Urban policies can be limited in areas where problems are not present, or at least not dominant, where changes happen without notice. Urban renewal policy is necessary where problems dominate, or, sometimes, where changes of uses are prominent, like in old brownfield areas. What are success factors for sustainable urban renewal? Four points that contribute to success can be distinguished.

The first factor is the integration of different policy sectors (such as physical, social, ecological and economic policies). The historic overview clearly shows that sectoral solutions for multiple problems generate no final improvements. Then, integration of different policy sectors is necessary. The second factor is the involvement and collaboration of many local players, from the municipality to police officers, from inhabitants to social workers and from shopkeepers to housing associations. Urban renewal is an issue of 'governance' and requires the active participation of all relevant stakeholders when necessary. This makes urban renewal a complicated process.

The third point is that different problems are attached to different scales, resulting in the need to operate at different levels simultaneously, varying from the direct neighbourhood, the district or the city to the region (a recent advice supports this, VROM-raad, 2009).

The fourth and last factor is a long-term approach accompanied by short-term measures, physical as well as non-physical. Complaining residents can regain their confidence through short-term improvements. Short-term and quick measures can be taken while long-term strategies are being prepared. Drastic measures, such as demolition and new construction, have more local support when daily inconveniences, like the dirt on the streets, the drugs dealer on the corner, the burglaries in the park, or the many unemployed, are dealt with properly and at once. It is important to keep the positive people involved and to keep them within the area, instead of seeing them moving out.

Urban renewal has over time, and most recently around the turn of the century, changed from a technical discipline to a complex process, integrating more aspects and involving more actors. More activities are carried out on different scales, and more strategies and methods are used. Some factors can be recognised as making urban policies improve deprived areas more successfully into sustainable areas, that are vital and able to adjust to the ever changing circumstances. The most important seems to be finding the right balance: the involvement and collaboration between all required actors, a combination of various measures and sectors, working simultaneously at several scale levels, and combining future-oriented policies with today's urban reality. For some this may be a platitude, for others it may just seem impossible. The trick is to look critically, but with open eyes, at successful projects elsewhere and to find out which successful elements can be used in the situation 'back home'.

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