

Everyday Life and Social Mixing in a Changing Neighbourhood

André Ouwehand & Eva Bosch

OTB Research Institute for Housing, Urban and Mobility Studies,

Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands

a.l.ouwehand@tudelft.nl

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Abstract

An important part of urban renewal in Western European countries is aimed at differentiation of the housing stock. This is done through demolishing cheap (social) rental dwellings and building new houses for sale in these regained spaces. The policy practice and expected gains of social mixing through urban renewal are widely discussed in urban policy. Critics contest neighbourhood effects of poverty or ethnic concentration in these countries. In academic circles, the existing mixing policies have even been judged revanchist policies. Effects of urban renewal are criticized and often studies conclude with a strong plea for a programme strengthening the socio economic position of the neighbourhoods residents in stead of restructuring the housing stock.

But what are the opinions of the residents? In many of the neighbourhoods with a dominant cheap rental housing stock selective migration processes have led to a population composition that is very diverse according to ethnicity and culture and more homogenous and vulnerable in economic terms. The rapid changes in the composition of the population have influenced the appreciation of the neighbourhood and its reputation in a negative way.

How do these changes in composition of the population and the realized and planned urban policies affect everyday life in those transforming neighbourhoods for its diverse group of residents? And what conclusions should be drawn for social mixing and the renewal policies? The paper builds on the results of research in a Dutch post-war neighbourhood that has gone through long renewal processes and where the population has become much more diverse in recent years. In the case study that is presented here, it is concluded that a vast amount of the residents support the renewal plans for the part of the neighbourhood with a very low quality that resulted in a situation of ongoing concentration of ethnic minorities, amongst the a dominance of Antilleans, in the northern part and high liveability problems. Residents themselves come up with social mixing as a favourite living situation. Summarizing we could say that residents often expect: more differentiation = a good mix = decent people. But social mixing is not enough. Renewal should also comprise a guarantee for more liveability, more selectivity in allocating new dwellings. The current policy of urban renewal and social mixing corroborates the stance that social mixing policies must be assessed in their local context.

Keywords: social mix, everyday life, neighbourhood change

Introduction

Urban renewal and especially social mixing is a widely discussed theme in urban policy. Social mixing is widely adhered to current government policies but it is also contested by academic researchers. The main arguments against the policy in Western European countries contest neighbourhood effects of poverty or ethnic concentration in these countries. The discussion on social mixing is not only an academic discussion, there is also a strong societal debate about the supposed benefits of social mixing. In the Netherlands this is not a simple

debate of leftist parties on one side and right-wing parties on the other side. Not only do these parties show some ambiguity in taking position, other, populist parties have fervently joined the debate. As well in academia as in society the debate sometimes seems to evolve in an almost ideological debate. At the same time enormous investments are concerned in realizing the social mix policies while the execution of these policies strongly intervenes in the everyday life of numerous residents of these areas. Therefore the relevance of the debate is high. In this paper we will only give a brief summary of the academic and societal debates on social mix. We will contribute to the debate more extensively with a description of the opinions on social mixing policy of the residents of a neighbourhood where people have been moved out and demolition is at hand. We will use the results of qualitative research that we have done in one of the neighbourhoods of Zuidwijk, a district in Rotterdam. This research gives us more insight in the arguments of the residents, why they are in favour of, or are against social mixing. In this way we hope to give information that may enable us to bring the debate further than ideological points of view.

This paper is structured as follows. We will start in the next section with the academic and societal debate. In the third section we will give a short description of the district Zuidwijk and especially the neighbourhood the 'Velden'. In this neighbourhood within a couple of years a large amount of the social rental dwellings will be replaced by more expensive houses for owner-occupiers, which are created either by drastic renovation or building new houses on demolition sites, to attract and keep the middle class households in the neighbourhood. The emphasis in this paper is on the fourth section where we will give the opinions of the residents of that neighbourhood. We end up with conclusions.

Social mix: a contested policy

The academic debate

Selective migration processes involve advantaged as well as disadvantaged groups in modern cities and have been the subject of urban researchers from the beginning of the 20th century until now. Different points of view have been developed in analyzing neighbourhood change (Temkin and Rohe 1996), from the ecological models of the Chicago school, the 'subculturalist view' of scholars as Firey, Gans and Suttles, that emphasized the role played by social networks, neighbourhood reputation and attachment to the community, till the points of view of the political economy with scholars as Logan and Molotch (1987). The study of Wilson (1987) of the significant role that one's neighbourhood plays in determining one's life-chances has cast a new light on selective migration processes in cities, especially on the exodus of middle-class residents, and has encouraged policies to counter these processes. The work of Wilson has influenced governmental policies as well as academic studies. In the last decade of the 20th century social mixing policies have grown popular in a number of Western European countries. In the Netherlands social mixing has been a stronghold of the urban renewal policy since the publication of the Memorandum on Urban Renewal:

"To ensure a healthy future for cities a differentiated composition of its population and housing stock is a prerequisite. If in certain neighbourhoods uniformity prevails or looms, investment should be made in quality improvement of the living and working environment, by increasing the variety of the housing stock" (Ministry of Housing 1997, p .5, our translation).

Nowadays it has become a major urban policy and planning goal in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Australia, Canada and the United States' (Lees 2008, p. 2453). Wilson's study has also boosted the subject of 'neighbourhood effects' in the academic debate and on the research agenda. The key question of 'neighbourhood effect' studies is whether a

concentration of advantaged or disadvantaged groups in particular areas has an additional effect on the well-being of some, or all, of the local population (Buck 2001).

On the basis of different studies we could state that there is evidence that living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods negatively affects the well-being of residents, also in the Netherlands (Ouwehand & Doff, forthcoming) Van der Laan Bouma-Doff (2005), Gijsberts and Dagevos (2007) and Pinkster (2008) have shown in the Netherlands negative associations between ethnic concentration and the degree of contact between ethnic minorities and native Dutch. Less contact has a negative influence on language capabilities and labour-market participation. In addition, a bad reputation and stigmatisation of concentration neighbourhoods also affect the residents' well-being (Hastings and Dean 2003; Hastings 2004; Wassenberg 2004; Ouwehand 2005; Pan Ké Shon 2007; Musterd 2008).

These different studies have left the question open whether or not social mixing is the best reaction to poverty or ethnic concentration in a neighbourhood. Galster has argued that demonstrating an independent effect on the behaviour and/or outcomes of individuals is a necessary condition, but not enough (2007b). He argues that other conditions also must be met, depending on the normative basis of the mixing policy and the presumed neighbourhood effect mechanisms (Galster 2007b, 524). He has developed an analytical framework that can be used to justify a housing policy aiming for a mix of residents, according to income, ethnicity and/or immigrant status (Galster 2005; 2007a; 2007b), either on the grounds of equity (improving the absolute well-being of the disadvantaged) or efficiency (improving the sum of all individuals' well-being, whether they are disadvantaged or advantaged, regardless of the absolute impact on the latter). This framework is contributing to the debate on social mixing as it tries to order different effects for distinguished groups of residents in one framework. But it also enhances the challenge of the debate: it is very difficult to measure the different effects of social mixing on one scale. Also it may be disputed whether it suffices to use only 'equity' and 'efficiency' as guiding principles. In their paper about a specific policy to prevent disadvantaged resident to settle in certain districts of the city of Rotterdam. Ouwehand & Doff (forthcoming) have suggested to include also the dimension of revanchism (Smith 1996) in the framework of Galster.

With the popularity of social mixing policies also a lot of evaluation research has been published throughout the years and in different countries in different stages summarizing literature reviews have been undertaken, for instance the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Mixed Income Communities programme (Holmes 2006) and in the Netherlands a literature study for the ministry (Ouwehand et al. 2006). Also a number of review articles have been published in academic journals (Galster 2007; Joseph 2006; Lees 2008;)

It is striking that these publications and articles come up with rather different conclusions, ranging from a very positive, even enthusiastic stance (Holmes 2006; Tunstall & Fenton 2006) to a very critical (Cheshire 2009) and even negative stance (Leese 2008). Cheshire is stating:

“Forcing neighbourhoods to be mixed in social and economic terms is, therefore, mainly treating the symptoms of inequality not the causes. It may make decent people feel better but it does not address the problem. (...) That the disadvantaged are concentrated in poor neighbourhoods does not demonstrate that poor neighbourhoods are a cause of disadvantage. If that is the case, the conclusion for policy is to reduce income inequality in society, not build “mixed neighbourhoods” or improve the built environment in such neighbourhoods. Mixed neighbourhood policies may divert attention from the need for effective income redistribution. (...) The obverse of this is that if policies do not effectively address the underlying causes of poverty, improving the physical environment and amenities of deprived neighbourhoods may simply

displace poorer people to even less attractive neighbourhoods, so the poorest have to bear disruption costs as well as poverty while continuing to live in a low-quality built environment.” (2009, p. 372-373)

Cheshire’s assessment of mixed neighbourhoods is based on the supposed social economic benefit for the poor. Lees (2008) is quoting Cheshire with much approval, but her paper seems to pretend to give a holistic overview and assessment. However, when she refers to the review of social mixing by Tunstall & Fenton (2006) she does not pay any attention to their positive findings on social mixing. This is striking since Tunstall and Fenton came up with a critical, but almost enthusiastic summary.

“In the last ten years, a substantial body of research has emerged on mix, its effects and means to create it. This research finds that a variety of types of housing and social mix are being pursued. The reasons for pursuing mix vary widely, and include: delivering social housing; meeting other social policy goals; and principle opposition to division between different types of people.

A review of the evidence suggests that some of these goals are more likely to be achieved than others. There are tensions between different goals; pursuing one aim may frustrate another. (...) There are some gaps in knowledge, but although they raise questions for implementation, the most common rationales for mixed communities remain valid.” (Tunstall & Fenton 2006, p. 3).

But Leese only seems to gather the negative and critical arguments. She summarizes:

“Social mix policies rely on a common set of beliefs about the benefits of mixed communities, with little evidence to support them, and a growing evidence base that contradicts the precepts embedded in social mix policies that should make policy-makers sit up and take note. (...) Social mix policies are cosmetic policies rather than ones prepared to deal with the whole host of complex social, economic and cultural reasons as to why there are concentrations of poor, economically inactive people in our central cities (2008, p. 2463).

It seems worthwhile to analyze the different reviews on social mixing in a systematic way, but we will not do this in this paper but will mention some arguments that may help us further in a better assessment of the supposed benefits of social mixing and the academic debate.

First we want to emphasize that it is needed to include all concerning aspects and include multidisciplinary research in evaluating the social mix policies. It is not sufficient to judge the merits only on the presence or absence of neighbourhood effects on the social economic outcomes for the residents. Neither is it sufficient to make an assessment of social mixing dealing only with the effects on social capital or social cohesion, or the positive and negative socializing effects of poverty or ethnic concentration. We also have to take in account the effects on neighbourhood reputation and position and perspective as stated before. A critical assessment from the point of view of the political economy should be part of that, but other disciplines and points of view should also be included.

Secondly, in literature sometimes social mixing is almost equalized with gentrification and the exclusion of low-income households (Leese 2008). This seems to be a rather blunt equalisation. In both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands social mixing is often executed as well to realize some differentiation in the housing stock in neighbourhoods with a very dominant position of social rented dwellings. Social mixing, either by selling parts of the rental stock to residents, or demolition followed by the realization of new built houses for sale, brings some differentiation to those areas, but mostly leaves still a dominance of the social rental stock. These processes must be assessed in relation with the changing position of social housing at large. In the Netherlands well skilled labourers, often with two persons

working in the household, nowadays want to buy a house due to existing fiscal instruments, instead of renting a social dwelling. 40 to 50 years ago social rental dwellings were the only affordable dwellings for these households. Due to scarcity of money and a low wage policy of the post war years, almost complete districts were realized as social housing. The growth of prosperity and the higher standard of living nowadays, have changed both housing demands and housing policies (Ouwehand 2002). Within the areas that were meant for those households, the stock could meet their present-day demands. Under influence of welfare growth and the revised housing policies that left less possibilities for state subsidized and state financed housing, the social housing sector has to cope with residualization and must serve a more specific part of the households (Harloe 1995). Within those set conditions, municipalities, housing associations, and other actors including residents(organizations) have to deal with the question whether they want to maintain all the social housing stock and, within the conditions that are at stake, accept that the population will become more and more homogeneous in economic terms. Social mixing, in that situation, is not equal with gentrification processes in the free market where complete neighbourhoods will be solely accessible for middle and high income groups and will exclude residents with a low income. Social mixing, in contrast, creates conditions so that social mobile households will not turn their back to these areas.

Thirdly, by putting social mixing on par with gentrification, there seems to be little attention for the scale on which it is executed and the geography of the city. On the cities housing market, post-war districts at the edge of town with 60-80% social rented dwellings have to face the competition with at one side nearby greenfield developments with an enormous supply of houses for sale and on the other side the real central district areas with much more facilities. They are in their very essence not comparable with the central city districts with a dominance of private housing. An assessment of social mixing should always be put in the broader frame of the availability of housing for all residents and has to take in account their preferences.

The societal debate

As we have posed, social mixing is a contested policy. Lees (2008) mentioned in the above given quotation that policy-makers should 'sit up and take note', regarding the evidence that she has named. But policymakers also or, within the given context, primarily have to deal with the societal debate. Social mixing, at least in the Netherlands, is part of a strong societal debate interwoven with the discussion on concentration of ethnic minorities and the discussion on integration of migrants. Illustrations of that debate are a series of newspaper articles discussing a then recently published study on urban renewal (Bergeijk et al. 2008) and a study on supposed spill-over effects of social mixing through urban renewal (Slob et al. 2008), in the Volkskrant and in NRC-next in July 2008. In September 2008 the national attention was drawn to the neighbourhood Oosterwei in the mid-size city of Gouda. An incident with boys that threatened a bus driver with a knife caused the bus company to divert their route and to avoid driving through that neighbourhood. The incident caused an enormous uproar in newspapers and on television. Boys in the neighbourhood, where many Moroccan households live, were getting annoyed by all the publicity and threatened a couple of days later a camera team. Similar incidents happened in the Amsterdam district of Slotervaart. The district Kanaleneiland in Utrecht belongs for the same reasons to the well known areas in the country. In almost all these neighbourhoods there is a high concentration of poverty, ethnic minorities, problems in public space, youth delinquency and youths dropping out of high school or professional education.

The existence of concentration neighbourhoods is a strongly debated political issue, especially the concentration of ethnic minorities in these neighbourhoods. The national policy to counter

these problems also attracts enormous attention. Weak performance of the minister for Housing, Communities and Integration, Ella Vogelaar, has caused her to resign under pressure of her party leader vice prime minister Wouter Bos last year. Meanwhile the Party for Liberty (PVV), a populist anti-Islam party, that held a plea for 'sending in the army' in neighbourhoods as Oosterwei with Moroccan youth, has gained lots of support. The national policy for urban renewal, the 40 Districts Approach (Wijkaanpak) is an often criticized policy by them. They build on xenophobic resentment under the population and a declared support for freedom of speech to offend the Islamic population, while at the same moment holding a plea for suppression of the Koran. This party turned out to be the second in row (17% of the votes) at the European elections in June 2009 at the national level. In Rotterdam it was even first in row (22,6%) leaving the other parties quite far behind.

We have given this short description of the societal debate since it is part of the context of urban renewal as well as of residents' assessments of their neighbourhood. Their opinions are influenced by own experiences with ethnic minorities in their neighbourhood, but also by 'borrowed experiences' from relatives and from television (Van der Horst et al. 2002). We have to keep this context in mind when asking and describing residents' perception and assessment of their neighbourhood.

Contribution to the debate

In this paper we will contribute to the debate by giving a residents view of the proposed mixing policy in their neighbourhood. What do they expect of the proposed plans? Is there a difference between the point of view of the people that have to move out of the houses that will be demolished and that of the residents that will stay? How do they define 'mixing'? What will the proposed plans mean for the reputation of their neighbourhood? We show the results of a qualitative Dutch case study.

The 'Velden' an example of social mixing in the Netherlands

Part of Zuidwijk

In the Netherlands social mixing is one of the main characteristics of the urban renewal policy. In the Neighbourhood Approach 40 districts have been distinguished on the basis of a set of criteria consisting of physical, social-economical, liveability and crime indicators. 29 of the 40 district are completely or largely post-war neighbourhoods. Zuidwijk belongs to one of the 7 districts of the city of Rotterdam on the list. The district is subdivided into seven neighbourhoods, namely the Horsten, the Kampen, the Steinen, the Lo's, the Burgen, the Mare's/Rode's and the Velden. Each of the seven areas forms a single whole in terms of architecture and urban design but each is different in terms of buildings and physical lay-out. Strips of greenery and roads separate the areas from each other. Most neighbourhoods used to have their own shopping strip. In addition, district shopping amenities are concentrated on the Slinge, a main thoroughfare cutting straight through Zuidwijk in east-west direction.

Before the neighbourhood restructuring Zuidwijk comprised over 7,200 dwellings, of which 83 % was in the ownership of a single housing association, named Stichting Tuinstad Zuidwijk (STZ, nowadays merged into housing association Vestia). The other dwellings were owned by private landlords or the occupants (after part of the housing stock was sold) and were all situated in the neighbourhood Mare-Rode's. The buildings consisted principally of four-storey blocks of flats with an entrance hall but no lift, gallery flats, of which a part realized as maisonettes, and single-family dwellings. Almost 90 % of the housing stock consisted of three-room or smaller dwellings (Gemeente Rotterdam/dS+V, 1992a).



Figure 1 Zuidwijk and neighbourhoods

Urban renewal in Zuidwijk started in the mid 1990's, but in the years before already a lot of houses had been improved and renovated in a more modest way. The demolition work started in mid-1993. In a period of some five years, 777 dwellings and 18 commercial/industrial buildings were pulled down, concentrated in the Horsten in the North-east part of the district and 653 dwellings and 12 retail premises were realized. 54 per cent of the new dwellings consisted of mid- to up-market owner-occupied dwellings, 17 per cent was up-market rented housing and the remaining 29 per cent was social rented housing (Crone 2000). In the same period 1,500 dwellings received a 'maintenance-plus' approach as a temporary measure to ensure the residential quality in the meantime on an acceptable level, in wait of a more drastic approach after 2000.

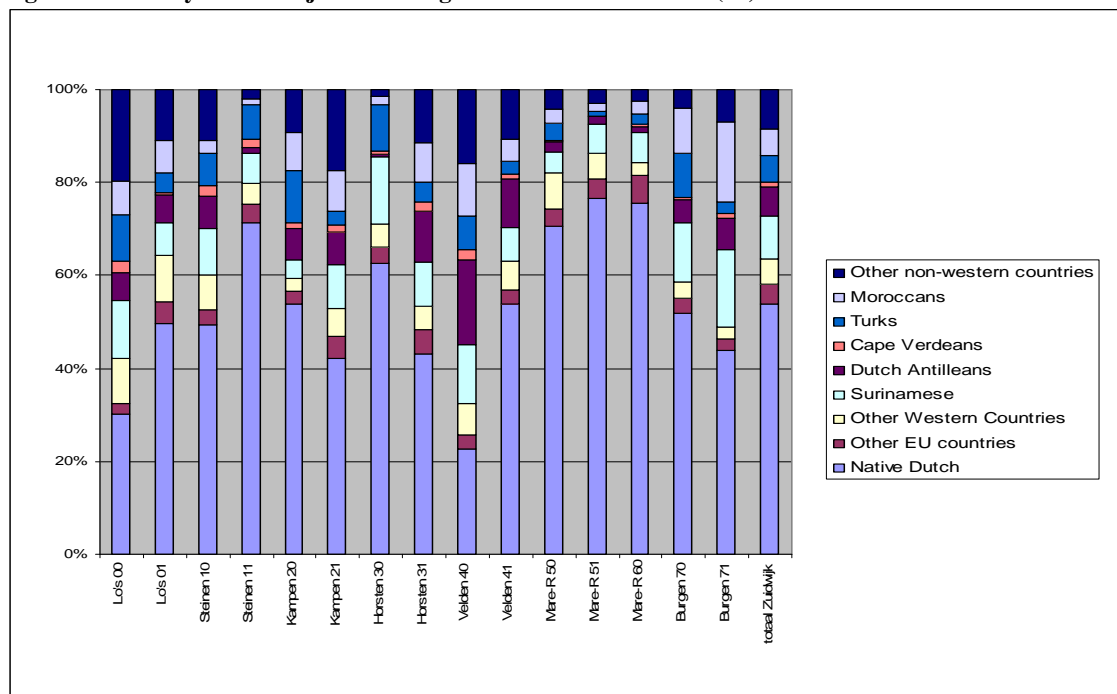
Since 2000 a second restructuring wave has taken place in an integrated district development plan, with the housing association in the director's role. It included the demolition of another 2,000 dwellings, of which 1,100 in the Burgen and the others are expected to be demolished in the Velden and the Lo's. The demolition in the Burgen has now been completed and the first new dwellings have been delivered in 2006. In the Velden the relocation of households has started in 2007 and demolition has started in 2009. However, in 2008 and 2009 the housing association has revised the development plan, due to the economic crisis and the refusal of the city of Rotterdam to pay for a radical restructuring in the Velden. The demolition of dwellings in the Lo's has been cancelled. In the Velden part of the vacated dwellings will not be demolished but radically renovated and repositioned in the market as houses for sale. Housing association Vestia not only develops the new housing, rental and for sale, but also a new school, in the neighbourhood the Kampen.

To give some insight in the social structure of Zuidwijk, 55 percent of the households in Zuidwijk is classified in Dutch housing policy terms as the 'attention group for housing'. That is the group with a low income that need special attention because they do not earn enough money to be able to pay all the costs of their own housing on the free market. The Rotterdam average is 46 percent, the national average is 34 percent (all percentages based on income figures of 2006) (De Graaf 2009). With 55 percent, Zuidwijk belongs to the 'sub top'. Rotterdam has developed a 'Social index' in which annually the districts are being assessed on different points and qualified in a five point scale from 'socially very weak', 'problem', 'vulnerable' and 'socially sufficient' to 'socially strong'. Zuidwijk is scoring sufficient on

living environment (housing, facilities, no litter, no discrimination), and sufficient on social cohesion (experienced bonds and numbers of moved households). It is vulnerable in participation (work, school, social activities) with problematic school and work, and is a 'problem' in capacities (language, income, health, education) of which income is 'socially very weak' (Van Doveren et al. 2009).

The population of Zuid is certainly mixed when we look at the ethnicity. As a result from the difference in housing stock of the different neighbourhoods and the difference in planning of the urban renewal interventions, the different neighbourhoods show different population characteristics. In figure 2 we have given the scores of the different sub-neighbourhoods (most neighbourhoods consist of 2 sub-neighbourhoods). We are focussing in this paper on the neighbourhood the Velden. We see that the northern part, Velden 40, has got the districts highest part of ethnic minorities as we define them in the Netherlands and that the southern part, Velden 41, is at districts level.

Figure 2 Ethnicity in Zuidwijk at sub neighbourhood level in 2008 (%)



Source: COS Rotterdam, processed by OTB

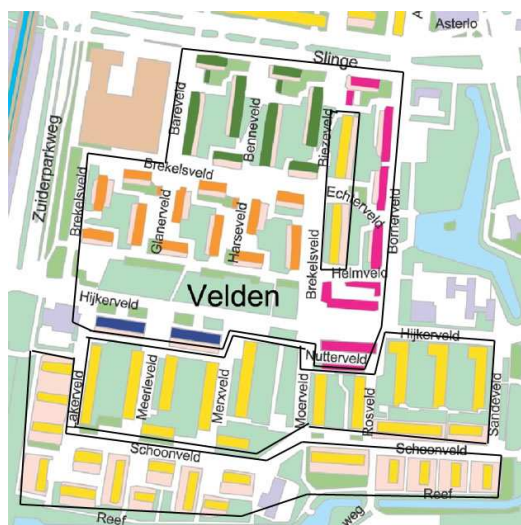


Figure 3 The Velden

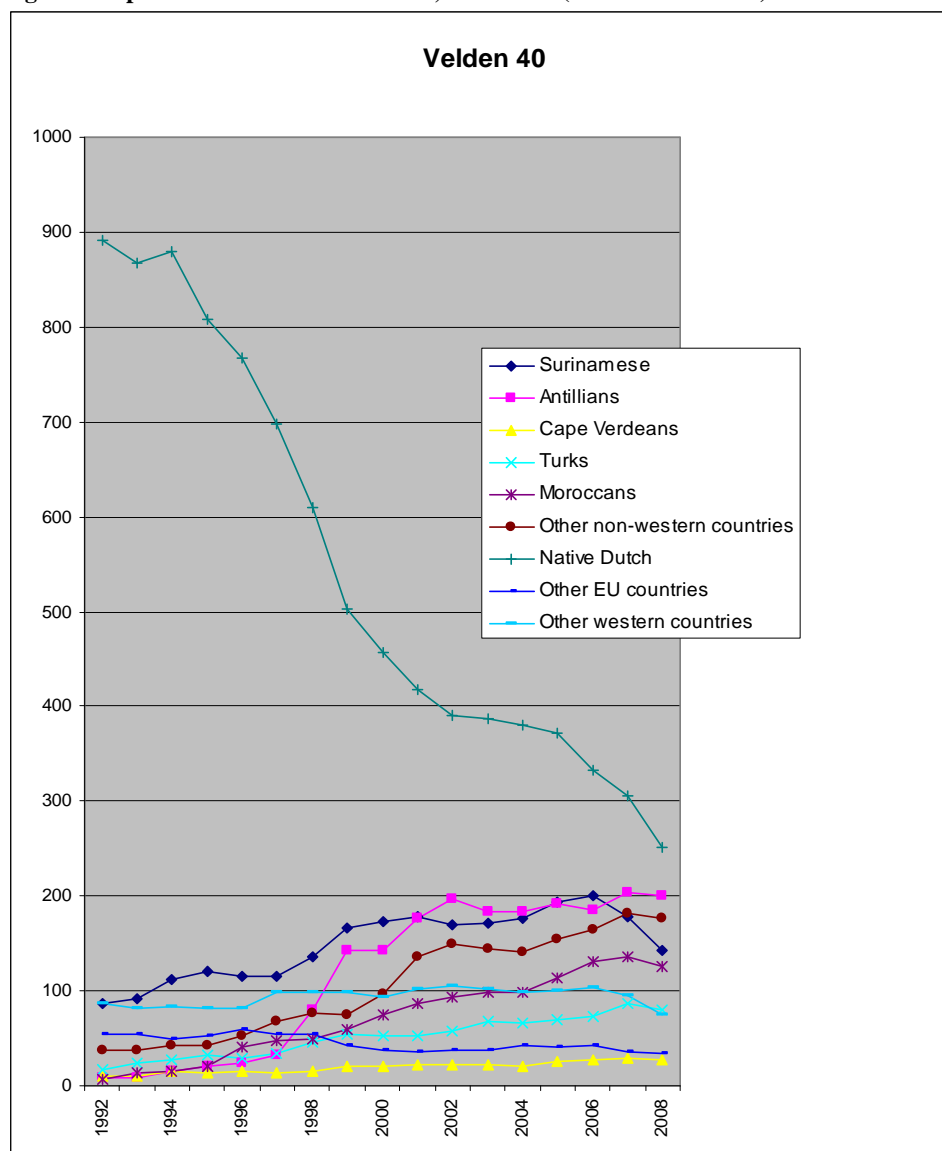
The Velden: two parts

All the dwellings in the Velden are rented social dwellings owned by the housing association, but there is a large difference in housing typology. The most southern part consists of 101 family-row houses (with yellow colour), the yellow blocks, 432 dwellings altogether, above those consist for a great part of dwellings situated on a gallery, which are mostly four storeys high and provided with an elevator. These elevators have been realized in a renovation in the 1990's as 55+-dwellings. A part of the blocks (at the

Schoonveld and Lakerveld), consist of three and four storey walk-up flats. All yellow coloured blocks will be maintained in the coming years.

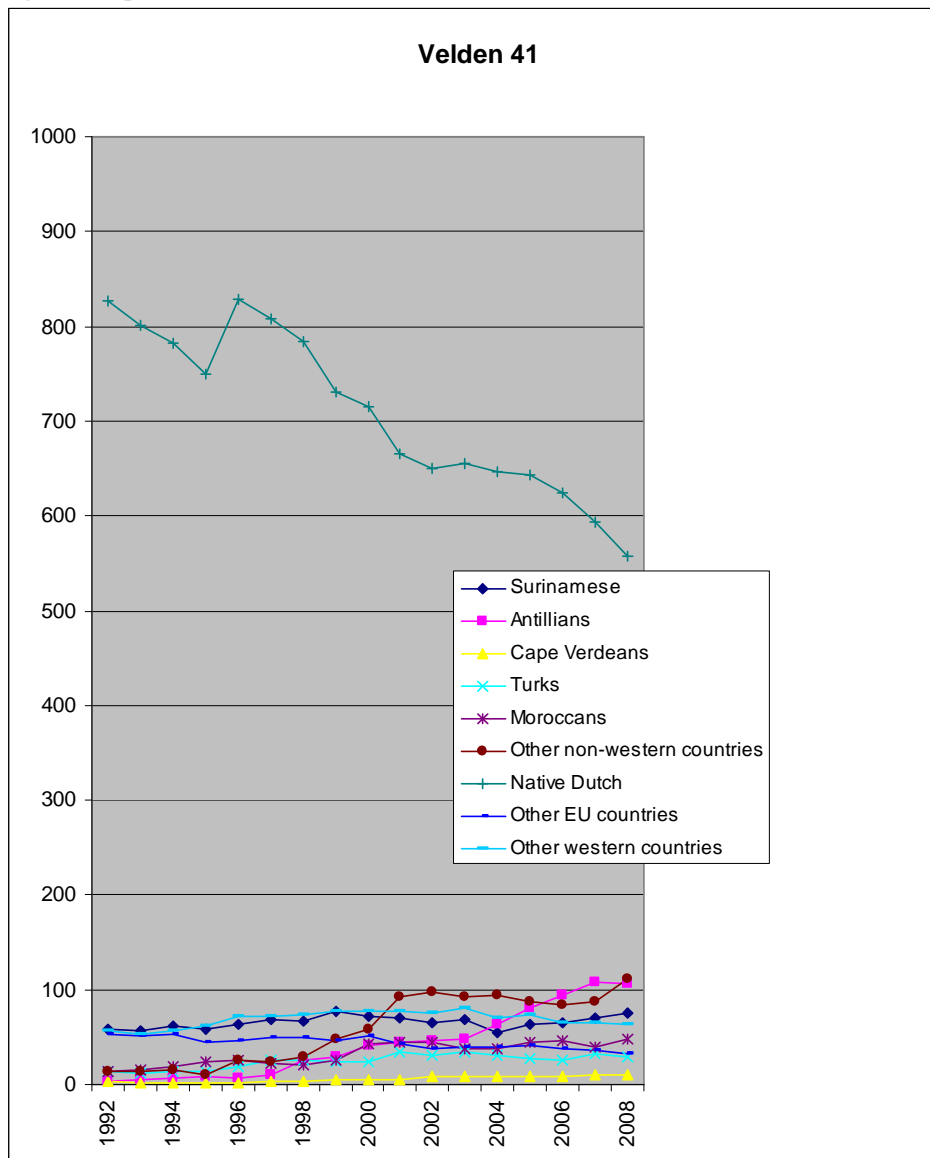
According to the plan of 2000, the northern part of the Velden was to be demolished, these are 470 dwellings altogether, with the exception of two yellow blocks of 54 renovated maisonettes at the Brekelsveld and Biezenveld. The pink blocks have been demolished already and were empty in the summer of 2008 (when we carried out our fieldwork). Building of new houses starts in the beginning of 2010. The people in the brown blocks (phase 2) were moving out after the summer of 2008, meanwhile the housing association has decided to rent those houses temporarily to avoid vacancies as long as new plans have not been finalized. The vacation of phase 3 (green blocks) has been postponed. A large part of the houses for demolition consisted of piled maisonettes at a gallery that are not very popular. When we look at the population dynamics of the Velden, we also see big differences between the northern and southern part.

Figure 4 Population of the Velden North, 1992-2008 (absolute numbers)



Source: COS Rotterdam, processed by OTB

Figure 5 Population of the Velden South, 1992-2008 (absolute numbers)



Source: COS Rotterdam, processed by OTB

In the Northern part we see a sharp decrease of the native Dutch starting in 1994 and continuing, with a slower decrease between 1999 and 2005, till 2008. At the same time we see an increase of Surinamese, 'other non-western countries' and especially a fast increase of Antillians between 1997 and 2002.

A part of these dynamics may be clarified by the realization of the 55+-dwellings by renovation and partly new built houses in 1995. The blocks in the southern part were easily transferred in very suitable dwellings for the elderly, because of the gallery type. In the northern part the share of residents of 65 years and older diminished from 11,7% in 1992 till 3,2 % in 2008. In the southern part it increased from 24,3% in 1992 till 27,1 % in 2008 (source: Cos, Rotterdam). It is obvious that the characteristics of the housing stock and the concerned allocation rules by labelling the 55+ dwellings, have caused selective migration processes. The family-row houses in the southern part are that popular that they do not often change residents and within the allocation system you needed to have a long 'residential age' to obtain a popular dwelling. Also the southern family-row houses have been for a long not

affordable for the lowest income groups while the rent was too high to obtain rental allowance.

Social mixing in the Velden: residents' opinions

The 470 dwellings in the northern part of the Velden are all social rented sector. They will be replaced, as far as we know now, by a smaller number of new built houses, with only about 60 as social rented sector (that was the situation in 2008 when we did our fieldwork). So the differentiation of the housing stock in the whole neighbourhood the Velden would change from 100% social rented to 60% social rented sector. With this change the housing association and the local authorities wish to enlarge the attraction of Zuidwijk for middle income households and to give them also opportunities to buy a house. This policy has been supported by the different tenants' organizations, although they urged for a larger share of social rented dwellings for the current residents.

As mentioned before, in the summer of 2008, when we carried out the fieldwork, the plans for the new Velden were very insecure. So, when we interviewed the residents last summer, they were sure in the northern part that they had to move out, but what was going to be built on that site was insecure.

Fieldwork in the Velden

In April 2008 we have started our interviews. We have held 29 interviews in the Velden as a part of a more comprehensive research on the influence of in-flow and out-flow of residents and the impact of urban renewal interventions on the residents' perception of their neighbourhood. Preferably the interviews were held in the dwelling of the respondent, which gave us the possibility to also make some observations. Normally we interviewed one adult member of the household; often the tenant, sometimes her/his partner and sometimes both man and woman were present. In some of the interviews with respondents of Non-Dutch ethnicity, her or his child has assisted with translation of some questions. For the interviews we used a semi structured item list, the whole interview took on average a little bit more than one hour. The interviews were taped and transcribed and were then coded and analysed with the use of Atlas.ti.

In the Velden we have presented our research in a meeting of the neighbourhood committee and made some appointments with members of the committee for an interview. In the Velden we also visited a group called 'De vrouwen van de Velden' ('The Women of the Velden'), an ethnic very mixed group of women that organises different activities, targeted at the liveability in the neighbourhood, but also on empowerment of the participants. Most of our appointments have been made by ringing at the door. The people have often been very willing to talk with us. We have been able to cover the different ethnic groups in the neighbourhood, as well as the differentiation in age and time of living in the neighbourhood. In the Velden 11 interviews have been held in the houses that will be demolished in the northern part, 1 in the renovated block in the northern part and the other 17 in the southern part.

In this paper we have divided the opinions of the residents in four main subjects: the demolition decision, the expected benefits of the mixing policy, concentration and loss of social rented housing and as last item: 'social mix is not enough'.

The demolition decision

Most of the people that we have spoken were happy with the demolition, although there are also that do not agree.

Woman, native Dutch, married with Moroccan, little children, €1,000-1,500, northern part has to move, but has to wait otherwise she misses the financial compensation for moving:

“Yes, according to me, people are just waiting to get away. Till they get their money and they are in the situation ‘Now I can leave, because yes you do not stay in such an area for nothing. Look, if you have lots of money, you ain’t going to live in a neighbourhood like this.’”

“At that time [2003] it was not so heavy at all, there hadn’t been a shooting, there had not been problems with the youth. Those are only from the last few years(....).

Financially you cannot move, but preferably I would like to move right now! And that sure is a problem. So you are stuck actually (....) I just want a neighbourhood where my kids are able to grow up safe. (....) She [her daughter that plays outside alone] walks through the neighbourhood. She sees things. Than I think yes” “Look, I just want that Vestia [the housing association] just does something on the dwelling, or at the population of the neighbourhood. Concerning the colour and...look that you [the housing association] throw above me only Antilleans, I think that that is not acceptable.” “I do not want a gallery flat anymore, I absolutely never want that again. (....) No longer that I have to walk through the dirt of anyone else.”

Woman, Turkish, no man, with children, below €1,000 northern part:

“For me really big enough, I really do regret demolition house. (....) Real sunny, morning that side, afternoon that side. Very sunny, no dampness, no dampness at all.”

Woman, native Dutch, retired of work, alone, €1,000-1,500, northern part:

Q: “I thought you told me that you have had enough of the situation?”

A: “Yes, here I have. Yes of course, because I live in a mess. (....) Everything needs to be renewed. (....) I would want to stay here, just built a new flat and I come living here again. (....) And if it had been renovated in time, than I just would have lived here. Perfect. But keeping us in doubt, concerning the renewal... that is a plan from here to anywhere.”

The reason why most of the people do agree has to do with the nuisance and social problems that have occurred. Two different native Dutch households that are living both for almost 40 years in Zuidwijk say it in a different tune, but both very clear, but demolition is also supported by other residents as by a woman that stems from the Dutch Antilles.

Man, native Dutch, married with kids, both working, above € 3,000, southern part:

“Because I would principally just want to stay living in Zuidwijk, that is why I find it positive that everything is going to the ground at this [northern] part. Yes that you can take the rotten apples out and there are still quite a lot of them. (....) that’s what you see here normally with all these flats. As soon as something got vacant, look if you have one or two and they are from different sort of cultures, it is alright, but if you lets say put ten Antilleans with each other on a staircase, than you ask for trouble. They live with each other in another way and scream something more and also more aggressive.”

Woman, native Dutch, married with kids, both working, above € 3,000, southern part:

“Look our flats, where I have lived myself, will be flattened [demolished] in a while, but, yes what lives in it at this moment, that throws the debris bags down, there is always glass, there is always vandalism, everything is being broken, than I think: you know I find it a pity, than I think well for me they may, I do not have any problems, well I am a roots human, of my roots, But as it will be demolished I do not regret it. So far it has gone.”

Woman, Antillean, divorced, one kid, jobless, income below € 1,000, southern part:

Q: “But you are happy that they are going to demolish and building new dwellings?”

A: “Yes, and that there will be change. And that, for instance, the Antilleans also go away, that it will be dispersed somewhat. Cause look, they also should live, but they have to mingle more with Dutch people or Moroccan people, but not only all Antillean put together. Cause

than it goes wrong. (...) I hope that other people will come to live there, as I said. (...) I hope it will be just like it has become in the Burgen. That it also improves here. That everyone, just and in the whole group, improves and can work together that we can keep it decent."

Other people make the same remarks. Some plea for even more demolition, also for some walk-up flats in the southern parts, where recently ethnic minorities have moved in some more.

The expected benefits of social mix

We did not ask the people what they expected from 'social mix' literally. We asked them what their expectations were from the demolition of the old and building of new houses. We did not use the word 'mix', but lots of respondents came up with an answer in which they talked about 'mixing' or 'mingling'.

Man, Turkish, married with kids, did have his own business, but got broke and had to sell his house, lives temporarily, because of coming demolition, in the northern part € 1,500-2,000:
"If a new resident comes to live here, and than send away those black to somewhere else, than here a bit Dutch, a bit Moroccan, a bit Turkish, Than you can make a mix, you know. Not everyone from one country living here. Making a bit a mix. That works well. That goes very well I think."

Woman, Dutch, married with kids, both working, €2,000-3,000, living a northern part, not to be demolished flat:

"I personally think that it will become better, I expect that because you have seen that also with the Horsten , and you have that also with the Burgen you see that it has improved [both already renewed areas]. (...) Yes it becomes only more beautiful, of course, here in the neighbourhood, it flourishes."

Woman, Antillean, no husband, with kids, working, €1,500-2,000, living in a dwelling that has to be demolished in the northern part:

"Not only houses for sale. Rental, reasonable also that people will be able to afford it, not too expensive living. And mingling the people a little bit, you know. Not only Dutch people or foreign people only. A bit mingling, as is in this building. We are mingled and live very cozy, friendly."

Q: Why is that important?

A: Yes, cause if you, let's say, put a lot of foreigners on each other, you mostly get quarrels, you know. They do not get ahead with the Dutch language, they only keep talking in their language, you know."

Man, Dutch, married with kids, both working, above €3,000, southern part (not to be demolished):

"Look, even when you also build new flats, take care of it indeed that it won't become a flat or walk-up with only jobless people, so to speak, and students. But choose for a good mix."

If we had to summarize the opinions, we could say that residents often expect: more differentiation = a good mix = decent people.

Loss and concentration of social rented housing, moving problems

A lot of residents support the partly demolition of the neighbourhood but some of them would like to see more social rental dwellings being built new.

Woman, native Dutch, married with Moroccan, little children, €1,000-1,500, northern part has to move:

Q: "Would you like to see any changes in the plans?"

A: "Yes, that more social rental dwellings would be realized. Because what there is now, what I have seen, there is a part of it and it will be flats. More modern than what there is now, but I just want that they also built more social rental family row houses, that are affordable."

Elderly woman, native Dutch living in the neighbourhood for 56 years, retired, €1,000-1,500, southern part:

"I knew that over there [northern part] dwellings will be demolished, those big gallery flats (...). What it will become then, it will be houses for sale. You see that everywhere. Than they oh so gladly want to demolish houses, but only houses for sale will replace them. Than I think oh dear that is once again. Yes that is my political idea."

Others relate the demolition with further concentration of social housing and thus with possible problems in the future for these dwellings.

Man & woman, native Dutch, married with kids, both working, above € 3,000, southern part:

Q: "You say that the walk-up flats have changed. But would that also be possible in the family row houses?"

AW: "Yes because it is now social housing" AM: I tremble with that thought. AW: This year it has again become social housing in the way that you can get in with rental allowance. [in the Netherlands there are rent limits for getting rental allowance. The housings association have a certain freedom to change the rent when a dwelling gets empty – the authors]

Q: "Why have they done that?"

AW: "Well because there will be built more expensive dwellings and they [the housing association] are obliged to have a certain percentage on social rental stock. And the [housing stock in the] Burgen have not become social rental anymore. That used to be social housing, so now they have changed that with the [family row houses in] the Velden neighbourhood."

Q: "What is your opinion on that they have made the family row houses affordable?"

AW: "Well, for us that is disadvantageous. While you get other people. AM: "That can not cope with the rules"(...)

Q: "Well you said that you liked the restructuring but it is connected with that they have made your dwellings affordable."

AW: "Yes that is of course a consequence of it." AM: Yes, they have to place those people again somewhere. That is what the city of Rotterdam is saying for years already. The neighbour municipalities also have to work along once. And not only Rotterdam."

Man, married, native Dutch, retired, living with his wife in a 55⁺ - apartment that has been built in the mid 1990's in the southern part, € 1,500-2,000:

Q: "But you think that it may turn into a problem?"

A: "I am afraid that it will before long, againbecause we again will be the most cheapest, that it will indeed again become a problem. I think, but yes it is also possible not, you never know how things turn out."(...)

My fear is that we will become the most cheapest part of Zuidwijk and that, maybe, the history will repeat itself at that time. I don't know, only if we stay 55⁺ - apartments, than I think that it will not be so bad."

Married couple, retired, moved out of the neighbourhood as a consequence of threats of other residents, now living in the centre of Rotterdam, € 1,500-2,000:

AM: "It will be replaced by a lot of owner-occupied dwellings. But than, you see it again. So those people that cannot afford that anymore, that have to move, because they are forced as they can no longer pay the rent, they go to another district. So what do the politicians? They remove the residents from that district, to improve that district, and they put them in another district, for instance IJsselmonde or how should I know, or Lombardijen. And then you have it over there in five or ten years."

‘Social mix is not enough’

Although residents do expect improvement of the renewal plans for their neighbourhood, demolition alone, followed by a social mix, is not enough. Different residents have confidence in the future of the neighbourhood but do find it necessary that after the renewal the housing association and others take care of more supervision and guidance in the neighbourhood.

Married couple, man retired subway driver and still caretaker [with an allowance of the housing association], living in 55⁺ apartment, southern part, € 1,500-2,000:

“I have a confidence in it, but you have to educate the people. You have to know what you are dealing with. First duty for a lot of people is to take care of order, tranquillity and neatness. Above all more supervision by Vestia and the police.”

Iraqian woman, married, kids, had to move for demolition, lives in nearby neighbourhood, € 1,000-1,500:

“I think that if the people are moving away, you have to think well who comes to live in the Velden after demolition. Not to be the same as what have become of it now.(....) [It have to be] surely good people (....) to know their file, how many times the police have been there, they pay their rent, they have no problems. I would see to that, really.

Q: “And the people that do have had problems with the police, where do they have to live?”

A: “I don’t know, They [police / housing association] have to know. But as someone has problems with the police, they will do it the same again.”

Man, married, full time caretaker of the housing association, living in the southern part of the Velden, € 1,500-2,000:

Q: “Is there something that you would like to change in the plans for the neighbourhood, you have mentioned something about housing allocation?”

A: “[We have to get] outside the existing newspaper [the choice based letting system that was in operation at that time, where every house seeker finds his dwelling in the advertisement in a special newspaper. The dwellings are allocated on the base of objective criterion – the authors] I have always said that, that is not good for Zuidwijk.”

Q: “And that the housing association is allocating on its own criterion?”

A: “Well, that they try to force it in the right way. (....) Just a nice interview with the new residents, to know whom you are dealing with. Yes I do think that is important. (....)

Q: “You would like to assess their neatness?”

A: “Yes, absolutely. (....) I do think that we as Vestia could deliver more conditions for example that means surely: curtains. Nowadays we have newspapers for the windows, that is no sight, we have rags for the windows, that is no sight in the neighbourhood.”

Support for social mix, but ‘social mix is not enough’

The reason why a vast amount of the residents support the renewal plans for the northern part of their neighbourhood is the liveability in that part of the neighbourhood and the quality of the dwellings. Flats of piled maisonettes on galleries with joint stairwells are not very popular and are often difficult to manage properly. The renewal policy in the mid 1990’s enhanced the quality (elevators!) and attractiveness of dwellings in the south part of the Velden for elderly households. But at the same time it must have contributed to more selective migration processes in the neighbourhood. The problems with youth in the recent years have contributed to the opinion of residents about the quality of their living environment and their support for the renewal. Some of them argue that the housing association has not properly managed the situation. Others put the cause of the existing problems in the housing allocation system that offered freedom of choice for house seekers, but that leads to a concentration of vulnerable households in the least popular dwelling types and locations. As soon as there were plans to demolish the blocks, the already existing process of dilapidation has been accelerated. Only

households that urgently needed a dwelling, that had a weak position in the allocation system and did not have high demands, took up residence in that area. It resulted in a situation of ongoing concentration of ethnic minorities in the northern part, especially of Antilleans. Residents themselves come up with social mixing as a favourite living situation, compared with current situation of dominance of some groups. They mention the demolition and new built houses for owner-occupiers as a measure to realize a neighbourhood that is also attractive for middle-income people and that attracts people that have jobs. It is not so much the idea of a higher status of middle-income households, as well that these households are decent people that will guarantee a better living environment.

To summarize the expectations of residents we could say that resident often expect: more differentiation = a good mix = decent people.

Some of the residents almost talk in policy terms in declaring that having a concentration of cheap housing, they talk about the weakest parts in the local housing market and the wish to avoid that their own apartment buildings or neighbourhood becomes the lowest in position in the housing market that will attract too much vulnerable people. They mention urban renewal as a phenomenon that creates displacement processes that generate new urban renewal projects. Some residents oppose the renewal from a more ideological point of view: it has to do with capitalism. After renewal the neighbourhood will be more expansive and they question whether or not there will be still enough housing for lower income households. Several residents articulate their concern that social mix is not enough. This concern is connected to their view of urban renewal as a shifting process. The housing association should take better care of the neighbourhood as it is renewed. Some mention that it has to be more selective in allocating new dwellings. Neatness and not having a police record is important. Above all residents want guarantees for living in a neighbourhood with decent people.

With this paper we want to contribute to the debate on social mixing by bringing to the fore the perceptions and opinions of residents of one of these neighbourhoods. Our research corroborates the need for a multi-faceted and -disciplinary approach of evaluation of social mix, as Atkinson stated (2008, p. 2627):

“A broader set of processes should be incorporated under an expanded vocabulary of residential change that incorporates the migration of higher-income households and which acknowledges these differential degrees of change as having complex outcomes, some beneficial, others problematic.”

We have to take in account residents' opinions, their perception and their demand for a better living environment. At the same time we have to analyze what the consequences have been of earlier policy decisions, as well at the moment when the neighbourhood was realized in the early post-war years, as recently in earlier renewal processes.

The current policy of urban renewal and social mixing must be assessed in this local context. Equalizing social mixing in general with gentrification and distancing one self hermetically from social mixing policies, does not take the local context into account. It seems to be a more ideological stance that could be characterized as political correct in some parts of academia, but not very political realistic and not very social as long as a total redistribution of wealth is not within reach. Above that it seems to be weakly empirical based and even less taking residents' opinions into account.

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