Heritage and its role in revitalising the housing market

André Mulder
Department of Real Estate & Housing, Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology
Email: a.mulder@tudelft.nl

Abstract

Due to the demise of traditional industry large industrial estates, often at central locations, become available for re-use. Municipalities have reacted by trying to attract new users who would need a lot of space, like big shopping centres, while strengthening the urban economy. However, these attempts have not always been successful. Also, local people may feel alienated if all remnants of the past, in which they lived and worked, are ignored.
In the recent past, some attempts were made to re-use buildings in a way more connected to the history of the area. The IBA Emscher Park (in the German Ruhr area) experimented in the 1990s with a less intensive use of industrial estates, while at the same time keeping many of the buildings standing and involving the local communities. The Ruhr area cities now are something of a tourist attraction, something that no-one could have predicted during the age of smoke and dust. Less well known is the fact that the refurbishment and new building of 30 garden cities was also part of the IBA.
Chimney Pot Park in the English city of Salford (Greater Manchester) also built on local traditions. Facades of terraced houses were kept, but behind them new homes with uncommon layouts were created: an attempt to reconcile the traditions of a working class estate with ‘new urban living’ (including alternative household formations) to the area.
In this paper, the increased role of heritage as a way to help revitalising the housing market of shrinking of cities will be explored.

Key words: shrinking cities, housing market, government policy, industrial heritage, Germany, England

Introduction

If dwellings, or even a whole neighbourhood, become obsolete: what can be done? This question is especially important in areas with low or falling demand for housing, as obsolete dwellings will probably become empty dwellings at some stage.
Many old industrial areas of Europe and beyond have seen population numbers fall. When the numbers of households also starts to drop, demand for housing is going down. At the same time, people are still living there, people who quite often have seen their jobs disappear, who have found out that their children are either unemployed or moving to areas where education and job prospects are better. Still, they may have lived here for generations. Part of the challenge when trying to regenerate these areas is to keep the people living there on board, something that can hardly be achieved by knocking down their houses and the places they used to work. More and more, often initiated by grass root movements, (local) governments and other parties that are involved have tried to capitalise on the heritage value an area may have. This is especially the case in the German Ruhr area, where ‘conservation goes hand in hand with regeneration, whether that regeneration is economic, social, ecological or spatial’. Conservation has become ‘a tool for democratic and social progress, integral to new intellectual attitudes and to the identity of the region.’ (Raines, 2011). By showing respect for what are the roots of a community, the conservation of industrial and related heritage can play an important role in the regeneration of an area.
Looking at it this way, the conservation of buildings is part of the conservation as well as the constant renewal of culture. ‘Culture’s place in regeneration [may rest] on the claim to be fundamental to the delivery and maintenance of successful communities. It delivers other benefits – for example, the economic, but the general reason to consider and plan culture in regeneration relies upon this: participating in culture creates and helps to maintain social capital – the networks, norms, values and relationships that shape the quantity and quality of social relations.’ (Bristow, 2010)

Germany, that now has a shrinking population, started experimenting with ways to cope with this phenomenon of shrinking since the late 1980s. The UK, which still has a growing population, nevertheless has experienced regions, like the Northwest of England, that are or used to be shrinking. Here, new policies to cope with the problem of low housing demand, and the symptoms that go with it, were developed from 1999 onward.

Both countries have conceived a whole array of policy documents and tools to fight the negative consequences of population and economical decline. Two of these tools include, more than the other ones, attention to cultural heritage and the role this can play in urban regeneration: the German ‘building exhibition’ (IBA) and the English ‘housing market renewal pathfinders’. This paper will focus on these two sets of tools and especially on projects that aim to reuse existing dwellings to help revive an area. Both the districts covered by the Manchester Salford Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder and the IBA Emscher Park were visited on a number of occasions, during which about ten persons were interviewed. In addition, a number of evaluative studies and policy documents were studied.

**Germany: IBA Emscher Park**

Let us take the number 107 tram between the Central Stations of Essen and Gelsenkirchen. In the city centre of Essen, the tram is running underground, as part of an ambitious but never fully completed scheme from the 1960s to create a new light rail network (*Stadtbahn*) through the entire Rhine-Ruhr urban area: from Düsseldorf to Dortmund, including many local branch lines. Most of the time, the tram is still in the existing streets, with the old narrow (metre) gauge being maintained. After running through some nondescript neighbourhoods, suddenly the remnants of the impressive Zollverein industrial estate, a former coalmine and steel plant, appear. Most of the old structures still remain, including the tower operating the mine lift, but apart from some new small scale businesses, this is no longer a place to work but a place to play. The area is now featuring exhibitions, restaurants and open air swimming or ice-skating, depending on the time of year. Subsequently the tram passes the old village square of Katernberg and some woodland. After crossing a main motorway, the trams enter Gelsenkirchen, with again a combination of older and newer neighbourhoods. Shortly after reaching the edge of the Gelsenkirchen city centre near the new music theatre, the tram disappears again underground for the final leg of its journey to the central station.

The Ruhr area is a good example of a former industrial region that has lost most of its industries and some of its population. As early as the second half of the 1950s the first signs of the retreat of traditional heavy industry were already visible, with restructuring plans concentrating on a diversification of the economic structure, with coal mining and the steel industry still playing an important role.

Opencast coal mining originates from the 12th century. The extracting of coal using shafts to deep underground layers started in the middle of the 19th century. The first mine shaft was built in 1834 in Essen-Schönebeck by Franz Haniel (Schaier and Stemrich, 1997). The demise of the coal industry began in the late 1950s, when oil started to replace coal as a main source of power in industry. Soon, coal mines started to close. In 1956, the Ruhr Area featured 141 pits and 470,000 miners worked there. By the end of 2008, not a single working coal mine was left (Seltmann, 2007).

A city like Duisburg used to have ten coalmines. The years they closed tell as much the story of a disappearing trade as anything else: 1962, 1963, 1968 (twice), 1973, 1976 (twice), 1990, 1993 (Hermann and Hermann, 2003). The last mine to close in Duisburg and one of the last in the Ruhr area as a whole
was *Bergwerk* Walsum in 2008, making 2,000 people redundant. As late as 1998, 4,200 people were still working there.

The large scale production of steel originates from the same period as coal mining using shafts, around 1840. Thyssen was one of the first to combine coal mining and steel production in one company. Now being known mainly by its steel products, Thyssen started as a coal mining company. In fact, the Ruhr area does not produce iron ore, which has to be imported, mainly from England and Belgium.

Again using Duisburg as an example, the three main iron and steel producing companies (Thyssen, Mannesmann and Krupp) in its heydays employed as many as 60,000 people. In 1970, 26% of jobs in Duisburg were in the steel industry. And other than the mining industry, steel is still present, Duisburg being the last city in the Ruhr area where blast-furnaces and steel producing plants are still in use. However, the closing of the Krupp steel plant in Duisburg-Rheinhausen, after much opposition from the trade unions, the municipality and the local workforce, was still a very decisive moment, with many jobs at the remaining factories being lost as well.

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<td>5,359.228</td>
<td>5,172.475</td>
<td>-501.748</td>
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Source: www.metropoleruhr.de

As can be seen from the windows of the number 107 tram, the Ruhr area does not look like a big city, even if it is one of the most densely populated areas in Germany. Instead, the urban landscape is a mixture of city centres, many of them destroyed during the Second World War and rebuilt with new 1950s facades and street plans, old and new neighbourhoods, interspaced with large scale industrial estates, and some remaining village centres, agriculture and woodland. Canals, railways and motorways were built to connect, but at the same time are separating neighbourhoods from urban centres and from each other.

It is in this type of urban environment that one type of settlement seems to be working better than anything else: the *Siedlung* or garden city. Unlike the original Howard scheme, garden cities in industrial areas do hardly take the form of independent cities with only rather weak relations with the main urban centre, which they have come to relieve, by decreasing population density and urban squalor. Instead, there are three reasons why many garden cities were built:

1. The need to attract a new working force. As the towns and villages of the Ruhr area only featured small numbers of inhabitants, the workforce for a new and growing industry had to come from somewhere else, mostly the eastern provinces of Germany and later also Poland. These were mainly peasants, quite poor, but still used to growing their own crops and breeding their own cattle. In order to attract these people, something of a village life had to be created. And indeed, many garden cities featured stables for cattle, which are often still visible today.

2. Social engagement by some of the major companies. The new urban neighbourhoods of the second half of the 19th century were quite often overcrowded. In order to have a fit and loyal workforce, and to avoid social unrest, many companies built their own garden cities.

3. Catering for the special needs for people working in heavy industry and reducing the distance between work and dwelling. In a time that passenger transport links were still poor, it was important to live close to where one worked. This is especially true in an industry that is mainly dependent on working in shifts. Having to sleep during the day when on a night shift, also requires dwellings that are fit with a bedroom that is well detached from daytime noise.

So the garden cities of the Ruhr area feature large gardens, dwellings fitted with a quite room, usually in the attic. Quite often they are situated close to a coal mine or big factory housing mainly, or even
exclusively, the people working there and their families. They are a quiet oasis in an often noisy and dirty environment. And they are places where everyone knows each other and shares the same experiences. It is not uncommon for families living there for generation after generation, with social networks that have strongly developed. This is what a typical Ruhr area garden city is like, or at least this is how it used to be. Now, more likely than not, the factory or coal mine will be closed, with many of the inhabitants of the garden city sharing the experience of unemployment instead of jobs. Later groups of immigrants with different cultures will have moved in. The area will possibly have seen a period of decay and even plans to tear down some or even all dwellings, plans that probably may have been averted. After the attempts to demolish the Eisensiedlung (Iron Town) in Oberhausen failed in the 1970s, because of popular opposition (see e.g.: Raines, 2011), garden cities were increasingly seen as providing good and affordable living.

A major impulse for the grass root movement, wanting the maintaining and re-use of existing dwellings, came with the Internationale Bauausstellung (International Building Exhibition) or IBA Emscher Park. IBA came to live in 1989, founded by the regional state of North Rhine-Westphalia and 17 local authorities, all situated near the river Emscher in the northern part of the Ruhr area. This IBA lasted 10 years. The term ‘building exhibition’ should not be taken too literally. Earlier ‘building exhibitions’, like the one in Hannover (1951) and Berlin (1957) still had a focus on urban development and the building of dwellings in a clearly defined part of the city. With the IBA Emscher Park the focus was much wider and the area much larger. Apart from urban development and the building of dwellings, this IBA included a wide range of subjects, like repairing environmental damage, boosting the economy and tackling unemployment, while wider welfare and cultural issues were also included.

The IBA Emscher Park is called after the river Emscher, which runs through the area, and the ‘park’ in its name is also there on purpose. From the IBA’s early start, two sets of concepts have been used to attract visitors to the area: industrial culture and industrial nature. Industrial culture is about the preserving of old industrial buildings, themselves part of local culture, and often finding a new cultural use for them, like exhibition hall or ballroom. Industrial nature is about the reinventing of the area by letting nature taking over parts of it, which will happen anyway as long as you don’t try to prevent this, and creating new footpaths and bicycle routes through the new green areas.

The IBA, for which the regional state government of North Rhine-Westphalia was politically responsible, can also be seen as the start of a new chapter of the development of planning policies in Germany. German public administration has for a long time had a strongly systematic approach. This as such was not changed by the IBA. What did change, however, was that the approach became less dependent on programmatic plans both for design and implementation. Instead, a more project oriented, more flexible, more creative and less hierarchic way of planning was developed (Reißerg, 2004; Shaw, 2002). Also, the IBA Planning Board (IBA GmbH) was a semi-public organization, close to but not really part of public administration. Indeed, one of the IBA’s tasks was to make contact with entrepreneurs, grass root organisations and civil society. Maybe even more importantly, one of the explicit goals of the IBA Emscher Park was the realisation of high quality projects. Sustainability, as defined by the Brundtland Commission, was also high on the agenda (Shaw, 2002).

During the ten years of the IBA many industrial buildings and estates got a new function. Many of the coal mine related buildings above the ground became listed monuments. Not only did this save many industrial buildings, they were also opened to the public as ‘monuments of industrial culture’. A new ‘Route of Industrial Culture’ was opened, showing visitors a whole array of industrial monuments. Many former mines as well as cokes and steel manufacturing plants can now be visited. Disused railway tracks were turned into bicycle tracks.

At the same time, many company premises were turned into museums (often specializing on the history of the area), theatres and offices, as well as new innovative businesses. In all, the IBA included over 100 projects. As part of the IBA more than 2.5 billion Euro was invested, about a third of this being provide by the private sector (Shaw, 2002).
One of the famous IBA projects is the North Duisburg Landscaped Park *(Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord)*, which is situated in the northern suburbs of the city, between the boroughs of Meiderich and Hamborn. The park is situated on the area that used to be occupied by the Thyssen steel manufacturing plant, which was built between 1901 and 1908 and closed in 1985. The 430,000 square metre area was heavily polluted. Thyssen sold it to the municipality of Duisburg for 1 D-Mark (about 50 Eurocents). Subsequently, the municipality handed the area over to the IBA and a competition was organised. The winner was a consortium of landscaping architects and building experts, and their plan was not to change that much. As a result, the steel manufacturing plants were not demolished, and the whole area became a green park. For some foreign visitors, the sight of local people walking their dogs between imposing steel plants and other constructions related to steel manufacturing, just like they would do in a normal park, may be a strange one. Close to an industrial building that is several 100s of metres long, there is a playing ground, which is being used for skateboarding at day time and hanging around at night time. However, the people from Duisburg do not have the park all to themselves, as it has also become an attraction visited by tourists from all over the world, climbing the small metal staircases in one of the steel plants to be rewarded with a view over Duisburg and surrounding cities. A gasholder, now being filled with water, is used as a divers’ training area. Part of the former ore bunker has been transformed into a climbing wall, used by the German Mountaineering Society. An exposition centre, featuring industrial history, is also part of the project. Furthermore, esp. during the summer month, some of the old buildings also feature movies and concerts. As one scholar notices: ‘The park’s success among locals and visitors alike has been astonishing: it is the most-visited place in NRW after the cathedral in Cologne.’ (Raines, 2011)

Another IBA project was the Duisburg Inland Port *(Duisburger Innenhafen)*. This is the area around the Harbour Basin *(Hafenbassin)* between Marientor locks and Schwanentor, built between 1840 and 1844, and the adjacent Inner Harbour *(Innenhafen)* and Timber Dock *(Holzhafen)*.

Other than the North Duisburg National Park and many other IBA-related plans, here the building of dwellings was going to be an important part of the project. In 1998, towards the end of the IBA decade, some 600 dwellings overseeing the water were being completed, with variable sizes and floor plans, ranging from large penthouses to small apartments for students and the elderly. The urban plan was made by London-based architect Sir Norman Foster. Some warehouses along the Inner Harbour were transformed into dwellings by a housing association. The Inner Harbour also became the site of the Museum for Culture and Urban History *(Kultur- und Stadthistorisches Museum)* and the urban record office, as well as a housing estate plus restaurant for the elderly.

Both IBA-projects in Duisburg, the Landscaped Park and the Inland Port, are generally considered as being a success (Glock, 2006). Forster & Partners were later commissioned to make a Master plan for the centre of Duisburg, bringing the Inland Port further into the area, with dwellings overseeing the water again being a main basic principle.

The IBA Emscher Park also included the refurbishment of 30 garden cities, as they are considered as being part of the heritage of the Ruhr Area and also a good way of providing affordable dwellings in a green environment, in an area mostly characterised by industrial use and dispersed cities. Schüngelberg in Gelsenkirchen is one of these garden cities.

**Schüngelberg Garden City in Gelsenkirchen**

Between 1961 and 2009, the population of the city of Gelsenkirchen went from 383,000 to 260,000 (minus 32%; table 1). Being very dependent on the coal mining and cokes producing industries, their demise inevitably resulted in a high unemployment rate and a high level of out-migration. The last cokes producing plant closed in 1999, the last coal mine just one year later (www.bpb.de/popup/popup_druckversion.html?guid=9BS7KA).
The historic garden city of Schüngelberg consists of about 300 dwellings (picture 1) and was built between 1897 and 1919 for the colliers of neighbouring coal-mine ‘Hugo’. Between 1916 and 1919 a plan was developed to extend the garden city with a further 200 dwellings. However, due to economic reasons, this development never took place. Like many other garden cities, due to lack of maintenance and an assumption that these small terraced houses were becoming obsolete, demolition was scheduled in the 1970s, but subsequently prevented by the inhabitants. For a long time however, it remained unclear what would happen in the long run. (Beierlorzer and Boll, 1999)

The IBA made it possible to refurbish Schüngelberg. However, to create a viable neighbourhood, it was felt necessary not only to improve existing dwellings but also to finally build the extension. This would also make it possible to include a small new village centre in the middle of the estate. After some consideration and an open competition, it was decided to build the new dwelling according to the same principles as the existing ones, at the same time giving them a new architectural look. In this new part of the estate, the original street plan, characterised by winding streets, was not kept. Instead, it was decided to create long straight streets, many of them offering a view to the neighbouring slap heap (Halde) which was changed into a park with a monument on top (figure 2). The dwellings themselves though show many of the garden city features: terraced houses with gardens and even the well isolated bedroom for night shift workers in the attic. Improving the environment was also part of the project, with the local brook playing an important role in cleaning waste water, while at the same time providing a green border to most of the estate. (Beierlorzer and Boll, 1999; own observations)
It was attempted, with some success, to include the Turkish community, which had also come to live in the area, in the consultation and decision making process. (Beierlorzer and Boll, 1999). However, Waltz does not really believe this. According to her, the communal garden, which played an important role in Turkish community life, was destroyed to make way for the new dwellings; also rents were increased, without dwellings becoming any larger and without paying attention to the specific needs of the local people. ‘The only thing Turkish about it was the name of the street, which ran through the former communal garden: ‘Tepe’ Street = Mountain Street, the result of a competition. This was the successful participation by the migrant community!’ (Waltz, 2007)
England: Manchester/Salford Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders

Although, contrary to Germany, England does not have a shrinking population, housing market problems can be quite extreme in some areas where almost all industrial employment was lost (figure 3). In 1999 was formally recognised by a report commissioned by the government (ODPM, 1999). According to this report, about 11.5 % of council housing (housing owned by the local authorities), 8 % of housing owned by registered landlords (housing associations) and 3 % of privately owned housing (both rented out and owner-occupied) was situated in areas with low housing demand. Many, but not all, of these areas were to be found in the Northwest (Liverpool, Manchester and surrounding and intermediate areas) and Yorkshire and Humberside. Economic decline and demographic changes were recognised as being amongst the main causes leading to low housing demand, with local factors like high crime levels and a poor environmental quality adding to the problem. The governments’ response to this problem, partly triggered of by the pressure it was put under by local authorities and registered landlords, was to set up a number of ‘market renewal pathfinders’. These pathfinder areas are specific areas that receive government money to try and solve their housing market problems.

Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders are part of the ‘Sustainable Communities Plan’. This report states that ‘too many people do not have access to decent affordable housing in decent surroundings. Across the country there are still homes in poor condition occupied by vulnerable people’ (ODPM, 2003).

The problems that must be tackled are:
1. a shortage of housing that exists in parts of the country;
2. the opposite problem of housing market collapse in other parts of the country, leading to homes or even whole streets being abandoned;
3. the waste of Greenfield land;
4. people moving out of the cities to seek a better life in suburbs, creating urban sprawl.
To tackle these problems, the government increased the amount of money being spent on housing and urban renewal from £5,400m in 2002-03 to £7,740 in 2005-06. While eliminating the backlog of repair in the social housing sector remains a priority, a new policy tool is introduced: the housing market renewal pathfinder (HMRP). Initially the government created a £500m fund for a three year period, which was later extended for another three years with more funding (around £700m) available. Another extension of the scheme was announced in February 2008. Later that year, as part of a policy package to fight the consequences the credit crunch has for the housing market, it was decided to speed up projects, without making more money available, meaning that more money can be invested now and less in the years to come. In 2010, the newly elected government announced that a review of the HMRPs was under way. The scheme was abolished in March 2011.

After analysing policy documents and public statements, Cameron noticed a ‘changing justification for housing market renewal, from low demand to a modernisation agenda based on a notion of rising aspirations. Strongly linked to this agenda is an economic imperative concerned with restructuring the housing stock, in terms of tenure and value profile as much as physical quality, to support what is seen as a changing regional economic structure and labour market’ (Cameron, 2006). After changing from ‘brick and mortar’ lead policies to a mix of social and physical policies in the mid 1990s, ‘brick and mortar’ seems to have returned in the form of HMRPs:

‘Housing market renewal clearly returns the focus firmly to the transformation of place, a transformation to be achieved partly through bricks and mortar but partly too by changing the make-up of the population, with less emphasis than earlier place-based programmes on improvement for the existing population. Moreover, while it is a policy focussed on neighbourhoods, the developing rhetoric of market renewal tends to emphasise it contribution to wider-scale objectives, especially economic objectives. In that sense it can also be seen as contributing to the other major strand of New Labour’s regeneration agenda: the engendering of a ‘renaissance’ of cities and their regions. … What housing market renewal does promise, whether explicitly or implicitly, which is new in UK urban regeneration policy, is engineered gentrification and the replacement of a substantial part of the existing population by households with higher income and social status’ (Cameron, 2006).

Indeed, the way the Manchester/Salford HMRP puts its long-term vision into words, can be seen as an example of this changing focus. Originally, the aim was ‘to build stable, sustainable communities, where housing and social infrastructure meets the needs of all’. A few years later, the pathfinder’s aim is ‘to support the economic growth potential of Manchester City Region by creating neighbourhoods of choice that meet the needs of existing residents and are attractive to new and former residents.’ And although ‘the pathfinder has generally promoted mixed communities by improving each neighbourhood for existing residents’, it is also noted that ‘in some areas new homes are markedly different to the existing housing offer, and principally aimed at a more affluent market’ (Audit Commission, 2008).

Before focussing on the example of Chimney Pot Park in Salford, first of some figures about falling demand for housing in the area during the 1990s will be given. In England as a whole, there was a population increase of 6.9%. In the Northwest however, the number of inhabitants declined with 2.3%. In the cities of Manchester (-10.4%) and Salford (-6.4%) the loss of population was even worse. From 2000 till 2010 the population of the Northwest remained roughly stable, although with some local variations, with the city of Manchester having a small population gain and other cities, like Liverpool, still shrinking.
Chimney Pot Park in Salford

Chimney Pot Park is a flagship and price winning development in central Salford. Terraced family houses are completely refurbished, with only their front facades being retained. The idea is to keep the architectural heritage of the area, at the same time providing modern dwellings with all the mod cons. Originally, it was intended to keep more of the original structure in place, but for fiscal reasons the plans were changed. In the UK, VAT (a tax on added value) must be paid for the refurbishment of dwellings, while new building is exempt from VAT. By demolishing all but the front facades, the estate could be classified as ‘new’. (www.cabe.org.uk)

In all, 227 dwellings will be built, with total development costs around £34m, including £11m provided by the public sector (of which £7.3m as part of the Manchester/Salford Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder).

Some local pathfinder managers, when speaking off the record, were quite critical about the amount of public money being spent on a relatively small scale project, although at the same time admitting that both the project itself and the attention it got, have helped to put Salford in the spotlight. Still, they indicated that it was not their decision to ask Urban Splash, a UK architectural and marketing company famous for its regeneration projects in run down urban areas, to help redevelop the estate. Instead, they told us, there was some pressure from above’. As indeed there was, as the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, who was born and raised in the area, told The Times (July 4th, 2008):

‘I dragged Tom Bloxham, the head of Urban Splash, around the area on three rainy Saturday mornings and said he had to help us. He kept saying: “Nothing I can do, Hazel, nothing I can do.” Eventually he said he would give it a go.’

The new dwellings, with parking facilities at ground floor level covered by gardens and other open spaces, feature ‘upside down’ layouts, with bedrooms at the ground floor. Many dwellings have open plan kitchen at the second floor. They are specifically aimed both at first-time buyers, not necessarily traditional
families with children, and people wanting to stay in or return to the area (e.g. former residents of the dwellings that used to be here). Phase 1 was completed in 2008 and consisted of 108 dwellings. Although more dwellings were bought and all but destroyed, work on phase 2 seems to have come to a halt, due to the economic crisis that hit Britain from 2008/9.

Flagship and price winning as it may be, the Chimney Pot Park development does attract some criticism from the local community. People who lived in the houses that were to be converted, but could not afford to return in the new ‘upside down’ dwellings, had to move, with the help of the local council, to other existing dwellings. They do not always feel they are better off than before. Others are angry about the amount of public regeneration money that was spent to make it all possible. Even if all 227 dwellings would be built in the end, and if the total amount of public money would still be limited to the £11m intended, this still amounts to a subsidy of £50,000, or about €60,000 a dwelling ‘for a return to the community of not a single affordable home in the first phase. That’s a scandal.’ (Kingston, 2006)

Discussion

The developments of Schüngelberg and Chimney Pot Park have much in common (table 2). Both are building on the (architectural) heritage of the area, both are partly funded by public money. Both are a combination of the retaining of existing structures and new building, although it in a different way. And both are at least partly aiming at the local population, people who are living or used to live in the area. The Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders and the IBA Emscher Park are both claimed to be a success, although it may be too early to tell esp. for the pathfinders. However, it is undoubtedly true that big projects like these must have an impact. For the Emscher Park, it can already be said that changing the area in the mind of people not living there from grey industrial wasteland to tourist attraction, again
stressed by the Ruhr Area being one of Europe’s cultural capitals in 2010, is quite large an achievement. Maybe the key to its success is the combination of the IBA being a large scale project and at the same time a combination of over a hundred small projects, all sharing some general goals, but also being responsive to local opinion and needs. The Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders seem to be more top-down than the IBA was, and more concentrating on change (e.g. attracting newcomers to the cities involved) than on tradition. Still keeping history alive, esp. traditional architecture, did play a part.

Are the IBA and the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders projects, which can be copied to other shrinking cities in other countries, e.g. Parkstad in the Netherlands, another urban region that started shrinking because of the demise of heavy industry (coal mining)? Indeed, Parkstad is now in the early stages of planning an IBA of its own. A preliminary conclusion could be the that projects that include keeping the architectural and industrial heritage alive and visible and finding new use for existing buildings can play a part in keeping or making an area attractive. At the very least, it is a way of showing the existing population that they are still wanted and that the history of the area, the place where they grew up, can be something to be proud of.

At the same time, we have to understand that IBA’s and Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders are not just a couple of visible urban interventions. They are as much about process as about content: keeping inhabitants and other parties on board, using skills that are locally available and finding a way of doing many things at the same time (like in Schüngelberg: refurbishing existing dwellings, adding homes as well as a new village centre, landscaping etc., while giving local people a say in almost everything). Maybe this is something that can be copied, but only if one understands the local preferences and needs in the area where an IBA- or pathfinder-like solution is going to be implemented.

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<th>Table 2: Schüngelberg and Chimney Pot Park compared</th>
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