

PARTICIPATION IN COLLECTIVELY SOLD PRIVATE RENOVATIONS

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Abstract

Several pilot projects have spawned an increasing number of schemes involving individuals in renovation. A well known and awarded (World Habitat Awards 2008) project is the “Wallisblok” also known as “De Dichterlijke Vrijheid”. This project involved the sale (for a symbolic amount) of a run down building block to a collective of future homeowners. The building block was in a poor technical condition and the collective owners had to (re)design and renovate the building block according to requirements set by the municipality. These requirements included both the quality of the renovation as well as the minimal investment. This scheme has been exported, copied and repeated due to its success. However, the schemes are different in several aspects, for example the price has never been as low as it was in the first project.

In the evaluations that have been written on the projects and especially on the Wallisblok, several gains are mentioned. Amongst others, neighbourhood improvement, home and street quality improvement, personal control over housing quality, participation amongst owners, strengthening of neighbourhood bonds and collective (neighbourhood) maintenance are mentioned (Sour 2009). Moreover effects that touch on demographic characteristics of the neighbourhood (attracting high income new residents, Van Der Laan 2009), on reaching environmental goals (climate change, Van Hal 2009) and contribute to diminish general socio-economic problems in the neighbourhood.

In this paper an overview of the stated effects and experiences is given and these are compared with the envisioned effects at the initiation of the project. The paper draws upon other (Dutch) evaluations and on literature that addresses similar effects. This paper is limited to a literature review focussing on the description of the project, its aims and effects. For the final conclusion, the effects of the project are put in perspective of scale and the competences of the collective that are necessary to create a successful project. Implementation possibilities of the scheme for use in more generalized housing and regeneration situations are mentioned keeping the limitations in mind. Thus the paper aims to give access to the characteristics of the project and to make an international interpretation of the scheme possible.

Keywords: Wallisblok, klushuizen, commissioning, empowerment, social diversity

INTRODUCTION

The “klushuizen” or DIY-homes (Do It Yourself) project in the municipality Rotterdam was initiated in 2003 by an architect (Ineke Hulshof) and process management agency

Urbannerdam (in person by Frans van Hulsten) with the renovation project 'Wallisblok'. The project scheme that was designed based its approach on two observations. The first was that houses in the area of the Wallisblok were rundown but that their structural rigidity was still suitable to be renovated. The second observation concerned the poor social quality and/or the poor living conditions in the area. As a result of the poor quality in the area the neighbourhood was labelled as a problem neighbourhood by the national government (VROM 2000). Moreover, the area surrounding the Wallisblok was assigned a 'hotspot' status by the municipality in 2002 (Rotterdam 2003a). The Rotterdam hotspots are unsafe locations with a problem accumulation, such as a poor physical quality, vacated dwellings, poor inhabitants, nuisance from prostitution and drugs related activities (Rotterdam 2003a). The municipality invited Urbannerdam and Hulshof architects in 2003 to create an approach to change these locations' characteristics in such a way that the hotspot status could be nullified.

The commenced basic idea was to get a collective of new homeowners to buy the complete housing block, make them renovate the houses to a high quality level and to live there for at least two years. In this way both the physical problems and the social problems would be addressed (e.g. VROM 2006). Due to the success of the Wallisblok, the municipality decided for a bigger project with more houses and the DIY-homes project was born and named '169 klushuizen'.

Since the first idea in 2003 and the start of the first project, around 450 houses have been delivered in Rotterdam and transformed into nearly 200 bigger homes. The objective of this paper is to give insight in the characteristics of the Rotterdam based DIY-homes scheme. An overview of anticipated effects and effects that are found in several evaluations is given and the contributed effects are discussed. The central question of this paper is: what are the social, physical and financial effects of the collectively sold 'Klushuizen'. To answer this question the paper distinguishes effects that are aimed for and effects that are claimed to be found in literature. This paper is explorative in describing the goals of DIY-homes, evaluative in comparing results with the goals. The paper draws solely on literature study and project information as obtained from Urbannerdam. The paper concludes with suggesting adjustments for the scheme to make future projects even more successful.

The paper consists of five sections. In this first section first some background for the DIY-homes scheme and some theories that were found applicable are given. The second section consists of a general description of the DIY-homes scheme addressing the conditions for the scheme, the target group and primary goals. The third section illustrates the DIY-homes scheme using the Wallisblok project as a typical example. The physical characters, specific goals, investment scheme, design and renovation process and the results of the Wallisblok project are described. The fourth section presents the effects as found in literature attributed to the Wallisblok project and more in general to DIY-homes schemes. The effects are presented and reviewed. The fifth and final section contains some discussion and addresses the goals, effects and opportunities of the DIY-homes scheme. Finally, it suggests further research to measure the effectiveness of the scheme.

Origination of the DIY-homes scheme

Urbannerdam's office background suggests that the DIY-homes scheme can be traced back to the urge to get inhabitants in neighbourhoods more involved, to restore trust in the government and housing associations and to battle the generic urban restructuring approach (Van Hulsten 2004). Van Hulsten suggests a different approach for urban restructuring opposing the traditional one. The suggestion to institutional actors, such as the municipality and housing associations, is to rely more on a modest role in urban regeneration. The problem

analysis and the creation of a vision on the future of a neighbourhood are more important in this approach than executing the restructuring. To make this approach successful it is necessary to communicate a vision in an early stage of development. The vision should contain less actual plans to offer opportunity for the inhabitants to identify their contributions in the reaching the envisioned situation. Van Hulten thus suggests a role for the municipality that is to facilitate and initiate, rather than realise. At the same time it offers the opportunity for the municipality to be more susceptible to demands and wishes from the inhabitants. In this approach the interaction between local inhabitants needs to be stimulated and supported and is a mean and a goal at the same time. The approach should lead to an increase in property value, lower turnover rates, improved housing quality, active owners associations, reduction of nuisance complaints and increased social cohesion. This approach shows similarities with so called 'area development' and 'demand driven housing management' (e.g. Van Overmeeren and Zijlstra 2009) in the respect that the relation and involvement of actual inhabitants (should) prevail. However, for this paper some theoretical backgrounds are found in theories concerning gentrification, rather than management. The following paragraph shortly addresses some relevant backgrounds for the DIY-homes scheme.

Theoretical background for DIY-homes

The selection of the houses in the DIY-homes scheme is based on the neighbourhood, the quality of the building itself and the possible value-gap between them. This approach can be compared to the 'rent-gap' theory from Smith (1987). This theory assumes that the factual price of a building, considering the state, location and size, is lower than the current actual price. This so called rent-gap or value-gap (the difference between potential price and present day market value) theory is used to explain gentrification of for example New York neighbourhoods (Smith 1987). Smith elaborates that through the first gentrification effects, the local economy will be influenced as well. Gentrification has, in this respect, effect on both physical and economical climate of the neighbourhood. But the social composition is effected as well. While prices are rising as an effect of gentrification, low income occupants move out, or are forced out, and higher incomes start to occupy the neighbourhood. Accordingly, the gentrification process has effect on three different pillars identified in the introduction: social, physical and economical.

The Wallisblok has been referred to as 'gentripuncture' rather than gentrification (Van Eijk 2010, Hoofs 2005, VROM 2007, COS 2007, Crone 2005, De Jong et al 2008). Gentripuncture mainly differentiates itself from urban restructuring in scale and in the approach. Gentripuncture aims at giving incentives by means of giving opportunities to gentrifiers (De Jong 2008) while restructuring focuses on renovation or demolishment and rebuilding large amounts of estates (Van Eijk 2010;21). Gentripuncture, a contraction of gentrification and acupuncture, could be placed in the state-led gentrification approaches as identified by Uitermark et al (2007). Uitermark et al argue that state-led gentrification is an actively chosen strategy by a coalition of governments and housing market actors to change the social composition of a neighbourhood to restore the social order and structure. Gentrification and Gentripuncture accordingly, can be seen as a global urban strategy (Smith 2002). Gentrification, as defined by Clark (2005;258) is "a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital." Thus by changing the neighbourhood composition the gentrification strategy can fight problems as poor living conditions in neighbourhoods. The definition of gentrification can be recognized in the Dutch urban restructuring strategies as well. The restructuring strategies focus on replacing low rent-price, low-quality houses by homes aided for higher and middle income owner occupiers (Uitermark et al 2007, VROM,

1997; 2000; van Kempen and Priemus, 1999). Rotterdam is no exception and has been aiming to maintain and attract higher incomes to the city (Rotterdam 2003a/b, 2006). However, the success of these strategies are under debate and not yet proven (e.g. Van der Land 2004). The DIY-homes scheme can be placed in the context of “joint private project commissioning” (Collectief Particulier Opdrachtgeverschap (CPO) Blom 2009, NRP 2009) but that has been mostly limited to new construction (Blom 2009, Boelens 2010). For this paper the context is limited to effects related with gentrification.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GENERAL DIY-HOMES SCHEME

The DIY-homes scheme can be interpreted in different ways. A building in a very bad shape can be named a DIY-project, which happens often by real estate agents. For this paper DIY-homes are defined as (Urbannerdam):

- 1) the buyer has a lot of influence on the design and realisation of the renovation and has been given the opportunity to manage and remodel both exterior and interior of the house;
- 2) the seller demands from the buyer a certain effort by requiring the buyer to:
 - a. renovate according to a programme of requirements set by the seller regarding building standards (higher than the usual Buildings Decree) for example in means of energy, comfort and looks. In this way the quality of the renovation is controlled;
 - b. live in his DIY-house for a given time (determined by the seller) to prevent the houses from being sold for a higher price and making it less interesting for property traders and to prevent speculation;
 - c. to renovate the building block (only if applicable) in a joint effort of all the new buyers.

Requirements/Conditions

Besides the requirements that have to be met in relation to building quality, self-occupation and collective renovation some other requirements are demanded from the future homeowners. The future homeowners have to meet a financial criterion that asks them to be able to finance the purchase plus the estimated renovation costs.

After the completion of the collective renovation all the owners get a determined period to finish the interior of their homes themselves (or have it done by a building contractor). This period ranges from 6 to 12 months in order to keep the project going and to be able to check if the desired minimum renovation level has been lived up to individually as well.

The conditions need supervision and monitoring during the process of renovation and even after completion. The municipality provided the new owner occupiers with experts during the design and renovation process (see next paragraph) and used monitoring tools to check whether the conditions were met.

Over time these conditions changed a bit since their first use in the Wallisblok project and were optimized throughout the other collective projects. The basic three main conditions remained the same.

Target group

The target group of DIY-houses are mainly people who are willing to put a big effort (time and money) in a house, in a dilapidated neighbourhood. They like to realise their own desired living space and by their investment will be involved in the condition of their home and their neighbourhood. Depending on the location, possibilities and conditions, each scheme has its own more specifically defined target group. Candidates can apply when new houses to be

sold are announced. The only selection criterion the municipality uses is the mentioned financial test. Candidates that prove to have sufficient financial means to pass the test are allowed to enter the drawing of lots to be assigned a place in the project. In advance the desired minimum quality of renovation has to be determined, budgeted and communicated, to minimize surprises (such as failing the test) and unexpected (extra) costs for the new buyers.

In general the features of the DIY-scheme are attractive because:

- 1) the new homeowner is in full control of the characteristics (quality and costs) of the property;
- 2) the requirements require both an effort from the homeowners as from the municipality;
- 3) the requirements guarantee banning of undesired tenures.

Primary goals of DIY-homes scheme

The initiator in the DIY-homes scheme is the municipality of Rotterdam. They own most of the DIY-homes offered in the scheme (eg. the homes in the Wallisblok) as a result of purchasing run down houses. Sometimes the properties are (formerly) owned by housing associations, mostly the properties are purchased from private landlords. The municipality states that the project should contribute to create “bigger, affordable dwellings, to create a more mixed neighbourhood and inhabitants” (Rotterdam, 2006). In the sale agreements the municipality addresses several ‘considerations’. The agreement states that the physical and social living conditions in the area are poor and that the area was assigned a ‘hotspot’. The municipality states to have invested national subsidies to restore the building quality (used on the foundations) and that the obliged renovation has to lead to “bigger, renovated houses that attract and are attractive for other occupants than actually present in the neighbourhood, leading to a more mixed neighbourhood.” In these considerations the physical and social goals prevail. Zoethout (2005) signals that the context of lacking tools to control the housing quality and budget cuts at the municipality are a general driver towards the DIY-homes scheme. More in general, the municipality was searching for instruments to get inhabitants and owner occupiers to invest in their own living environment (Zoethout 2005, Blom 2009, Rotterdam 2003a, VROM 2006, Hoogstad 2007). According to Blom (2009) it is a challenge to find solutions for the question “how to attract buyers to a deprived area? How can you change a negative image of an area in such a way that the neighbourhood transforms to a trendy hotspot in a few years time?” Blom thinks that physical renovations, with or without subsidies, are not enough to improve the quality of an area. One of the reasons is that the properties owned by private landlords cater undesired tenancies as (illegal or overcrowded) pensions and sub-letting. Considering the distribution of tenancies in the neighbourhoods (Spangen for example consists for 95% of rental homes and 5% owner occupied homes) stimulating homeownership should be part of the approach. Blom assumes that owner occupiers are more strongly involved in the neighbourhood than rental tenants.

Hoogstad (2007) states that the primary goal of the municipality was to get the building block sold from their portfolio. According to Hoogstad the main question was how to attract potential occupants for the dwellings situated in the “deprived” area (Hoogstad 2007, compare Blom 2009). The privately commissioned collective renovation was the solution the municipality believed in to offer such a “niche” to attract “creative” people (amongst others Hoogstad 2007, Blom 2009).

General goals for the DIY-homes scheme can be summarized in being:

1. improving and guarding housing quality (larger, diversified, renovated);
2. improving and sustaining neighbourhood compositing (different from present neighbourhood composition, higher incomes, creative people);

3. improving economical viability (giving financial incentive to attract and stimulate investments);
4. fighting undesired tenures (sub-letting, illegal pension holding).

Thus leading to an overall improvement in the area and removing a hotspot appointment. The effects can be identified through differentiation in physical housing stock characteristics, raises in average housing values and improving the inhabitants' judgements on safety and the quality of the living environment. These goals are enforced by the terms and conditions set by the municipality in the sale agreement and work along several mechanisms such as attracting higher incomes to the neighbourhood and improving the image. Furthermore it is believed that the new homeowners shown a greater commitment to both home and neighbourhood as a result of the investments they have made in time, effort and money. The new homeowners are expected to have higher incomes and different backgrounds than the existing inhabitants in the neighbourhood, thus leading to differentiation and an increase in purchasing power in the neighbourhood. Further living quality improvement could be reached as a result of a role-model effect both socially and physically.

The architect and process manager (Ineke Hulshof and Frans van Hulsten) are cited "if a municipality or housing association develops such a project it undoubtedly ends in an unpopular project full of compromises. ... people are willing to live in such a project but not when it is situated in a neighbourhood like Spangen, they are only willing to [live there] when they get full control [over the renovation and design]." Ditty Blom is cited "they want a lot of floor surface and space, and most of them have dreamed for years of a home that they can design and model to their own desires." These quotations illustrate social goals (attracting a different target group, offering a home that can be fully controlled), economical goals (delivering value for money, loosing the building block from the portfolio) and physical goals (a home made to measure and solving poor living conditions in the area starting with the building block). The goal of the project could therefore be captured in terms of state-led Gentrification aiming for gentrification of the Spangen neighbourhood (Bosscher 2007).

DESCRIPTION OF WALLISBLOK PROJECT: the first DIY-homes scheme

The Wallisblok also known by the name the 'De Dichterlijke Vrijheid' (the poetic freedom) is situated in the neighbourhood Spangen in Rotterdam, and the location is assigned a 'hotspot' status (Rotterdam 2006, VROM 2006). The neighbourhood is referred to as the "drain" of the city, thereby collecting all the dirt and problems of the city (Crone 2005). It is an unpopular area dominated by non-Dutch-native inhabitants (over 75%, *ibidem*;4). The building block was heavily dilapidated and Spangen as a neighbourhood in general was considered a weak area of Rotterdam. Spangen was well known for its bad reputation. The properties were previously owned by private landlords that neglected the buildings. The municipality bought different poorly maintained properties in the building block since 1998 (Sour 2005) and boarded them up. The municipality has legal tools and had the means to intervene in 'dangerous' housing situations. The municipality can force a homeowner to improve the housing quality when it becomes dangerous according to the building law. When an owner does not comply, the municipality will commission the renovations themselves and forward the bill to the homeowner or owning landlord. When the homeowner thinks the investment is more expensive to be worthwhile, the municipality can offer to buy their properties from them, renovate the building according to the safety standards and sell them again. This method was used in many cases and is known as the Aankoop-Verbeter-Verkoop concept: buy-improve-sale concept (Blom 2009;35). As a result of the regulations, the

municipality was able to buy the properties relatively cheap. Most of the houses remained boarded up to 2003 and thereby enforced the negative image of the area.



Figure 1: picture Wallisblok before renovation (2004)

Physical characteristics

The architect and process management company were invited by the municipality to explore the options of renewal and came to the conclusion that the Wallisblok:

- Was in a poor physical condition and needed a full renovation including the interior, the foundations, roof and the rear facades;
- Represents a high architectural value block since it is constructed in the 1930's typical Amsterdam School style;
- Would cost an equal amount to renovate as it would to be demolished and rebuild or redeveloped.

As a result, the advice was to renovate (Blom 2009). Crone (2005) and VROM (2006) emphasize the poor physical quality and stress that the municipality will improve the quality of the building foundation if necessary before the houses are actually sold.

Specific project goals Wallisblok

Renovation is a clear goal and according to the sale agreement, the quality aim is to create not just bigger homes, but to ensure the quality by demanding new-built standards. Improving the physical and structural quality of the homes thereby is important to attract future occupants and preferably is realised before the homes are sold. This is necessary since the image of the area is too bad to attract occupants (Blom 2009).

Joint private project commissioning, mixing (attracting high incomes) and improving the image of an area are goals within urban renewal (Berkelbach 2006). Attracting high incomes and revitalising an area can be part of a gentrification strategy as well.

Agricola and Helleman (2006) place the Wallisblok in the urban renewal background aiming for social cohesion, citizen participation and urban mixing (ibidem;12). According to them especially the link between the social and physical urban regeneration is of importance.

The goal stated in VROM (2006) was to increase owner occupancy in the neighbourhood and to reach dwelling diversification. The follow-up projects have to improve the image of the neighbourhoods and have to contribute to the gentrification of Rotterdam (ibidem;6).

Investment scheme

The investment estimate excluded the costs of purchasing the properties and the costs for improving the foundations. Using subsidies (ISV1 and 2 national subsidies for urban renewal and IPSV national subsidy for innovations in urban renewal, Blom 2009;46) the renovations of the foundations could be paid for by the municipality. Considering the estimated value of the houses before and after renovation, the municipality decided to 'give away' the building block to a collective of future owners. In fact the Wallisblok was sold for a single Euro per buyer. In return for a free (in later projects a cheap) home, the future owners had to meet the conditions mentioned.

The price is determined by valuing the renovated property minus the investment costs. This price is (should be) lower than the property's value in its present state. This method of pricing is necessary to make the project interesting and affordable for future buyers. For the Wallisblok it turned out that the municipality had to sell the houses for a single Euro, later projects were never this cheap since the quality of the properties wasn't as bad as in the Wallisblok.

It is required for the new homeowners to renovate the building block (if applicable) as a collective. They have to act as one private commissioner. The owners have to come to one general renovation plan. The advantage is that they share the costs of the collective renovation equally (according to purchased floor area in square meters) and thus should be able to get a relatively good price for the works commissioned.

The design and renovation process

After the announcement of the Wallisblok being "given away" in November 2004, there were over 400 interested potential buyers of which 39 decided they wanted to take this challenge and finally formed a collective of homeowners called "De Dichterlijke Vrijheid". The (design) freedom, collective and the price aspects attracted the new homeowners to the project. The costs for a single floor apartment were estimated on €70.000 and € 200.000 for a four storey house (about 160 square meters).

During the process the buyers got assistance from experts. The design and planning process was accompanied by the process manager (Urbannerdam) and architect (Hulshof) and there were municipal permit experts involved, guiding the buyers through the different phases of developing their own homes. The process manager had knowledge of the entire building process and more importantly had knowledge and experience in controlling group dynamics. The architect assisted in designing the wishes and desires of the homeowners and had knowledge about technical and process matters. The future occupants were closely involved by the experts so to become experts themselves on different aspects of the building process.

To get things started, workshops were used to determine housing preferences on which the later parcel layout was based. Groups of buyers were formed which investigated specific terrains. The formed building group of homeowners acted as the private commissioner and formulated the groups' collective wishes. Another group of owners formulated the sustainable investments and another group made a plan for the collective garden.

Result

The Wallisblok project turned 96 dilapidated units into 39 renovated, high quality, inspired and unique homes. As a result the building block was preserved, the architectural value was kept, the facades renovated and the run down image of the street improved (compare figures 1 with figures 2).



Figure 2: picture Wallisblok after renovation (2008)

EFFECTS OF FIRST DIY-HOMES PROJECTS

In 2010 a total of up to 450 houses have been offered in the DIY-homes scheme and that has led to improvement of and occupancy of nearly 200 remodelled homes. About 57% of the houses has been offered in some sort of a collective scheme while the other houses became individual homes that were no part of a collective. The DIY-homes are mainly offered in three neighbourhoods of Rotterdam: Delfshaven (Spangen), Feijenoord and Charlois.

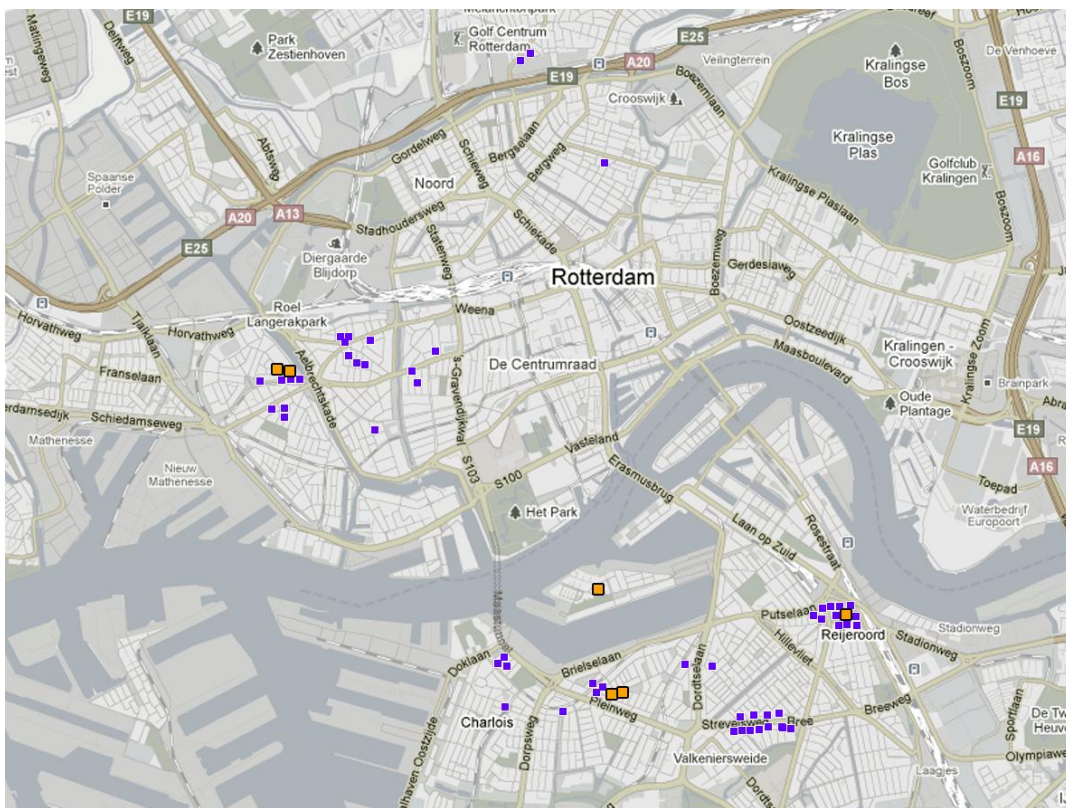


Figure 3: geographical overview of DIY-projects in Rotterdam. (Orange squares represent collective projects, blue squares represent individual homes)

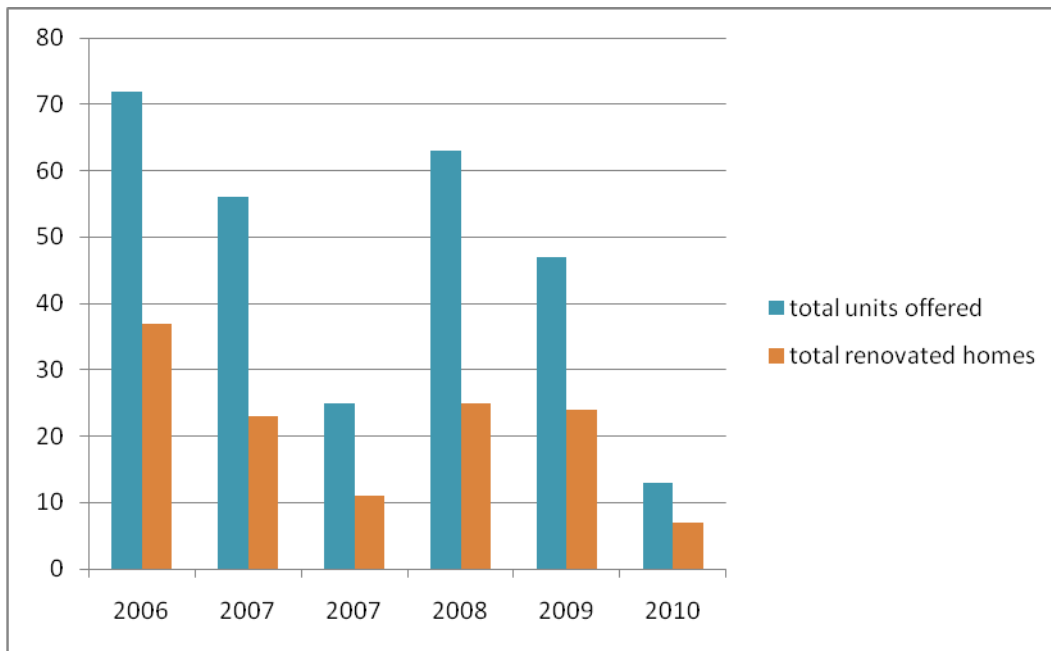


Figure 4: Timeline and number of homes offered (both collective and individual DIY-homes)

Selection criteria for homes and neighbourhoods

Selection criteria should be (Zoethout 2005) that the houses are part of a single building block and all houses in the block are included in the scheme. Preferably the area is close to the city centre, the dwellings are cheap or preferably free and worth an expensive renovation. Buildings with '30's architecture are preferred (ibidem;49).

The houses to be offered are preferably run down since the lower quality will lower the price as illustrated in the investment scheme and calculation of the sales price. The lower price and poorer state offer the future owner more possibilities and at the same time it gives the municipality a justification to demand (more) conditions.

Some warnings are issued by Zoethout as well: the group of new owners cannot be much bigger than 36 to ensure that decisions can be made and meetings will be fruitful. But there is a minimum group size as well, if the group consists of less than about 8 buyers the amount of available time and effort and therefore work being done and knowledge within the group is reduced. Good planning and guidance is essential. Moreover, Zoethout believes the scheme is not applicable in deprived areas, the future inhabitants need to have faith in the future of the area.

Blom (2009) is clear about the economical aspect from the municipality's point of view. Other housing investors, such as housing associations, didn't manage to envision a financially feasible project in the Wallisblok case, even including subsidies. The buy-improve-sale scheme therefore wasn't working and an alternative had to be found. Giving the houses away was left as the only solution (ibidem;39). The scheme was financially backed by a housing association from Rotterdam (if the houses weren't sold, however free, the association would do the obliged renovation investment, Blom 2009, De Jong et al 2008). The selection criteria for the possible DIY-homes schemes can thus be supplemented by the need for a value gap and by the availability of subsidies to bridge the negative investment.

Berkelbach (2006) states that inventiveness and a social attitude are needed in the future owners to be willing to join in a (collective) DIY-homes project. To attract the future inhabitants and keep them from withdrawing from the project it is essential to be honest and give an estimation of the costs that is feasible (De Jong et al 2008).

Project name	Period	Area	No. dwellings before-after renovation	Sale price-investment	Remarks
Wallisblok (Dichterlijke vrijheid)	2004-2007	Spangen/Delfshaven	96-36	0/unit 200.000/dwelling	First pilot project
Kleine Kop Vosmaer (Blauwe Vos)	2006-2009	Spangen/Delfshaven	39-18	10.000/unit 1.400/m ²	
Verschoor 2	2008-2011	Tarwewijk/Charlois	15-5	110.000/dwelling 65.000/dwelling	partly renovated before sale
Beukblok	2007-2010	Hillesluis/Feijenoord	16-6	0/unit 1.200/m ²	Initially non-sold apartments got partly renovated before selling
De Driehoek	2007-2011	Katendrecht/Charlois	85-36	15.000/unit 1.500/m ²	Offered in collaboration with Nieuwe Unie housing association (Woonstad)

Table 1: Overview of characteristics of the collective projects realised (Urbannerdam 2010).

Stated effects of the Wallisblok project and DIY-homes

Van der Laan (2009, minister of VROM at that time) concludes that there are three main reasons to stimulate DIY-homes schemes. The first is the positive effluence on the neighbourhood of DIY-homes. He feels the scheme should be used in deprived areas since inhabitants are the first to notice problems and the first to have ideas on solving them. Secondly the scheme gives tenants full control over the housing quality. Third and last he concludes that the bond between occupants created during the renovation will have an effect on the collective maintenance of the homes and of the neighbourhood.

De Jong et al (2008;40) summarizes the effects of the Wallisblok project in 7 “lessons”. The DIY-homes “stimulate social cohesion in the area (1); stop the downward spiral of degeneration (2); increases owner occupancy (3); diversifies the housing stock (4); attracts people with higher education levels and incomes (5); comply to individual housing demands leading to diverse and extraordinary homes(6); led to an increased confidence within the municipality in the scheme and its outcomes (7).” De Jong et al don’t state any economical effects but oppose the effects to the investments: between 70.000 and 350.000 Euro per dwelling per individual household. And an additional investment from the municipality of 35.000 Euro per dwelling excluding the additional costs for foundation repairs.

Now an effort is made to distinguish the different effects according to the distinction made between physical, social and economical effects.

Physical

The homes created are extraordinary (De Jong et al 2008) and got published in the (Dutch) Architectural Yearbook (Blom 2009, Van Hulst 2008). Zoethout (2005) states as positive results that “characteristic buildings” are maintained instead of demolished. The dwellings are more diversified (ibidem, De Jong et al 2008), became considerably bigger (Boonstra 2008, De Jong et al 2008, Sour 2009), and contain some very special lay-outs (Van Hulst 2008, Sour 2009). VROM (2006) states that the goals of increasing owner occupancy in the neighbourhood and dwelling diversification has been reached.

The project has been mentioned in relation to sustainability questions such as energy consumption, CO₂ reduction and climate change as well (Van Hal 2009). At least they are renovated to high quality standards (Boonstra 2008). The aspects of physical neighbourhood improvement, home and street quality improvement and collective (neighbourhood) maintenance are mentioned, but more in relation to the social effects of the project. The Wallisblok received three awards. The World Habitat Award for the preservation of the valuable buildings, offering affordable homes and triggering local regeneration (World Habitat Awards 2008), the Job Dura Award for the contribution to safety in the area and stimulation of the rehabilitation of the area in the neighbourhood (Job Dura Fonds 2006) and the Innovation Award at the Nationale Renovatiedag in 2009 for innovation in the building process and contributions to social and economical structure of the neighbourhood (NRP 2009).

Social

The Wallisblok attracted 60 new inhabitants to the neighbourhood. The inhabitants have high incomes, which is consistent with the ambitions of the municipality (Zoethout 2005, Boonstra 2008). The inhabitants are a stable group and create a child friendly environment (Van Hulst 2008;45) at least in the inner garden (Van Hulst 2008, De Jong et al 2008). Inhabitants experience the shared responsibilities as pleasant and the inhabitants remain enthusiastic despite the hard work and long hours that had to be invested in the project (De Jong et al 2008).

Blom (2009;41) concludes that the DIY-homes attracted a completely different group of inhabitants to the area. She calls them dynamic urban people and the group is typified as “active with the city and street” and they “actively choose for a neighbourhood”. The group is creative: architects, artists, designers and photographers. They are “pioneers” that choose for the control, freedom of choice and good value for money (ibidem). VROM (2007) typifies the group as the “creative middle class” rather than non-Dutch natives. Berkelbach (2006) calls the inhabitants highly educated as well. The inhabitants self-select (VROM 2006) and have the ‘perfect profile’. This profile consists of creative people with high incomes and freelance occupations, that share “ideological motives” and are “empowered” (“weerbaar” VROM 2006). SCP (Gijssberts and Dagevos 2007) states that the owners of the DIY-homes are “frontrunners” and is one of the few successful measures to have a positive effect on social cohesion (Hoogstad 2007). De Jong et al (2008) refer to the Wallisblok effects as social climbing of the tenants. This ‘climbing’ mechanism is referred to as empowerment as well (e.g. VROMraad 2006). In this case the main aspects of the process involve homeownership and control over the dwelling (De Jong et al 2006;42). Van Hulst (2008) refers to the strength of the group and the control they expressed in the project. Without these characteristics the Wallisblok project would not have succeeded in his eyes. It could be explained through motivation and shared opinions (ideology and ambition) of the group. De Jong et al (2008;44) conclude that the new inhabitants are a closely knit community consisting of the creative class (according to Florida).

The DIY-homes have led to cohesion amongst the tenants has been created as a result of intensive collaboration in the renovation and design phase (Zoethout 2005) and shows in the number of groups formed to get things done in the building block and surroundings. The project has contributed to create a more positive image of at least the neighbourhood (Van Hulten 2008;45). A tenant admits to have chosen for the DIY-homes partly out of idealism “we don’t want to become a white enclave” (Hoogstad 2007). This statement was also found in Sour (2005;45). Some inhabitants themselves claim that the social cohesion within the group is an important factor (De Jong et al 2008). The social cohesion amongst the new inhabitants generates another valuable aspect besides the quality of the house itself (De Jong et al 2008;48). VROMraad (2009) signals that DIY-homes illustrate and generate cohesion and involvement with the living environment.

One of the advantages is that the housing consumer becomes a housing prosumer (after Toffler 1980) and models and thereby creates their own home and living environment. Hoogstad (2007) cites some tenants just after they moved in “we have created our own dreamworld”, “an ideal housing situation ... where I can settle” (De Jong et al 2008;48).

The effects on the neighbourhood are less simple explained. The safety index has improved (10point scale) from a 4,6 to a 7 at the moment the first homes are inhabited (2007, COS 2007). Major problems in the area have been solved such as related to drugs, homelessness and prostitution (Hoogstad 2007, Blom 2009). De Jong et al (2008) cite an inhabitant that mentions smashed windows and other nuisances in the neighbourhood. But the inhabitant recognises the attractive force of the Wallisblok as well. In its wake all kinds of activities are coming to Spangen and thereby having a positive influence on the image of the neighbourhood.

Urban restructuring could lead to inhabitants protesting against demolition. Since the houses in Wallisblok were already vacant, it was decided to renovate in stead of demolish and built new houses, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood did not protest the approach. But some uneasy feelings have been expressed (Zoethout 2005;42). And Aussen (2010) concludes that the old inhabitants of Spangen are not really interacting with the new inhabitants of the project. However, the project hasn’t led to feelings of displacement as could be found in gentrification literature (e.g. Hamnett 2003, Atkinson 2002). The old inhabitants of Spangen view the arrival of the new inhabitants as an achievement they themselves have made possible as a result of all their activities to reduce problems in the area. The different groups rarely meet and when they do some tension can be felt. The old inhabitant agree that the new inhabitants mainly live a different life withdrawn from neighbourhood activities. One of the arguments to support this is their communal (private) garden (compare amongst others De Jong et al 2008). As a result the new inhabitants are regarded as outsiders in the neighbourhood (Aussen 2010).

Economical

As stated among the social effects, the Wallisblok succeeded in attracting high incomes. This could lead to a more entrepreneurship and higher purchasing power (Van Der Laan 2009). Van Hulten (2008;45) sees this economical component as well. He states that the new inhabitants stimulate the local economy as a result of the high purchasing power. But the RMO is less optimistic. RMO (Hokken en Janssen 2005/RMO) concludes that integration won’t be the case since the new inhabitants will find different schools for their kids, will do shopping in other stores and socialise at other places than the other neighbourhood inhabitants. Colantonio and Dixon (2009) conclude for the Rotterdam South area, but not especially regarding the DIY-homes, that housing mobility has not changed considerably and that social effects, as measured in different monitors, need more time to become visible and might take generations to show (ibidem; 65-69).

The total investment in Wallisblok is over 10 million Euro, of which 6 million by the inhabitants (Berkelbach 2006;186). De Jong et al (2008;44) conclude that the inhabitants got themselves a owner occupied home with new built quality for a price of 200.000 euro per 130 sq meter. Zoethout (2005;34) illustrates the average price per square meter in Wallisblok is 1150, while the average of Rotterdam is 1635 and for the neighbourhood it is 1246 (prices 2004). Close reading reveals some differences in the stated investments. However, the homes can be considered a “good deal” and the inhabitants feel that they got a good deal. The price-quality ratio is stressed by several authors as main point of attraction (Hoogstad 2007, Crone 2005, Zoethout 2005, De Jong et al 2008). However, De Jong rephrases an inhabitant that claims to have high housing expenditures as a result of obliged maintenance reservation and energy costs (2008;48).

Critical review attribution of effects to DIY-homes:

From the previous paragraph it can be concluded that in describing the DIY-homes most attention is put on social effects. These are the most difficult to measure (Deuten and De Kam 2005). The physical improvements can hardly be debated. The economical aspects might be to soon to be measured and might face difficulties as well. Contrary to Van der Laan (2009) who advises to use the DIY-homes more often, Agricola and Helleman (2006) conclude that no generic advice can be given on how to reach successful renewal. The size of the project is debated as well. De Jong et al (2008;42) state that for gentripuncture effects to be found, a minimal amount of 20 (new delivered) dwellings is needed. Van Hulten (2008) states from a process managing point of view that 40 dwellings is the maximum project size. SCP concluded that DIY-homes are one of the few ways of increasing cohesion in neighbourhoods. Sceptics doubt the SCP conclusions. And Blom responds “I still have to find out if the DIY-homes are the magic wand. ... talking about integration, this project still has to prove itself” (Hoogstad 2007). Zoethout concludes that the DIY-homes accomplished to attract inhabitants to the neighbourhood that have specifically chosen to invest money, time and creativity in the neighbourhood. However, if this leads to gentrification has still be seen. Note that the scale of the project in the neighbourhood is small and that the effects of mixing are debated (Bolt and Van Kempen 2008, Boonstra 2008). Some sources contradict each other. Zoethout (2005) claims that the scheme is applicable to these deprived areas where people have faith in a prosperous future. Others, as Blom and Van der Laan (2009) praise the scheme to be applicable in deprived areas without making any reservations.

The downside is that the DIY-homes are relatively expensive for the municipality (Zoethout 2005). Blom (2009) gives an estimation of around 100.000 Euro per dwelling in case of the Wallisblok and signals that without available subsidies the project wouldn't have been feasible at all. Blom has the opinion that for housing associations with dilapidated properties in their portfolio, the scheme is much more feasible. But housing associations are reluctant to use the scheme because they approach the sale from a profitable point of view that makes the homes more expensive and thus less attractive (Blom 2009;49). VROM (2006) signals that a similar project (as the Wallisblok but executed by a housing association) has experienced difficulties to be sold. The project offers less modelling options and is situated just a few blocks away from the Wallisblok. The price of the project is considerably higher (opposed to “free”) and the marketing used to promote the houses is poor. The media attention for the “free” homes was tremendous and even got on the national evening news. In the Wallisblok case, the municipality intervened actively by buying the properties located in the hotspot and used a more assertive and repressive policy to battle the existing problems in the hotspot areas (Blom 2009). The effects assigned to Wallisblok and DIY-homes might as a result, rather be related to the municipal actions than the result of the new inhabitants moving in (De Jong et al 2008;44).

It is not possible to attribute all the signalled improvements in Spangen to the Wallisblok project since the municipality and housing associations intervened in many different ways (Boonstra 2008, De jong et al 2008, Van Hulten 2008, Hoogstad 2007).

DISCUSSION

There seems to be some shift in the attention for the Wallisblok project. From the outset of the project, aiming to attract high incomes and to solve the hotspot problems, now the focus is more on social goals. The literature used in this paper does focus on the success of the project but lacks a proper evaluation based on the stated goals. The literature doesn't seem to be too critical and at the same time the methodologies used are debatable (but is beyond the scope of this paper). In depth analyses are yet to be made, for example an extensive evaluation of the neighbourhood effects has not been conducted. The number of projects will now allow for such an evaluation. The scale and contribution of effects to the scheme will however prove to be difficult.

It is clear that the project succeeded and might have reached more goals than initially aimed for. The goals desired by the municipality, such as getting inhabitants with higher incomes in the DIY-homes, have been reached. Housing diversification has been reached and characteristic buildings have been preserved. The cohesion amongst the inhabitants is good as a result of intensive collaboration and the safety in the neighbourhood has improved but might be a result of the municipal actions.

The owners were willing to invest in the renovation and to choose for the neighbourhood despite the problems. The cohesion within the group might have effect on the neighbourhood; at least the owners are willing to invest the award money in the neighbourhood. This offers an opportunity for additional quality improvement and might lead to more meetings with old inhabitants. However, the bonds between the two different groups are mostly not existent. For social cohesion to be found a different research approach is necessary. The empowerment effects as mentioned by De Jong et al are debated since the attracted group is self sufficient; high educated and has a high income (Elsinga et al 2009). If the selection criteria are to match low incomes, empowerment through ownership might be feasible.

For the project to be successful the value-gap must be present and preferably there are additional subsidies available to finance the renovation. The building has to have some kind of quality; in the location, building or a low price, but preferably in a combination of those three. The DIY-homes have been applied mainly in Rotterdam but other municipalities have shown interest. For example The Hague has already tried a first building block and Arnhem sold DIY-homes both individually and collectively. As long as the value-gap is present the scheme could be applicable. People from Denmark and Great Britain have shown interest in the scheme as well. This paper did not go into international schemes but it should be possible to be exported to other countries. In general this scheme offers a solution for countries where housing quality can be enforced (by governing bodies) and housing market is skewed due to tension on the housing market. However, it demands an investment by municipality to make it possible. For example, in shrinking areas the possibilities to acquire beneath economical value are present, but individuals or commercial entrepreneurs could respond to the opportunities themselves. However, a collective approach, backed by a housing association or municipality, might prove successful in attracting inhabitants. The collective approach guarantees that a building block can be renovated at once and gives a financial advantage over individual renovations. As a result the risk is lower than when a project developer is involved especially in the present difficult housing markets. Maybe the most important factor

is that all the new homeowners are involved from the start of the project, are highly committed and impatient to live in their project.

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