05070421A.SRG-SOV
HP/IH
E140

Version August 22, 2005

Urban Renewal, Neighbourhood Revitalization and the Role of Housing Associations.
Dutch experience.

Keynote speech at the
National Policy Forum on
Neighbourhood Revitalization,
Ottawa, October 25, 2005
Caledon Institute/Action for Neighbourhood Change
Prof. dr. ir. Hugo Priemus
Dean Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management,
Delft University of Technology
Scientific Director Habiforum Programme 'Innovative Land-Use'

Abstract

This contribution deals with three questions:
1. How is urban revitalization currently being put into practice in Dutch urban neighbourhoods?
2. What role do housing associations play in this?
3. How could neighbourhood revitalization and new urban renewal be better combined?

First, several waves of interest in the district and the neighbourhood in the Netherlands are presented. We look at recent developments in Dutch urban neighbourhood revitalization, in particular the recent transition from 'traditional' urban renewal into 'new' urban renewal in the Netherlands. The role of housing associations in the Netherlands is analyzed, including the relation between housing associations and new urban renewal. We give an overview of current approaches in the Netherlands intended to revitalize urban neighbourhood as in ways that will make new urban renewal more successful. We suggest that other governments could learn from Dutch experience.

1. Introduction

In the study by the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 2005: 29-41) an overview is presented of national policies and general approaches to support neighbourhood revitalization in the Netherlands. My contribution draws heavily on this source, which is a good reflection of the way that politicians and practitioners currently think about urban renewal and neighbourhood revitalization in the Netherlands.

District and neighbourhood policy, making contact with citizens, reducing the distance between citizens and government, self-organization and private initiatives and responsibility of citizens are all (related) themes which are currently receiving much attention in the Netherlands. National and local policymakers seem once again to be searching for the right scale level for social intervention at the level of the district and the neighbourhood (Uitermark, 2003: 8). The high political priority of new urban renewal in the Netherlands is giving even more impetus to this search.

This interest is certainly not a totally new phenomenon. The post-war period has seen several waves of interest in the district and the neighbourhood and a correspondingly focussed policy (De Boer, 2001). The neighbourhood-oriented approach was popular immediately after the Second World War (Section 2), but was banished from policy in the 1960s as seemingly irrelevant. In the 1970s it reappeared in the context of urban renewal and (neighbourhood) welfare planning (Section 3), only to disappear again in the 1980s when government attention shifted to the revitalization of larger cities. Since the 1990s the neighbourhood approach has experienced a third wave of popularity (Section 4): this was prompted first by social renewal and later by new urban renewal.

Following this descriptive historical analysis of thinking about districts and neighbourhood in the Netherlands, we turn to the central issue of this paper. This is:
How is urban revitalization currently being put into practice in Dutch urban neighbourhoods? What role do housing associations play in this? How could neighbourhood revitalization and new urban renewal be better combined?
In Section 5 we look at recent developments in Dutch urban neighbourhood revitalization. Section 6 describes the development from 'traditional' urban renewal to 'new' urban renewal in the Netherlands. The role of housing associations in the Netherlands is described in Section 7. In Section 8 the relation between housing associations and new urban renewal is presented. Section 9 gives an overview of current approaches in the Netherlands intended to revitalize urban neighbourhoods in ways that will make new urban renewal more successful. To conclude, Section 10 shows what Canadian federal government might learn from Dutch experience.

2   First wave of neighbourhood revitalization: 1940s and 1950s

The years of crisis and the Second World War had clearly shown that democratic citizenship was not something to be taken for granted. People had lost their trust in the traditional democratic institutions. A sense of community was needed in order to prevent people from being submerged in the general mass. It was this idea, immediately after the war, which motivated the first wave of the neighbourhood-oriented approach. People wanted something new and different, and it should be possible to create this new energy in the neighbourhood (De Boer, 2001: 2). Community thinking became the key principle. Neighbourhoods should no longer function just as social communities but also as a new form of democracy. In the larger towns and the cities in particular, expectations were high with regard to the potential of the neighbourhood. Besides solutions based on the idea of social compartmentalization, community life at neighbourhood level was thus a new ideal.

It was felt that sectoral legislation was not sufficient to meet the many problems in the fields of housing, education and care: a central approach seemed necessary. But as a counterbalance to this centralization, an element of decentralization was also required "which enables the individual citizen to bear personal responsibility and to let his voice be heard." This formulation nicely sums up the neighbourhood philosophy.

In a nutshell, the neighbourhood philosophy was intended to counterbalance the upscaling and centralization in government by stimulating forms of decentralization based on a sense of community and individual responsibility for each citizen.

For a number of years this first form of neighbourhood policy had a (limited) effect. In the 1950s, for instance, neighbourhood councils were set up in cities such as Rotterdam. In the latter half of the 1950s, however, the neighbourhood philosophy seems mostly to have evaporated again. One explanation is that the approach did not gel with the central ideas which dictated urban development in these years: metropolitanism and separation of functions. The idea of the citizen as metropolis-dweller became popular, and supplanted the idea that the citizen is part of a community on a small scale.

The tension between the new concept of the neighbourhood approach and the compartmentalized reality was described by the sociologist Van Doorn (1955) in his well-known essay: 'Neighbourhood and city: realistic frameworks for integration?' (in Dutch: *Wijk en stad; reële integratiekaders?*) which more or less heralded the end of the first wave of neighbourhood philosophy. Van Doorn cast doubt on the significance of the neighbourhood as a framework for integration, especially because he saw in it a planning approach to the creation of community. He emphasized that there were no *a priori* reasons for thinking that a neighbourhood would form a community, would be amenable to planning as a community or indeed should be a community. Van Doorn did not believe in the idea of a close-knit district and neighbourhood community.

3   Second wave of neighbourhood revitalization: 1960s and 1970s

Following the decline of the neighbourhood philosophy in the second half of the 1950s, for some time the neighbourhood played almost no significant role as an integrative framework. This changed in the 1960s and 70s when major action was taken to combat the post-war housing shortage. A large number of totally new city and small town neighbourhoods were built. These were originally based on an approach dictated by urban planning and housing, but in the course of time attention was also devoted to subjects such as physical and social administration and living quality. These aspects were at the top of the agenda when, from the mid-1970s onwards, a process of urban renewal began in the major cities with Rotterdam leading the way.

To begin with the necessary readjustment was determined mostly by spatial and physical planning: the instruments used were demolition, new construction and renovation. All this "stacking of stones" was managed by project groups. The work on the areas designated for renewal (street, block, neighbourhood) was handled by a project group set up by the municipality, and containing civil servants from the involved ministries and representatives of the relevant housing associations, shopkeepers and residents. Generally speaking these projects were regarded as "building for the neighbourhood" – very different to the technocratic planning which had dominated in the previous period. For municipalities this work in project groups "was the first experience with intersectoral and problem-oriented collaboration between various parties, including organized residents" (De Boer, 2001).

At the same time that urban renewal once again led to an neighbourhood-oriented approach, the care and welfare sector also began to focus on the neighbourhood as a policy unit. This provided yet another channel for an intensification of contacts between government officials, civil servants and citizens.

In 1974 the increasing level of criticism led to the Dutch government's *'Knelpuntennota'*, or 'Sticking Points Paper', which concluded that the welfare policy needed changing. This change chiefly meant that the welfare policy should become the responsibility of local government and thus be formulated on a local basis. In the major cities the welfare policy was set out per city district; the policy was created in collaboration with the local care institutions and with representatives of these institutions' clients.

However, this framework for welfare work was fairly short lived: it soon became bogged down in bureaucracy and was finally abolished during the second term of the Lubbers government (1986-1989). Nonetheless, the neighbourhood-oriented approach from this time can still be found in today's principle of 'organization of work'.

The process of urban renewal and physical restructuring continued unabated and seemed to be becoming a semi-permanent policy task. In the 1970s the focus was mainly on the repair of pre-war urban districts, but it then shifted to post-war districts (such as Hoogvliet and Pendrecht in Rotterdam, the Westelijke Tuinsteden in Amsterdam and Kanaleneiland in Utrecht) which required major redevelopment. The traditional urban renewal in the 1990s was followed by 'new urban renewal'; in this framework the management of neighbourhoods became a permanent area of attention.

Three elements were responsible for the resurgence of the neighbourhood-oriented approach: (1) the decay of population compartmentalization along socio-political lines, (2) the striving for more socio-economic equality, (3) a changed relationship between citizens and government, i.e. the rise of the emancipated and articulate citizen who demanded a more 'customer-friendly' government.

But this second wave of neighbourhood-oriented thinking also quickly came to an end. In the 1980s worries about economic stagnation and unemployment became dominant in society and policymaking; interest in socio-economic equality dropped dramatically. The impulse once provided by urban renewal had subsided into institutionalized channels. Moreover, towards the end of the 1980s neighbourhood welfare planning had disappeared from the agenda.

4   Third wave of neighbourhood revitalization: 1980s and 1990s

The third wave of neighbourhood-oriented policy was characterized by large, national, cross-sector policy initiatives by the state. A forerunner to this was the 'policy on problem accumulation areas'. This allowed municipalities to request funding from the Ministry of Internal Affairs for specific neighbourhoods which were experiencing an above-average number of problems. This originally involved a limited budget of some five million euros per year which was administered by the Ministry itself. In the 1990s the integral policy initiatives aimed at the sub-local level increased significantly in volume. In concrete terms these involved social renewal, new urban renewal and the Major Cities Policy. These policy initiatives overlapped to some extent but are described below separately.

The prior developments – greater freedom for executive bodies, greater valuing of the process, the day-to-day problems of the citizen as point of departure – laid the foundation for the third wave of the neighbourhood-oriented approach at the end of the 1990s. The period began with the *social renewal* chosen as motto by the third Lubbers government at the end of 1980; this

meshed with an initiative that had begun at the bottom and worked upwards. Social renewal was a term that had previously been applied in Rotterdam following the report by the Idenburg Commission, *The New Rotterdam in a Social Perspective*. It could be regarded as a new form of, or label for, social development, partly in response to the technocracy and bureaucracy in the daily administration of city neighbourhoods, and to the tension between major urban ambitions and the problems as experienced in the neighbourhoods.

At the state level the social renewal was followed in 1995 by *new urban renewal* and the *Major Cities Policy* as the most important policy initiatives for restoring the neighbourhood to its former status. In his penetrating analysis of fifteen years' research into the relationship between urban planning and daily life, Reijndorp concludes with some surprise (2004: 36): "It is remarkable how quickly the ideals of urban renewal, of 'building for the neighbourhood', were overshadowed by the dominant image of the depressed neighbourhood. Initially seen as a mature citizen, active in action groups and neighbourhood committees, 'the resident' reverted almost overnight into a subject for social interventions".

The urban renewal which had begun in the 1970s was originally conceived as a one-off and thus finite operation to restore neighbourhoods which were in a poor state due to 'neglected maintenance' (especially in districts dating from around 1900). But soon after the start it became clear that neglect and decay could also occur in these renewed neighbourhoods as well as in the relatively recent neighbourhoods (pre-war and post-war). The conclusion was that permanent investment was required for the renewal of housing and the accompanying public space. This continual investment was christened 'new urban renewal' or 'urban regeneration' (in Dutch *'stedelijke vernieuwing'*). This concept was defined in the policy document of the same name issued by the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (VROM) in 1997.

New urban renewal was thus a continuation of urban renewal, but also included the 'restructuring' of (in particular post-war) neighbourhoods. This restructuring meant that the existing housing stock should be improved, but also redifferentiated, creating a wider variation in types of homes and the accompanying price categories. The intended result – neighbourhoods with both owner-occupied and rented housing in various price categories – was held to be sufficient to prevent impoverishment and the formation of depressed neighbourhoods.

Major Cities Policy
From 1995 onwards the Major Cities Policy formed the framework in which social renewal and new urban renewal were to progress hand-in-hand. The first Kok government (1994-1998) maintained a Secretary of State for the Major Cities Policy at the Ministry of Internal Affairs: Jacob Kohnstamm; the second Kok government (1998-2002) even appointed a minister for this role: Roger van Boxtel. The aim of the Major Cities Policy was an integral approach to the physical, social and economic problems of the city. This was originally aimed at the four biggest Dutch cities, but was later expanded to include other larger cities and towns, 25+5 in total. The state did not impose a neighbourhood-oriented approach: the Major Cities Policy Plan of Action 2002-2009 hardly dictated a working method, but instead indicated priority themes. These themes were:
1. safety, integration and naturalization of citizens, social support for vulnerable groups, social cohesion;
2. investment in youth and education;
3. restructuring of neighbourhoods – with the emphasis on combating the exodus from the cities of people in the middle and higher income groups;
4. improvement of the economic structure and entrepreneurial climate.

In order to deal with these themes the cities drew up made-to-measure covenants with the state, and took responsibility for achieving the goals formulated within these documents. The Major Cities Policy thus had the aim not only of solving problems integrally, but also of clearly defining the responsibilities of the cities, the government as a whole and the coordinating Ministry of Internal Affairs. In addition process goals were formulated: the active involvement of citizens, companies and institutions in policy development, prioritization and implementation, regional coordination and integral area-specific approaches, particularly in the high-priority districts.

The Major Cities Policy thus formed a framework into which a neighbourhood-oriented approach fitted well; it was left up to municipalities to decide whether they would actually work in this way or not. Dealing with problems of various types at a level which people could perceive and understand marked a return to the original neighbourhood philosophy. The same applied to the striving for a more active involvement of citizens in actions by government.

5.   Recent developments in neighbourhood revitalization

The most recent developments with regard to Dutch state policy on city districts and neighbourhoods are the programme entitled 'It's Our Neighbourhood's Turn' (in Dutch *'Onze buurt aan zet'*, which was preceded by 'All the Neighbourhood' / *'Heel de buurt'*) and the '56 Neighbourhoods Policy'. In addition, in 2001 nine ministries and 25 cities set up the Major Cities Knowledge Centre which has the task of stimulating the exchange of knowledge and information in the field of the Major Cities Policy. The Knowledge Centre also issues a Knowledge Journal, maintains a Knowledge Network and together with the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research has set up a long-term research programme in this field. Relevant expertise in this area is also to be found at the Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare, the Verwey-Jonker Institute, Forum and National Centre for Community Development.

It's Our Neighbourhood's Turn / All the Neighbourhood
In 2001 the stimulatory programme 'It's Our Neighbourhood's Turn' was commenced within the framework of the Major Cities Policy and in collaboration with the National Centre for Community Development and with Forum, the Institute for Multicultural Development. For a period of three years thirty cities experimented with participation by residents in high-priority neighbourhoods. The programme focused on increasing safety, liveability, integration, participation and social cohesion; it ended in 2004.

'It's Our Neighbourhoods Turn' was the successor to a similar programme entitled 'All the Neighbourhood' from 1998. The subsidiary goal of this latter programme was to create a degree of cohesion in the 'project roundabout', but despite this it was sometimes perceived as being part of this roundabout (De Boer et al., 2003: 11). 'All the Neighbourhood' was originally devised by the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport as a Dutch variant of the American caring communities concept, but gradually it came more to resemble the Dutch tradition of community work. Although implemented as policy of the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport, it gradually transpired that the involvement of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment was just as important: restructuring of neighbourhoods often proved to be the dominant policy initiative. The evaluation of the programme (De Boer et al., 2003) indicated that 'parachuting in' national objectives and guidelines did not work. Another general conclusion was that the more individual and creative the local partners were in determining the local goals, the more successful 'All the Neighbourhood' became. Focusing on the concrete projects, the result was a combination of successes and failures.

6. From 'traditional' urban renewal to 'new' urban renewal

In the Sections 2-5 we examined the different stages of social neighbourhood revitalization. At the same time we have observed a development from the expansion of the housing stock to the renewal of the housing stock, and the transformation from 'traditional' urban renewal to 'new' urban renewal. In this section we elaborate and explain this transformation.

After the liberation in 1945 there was a desperate shortage of housing in the Netherlands. The construction industry had lain idle for five years and there was nowhere near enough investment capital. Dutch cities grew rapidly when the construction industry recovered again in the 1950s. The emphasis was on medium- and high-rise social housing, on austerity and uniformity. It was pretty clear that the property developers of housing projects had very little interest in differing preferences of the occupants.

The second half of the twentieth century saw a persistent trend in selective migration among families with children and households with medium- and high-incomes from the cities to the suburbs. Young people and immigrants – usually with a low income and often dependent on benefit – started moving into the cities. Spending power in the city consistently lagged behind the national average and the gap in income between the poor city dwellers and the affluent regional residents widened even further. Initially, the low-income groups tended to concentrate in a number of old, run-down, pre-war urban districts with a relatively high proportion of private rented dwellings. In the 1960s and 1970s these neighbourhoods were the main target of successful urban regeneration projects. The quality of the housing and the residential environment in these – usually well-situated – neighbourhoods quickly improved. The problems shifted to some less popular postwar urban districts, most of them managed by housing associations.

In 1997 the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (Ministerie van VROM, 1997) formulated the 'new' urban renewal policy, which differed in several respects from its predecessor. Whereas 'traditional' urban renewal targeted pre-war urban neighbourhoods, concentrating mainly on the construction of social rented housing and on the improvement of technical quality, 'new' urban renewal specifically targets post-war neighbourhoods, trying to improve not just the dwellings but the whole living environment and urban structure as well, and aiming particularly at redifferentiation of the housing stock by means of more owner-occupier property and less social rented housing. In traditional urban renewal social housing was the solution, but in new urban renewal, it is more and more perceived by national government as the problem.

Thirty cities (G30) are participating in the new urban renewal policy. These cities have entered a multi-year covenant with the national government. Other cities that want to join need to enter covenants with the provincial authorities. Every year the national government sets aside an Investment Budget for Urban Renewal (*Investeringsbudget Stedelijke Vernieuwing / ISV*) to give the municipalities the financial support they need to frame and realize their urban renewal policy. The Minister of Housing is politically accountable for urban renewal and the Minister of the Interior is politically accountable for the Major Cities Policy. The Major Cities Policy covers the broad domain of improving the physical, economic and social quality of cities. New urban renewal falls more or less under the category of physical improvement, which also includes the restructuring of industrial sites.

To prevent the financial resources from being spread too thinly, 56 'depressed neighbourhoods' were selected for priority funding in 2003. All these neighbourhoods – where the problems are most strongly concentrated – are in the G30 and they are required to develop a Neighbourhood Development Plan. Most of the housing stock in these neighbourhoods (60-100%) is owned by housing associations. This fact alone makes the housing associations, in addition to the

municipalities, key players in new urban renewal. In the next section we shall further explore the current position of housing associations in the Netherlands.

7. The role of housing associations in the Netherlands

In the nineteenth century industrialization led to radical changes in the Netherlands and elsewhere. Agricultural decline prompted many people to head for the city in search of new employment in the fast-growing manufacturing sector. The mass influx of rural workers played havoc with the urban housing market. Around this time, charitable organizations started emerging along with initiatives by socially-aware employers and municipal councils. As a result, the first housing foundations and housing associations were set up; these were non-profit institutions dedicated to the promotion of social housing (Prak & Priemus, in: Pooley, 1992: 164-189). An urgent need for legislation then arose, which eventually culminated in the Housing Act (*Woningwet*) of 1901. This act – which is still in force albeit in an amended form – gave the housing associations institutional status, which, under certain conditions, made them eligible for government funding.

After the First World War, and above all after the Second World War, the housing associations kept adding to their property until, by the 1990s, they held 42% of the market. The stock of housing association dwellings then reached a plateau and the market share has gradually declined ever since. At present, over 36% of the Dutch housing stock consists of housing association dwellings, which not only serve households from low-income groups but a significant number of households from middle- and even high-income groups as well.

Housing associations can be described as 'hybrid'; for they combine market operations with public duties. Their most important public task is to provide housing for groups that are unable to provide it for themselves.

Ever since the Cohen Commission (1997) published its Market and Government Report, the Dutch government has been experiencing problems with the phenomenon of the 'hybrid organization' (see for an overview: Verhoef & Simon, 2001). Cohen recommends that hybrid organizations be split into a public and a private entity. This kind of arrangement would stop public sector subsidies from filtering through to the market and also prevent market risks from having negative repercussions on public duties. Similar approaches have evolved in the EU competition policy. The ministerial budget for 2005 (Ministerie van VROM, 2004) announced changes to the regulations for the social rented sector (*Besluit Beheer Sociale-Huursector* / BBSH), based on the Housing Act, which regulates the public tasks of housing associations: each housing association would now be required to split into a parent organization with a purely public remit and one or more subsidiaries geared more to market activities. These subsidiaries would pay company tax, which would place them on an equal footing with 'real' market players like project developers, property investors and estate agents. This looks like 'overkill' (In 't Veld, 1995) and would automatically mean that the accounts for the public sector activities would have to be strictly separate from the accounts for the private sector activities. Though the 'equal footing' (level playing field) argument is certainly valid, a legal split in the housing associations is an extremely dubious proposal. In all probability the market-oriented subsidiaries will eventually shake off their public-sector past and the public-sector parents will continue as approved institutions with a much smaller market share and a larger need for public subsidies.

The rents of no fewer than 95% of all Dutch rented housing are regulated. Housing Minister Sybilla Dekker wants to reduce this to 75%. It doesn't take rocket science to predict that, if this goes ahead, 25% of the social rented dwellings will soon lose their social status and the social rented sector will lose 25% of its market share in the near future.

For a clear understanding of the unique position of housing associations in the Netherlands we need to explain what happened on 1 January 1995, when the so-called 'grossing legislation' (*Bruteringswet*) was enacted.

On this landmark date all housing associations repaid the outstanding government loans in one fell swoop and swapped them (as far as was necessary) for private loans (guaranteed by the Guarantee Fund for Social Housing with 50% backing from central government and 50% from the municipalities). On the self-same date all the associations received the future state-approved property subsidies (on the basis of assumptions shared by the government, the municipalities and the housing associations regarding developments in rents, interest rates and inflation in the coming decades). These concerned pledges for a period of no fewer than 50 years. Again, on the self-same date, all multi-year exploitation subsidies, new building subsidies and renovation subsidies were scrapped. The housing associations became financially independent from national government overnight (Priemus, 1995). For the first time ever, they had to become competent in treasury management. They were no longer dependent on government subsidies. They had received them in advance and now had to decide for themselves where and how to use them in order to compensate for unprofitable investments, such as new social housing projects and the renovation of social rented housing.

8.   Housing associations and new urban renewal

The new urban renewal of post-war urban districts is still in its infancy. Hardly any market players have shown themselves so far in the 56 depressed neighbourhoods. Here the housing associations hold the reins along with the municipality. When commercial developers tackle a problem neighbourhood it usually means: a strategy aimed at driving the current residents to other neighbourhoods (re-housing), the demolition of dwellings, and the construction of far more attractive and expensive housing to suit the demand at the top end of the market. This results in a dramatic improvement of the physical environment, but it does not always improve the situation of the sitting tenants. Sometimes they become 'urban renewal nomads'. Obligatory rehousing puts pressure on social ties. Meanwhile, problems in depressed neighbourhoods (vandalism, noise nuisance, crime etc.) which were connected with the characteristics and behaviour of the original residents, are not solved but merely shifted elsewhere.

Housing associations adopt diverse strategies to tackle depressed neighbourhoods. Most housing association directors realize that the greatest threats to quality of life in such neighbourhoods are crime, lack of safety, and vandalism. What is needed, first of all, is action by the police and the municipality, but they, in turn, try to dump some of the problems at the door of the housing associations. After all, surely the wardens and the managers of the housing association estates can extend their supervision to the streets and the wider environment. National policy tells the housing associations to seek the solution primarily in the demolition and sale of social rented housing. But the housing associations pick up different signals when they meet the tenants' representatives: yes, the tenants have grievances, but what most of them want is large-scale maintenance and home improvement. If this pushes up the rent, most of the extra expense is usually offset by lower heating costs and higher housing allowances. The majority of the residents do not have the means to buy a house.

There is, however, an intriguing minority of social climbers, among ethnic and non-ethnic residents alike, who want to improve their housing situation and often feel compelled to leave the neighbourhood – and sometimes even the city – because the type of homes they are looking for – owner-occupier dwellings, homes with more space, family homes with a garden – are only available elsewhere. If, thanks to new urban renewal, similar homes become available locally,

some of these people will move into them, thus keeping the spending power in the neighbourhood and retaining meaningful social ties (social capital; Putnam, 2000).

A lot depends on just how convinced this group is that the neighbourhood will really be improved. Many residents who do not believe it (for the foreseeable future) capitalize on the urban renewal and manage to move with an urgency certificate and reimbursed removal costs to a home in a less problematic neighbourhood in or outside the city.

Some housing associations who find themselves in this quandary opt for a modern version of building for the neighbourhood: they listen to the residents and stress large-scale maintenance and home improvement to such an extent that the strategy runs the risk of being seen as half-baked by the government and the municipality. Other housing associations take the residents on and opt for more radical measures: demolition, the construction of owner-occupied housing, the sale of upgraded property. Though this last category benefits from the currently very low mortgage rate and the almost unlimited income tax relief for paid mortgage interest, the downside is that the growing shortage of rented housing is constantly fuelling public opposition to the demolition and sale of social rented housing.

The housing associations that adopt a radical approach are increasingly accused of behaving like commercial project developers and property investors. Against this background, it is hardly surprising that the identity of Dutch housing associations is questioned time and again by politicians and other observers.

## 9.	How can urban neighbourhoods be revitalized?

In general one can conclude that an intensive exchange and interaction within a neighbourhood contributes to the social trust among residents. Social trust increases by definition the social capital (Putnam, 1993; 2000). Their definition of the neighbourhood and the nature of their mutual bonds differ however according to the type of citizenship style. The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (Dutch abbreviation: WRR, 2005) defines four citizenship styles: dependent, outsider, pragmatic and active. For 'dependent' citizens the main thing is the strong bonds (bonding) within a relatively small and close-knit neighbourhood, 'outsider' citizens tend to have broader physical and mental boundaries while 'pragmatic' and 'active' citizens tend to realize their social involvement much more through the weaker links with large numbers of people at a greater distance: bridging, in other words. There are few homogenous neighbourhoods where a single citizenship style is dominant. Rather, strongly represented 'blocks' live out their own social forms separately in the same physical surroundings. This makes it more difficult to formulate administrative goals aimed at promoting social trust.

According to the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 2005), depressed neighbourhoods need to be 'reconquered'. Engbersen et al. (2005) define the term 'social reconquest' as "social and physical interventions aimed at (1) increasing the liveability and safety in public space; (2) the realization of a more balanced social structure, and (3) the formulation of shared competences and rules of behaviour to promote the daily contacts and communication between residents." The term social reconquest describes the 'conquest' of the neighbourhood for and – as much as possible – by the current neighbourhood residents. This path thus concentrates on a reconquest of the liveability and social cohesion in depressed neighbourhoods. This deviates explicitly from a comparable terminology used within some policy circles where it refers to the reoccupation by the Dutch middle class of neighbourhoods with a strong and growing non-white population (Reijndorp, 2004: 94).

The Scientific Council for Government Policy (2005: 192) formulates four recommendations on neighbourhood revitalization:

- Select – if necessary – a two track policy which differentiates between (1) the restoration of liveability in depressed neighbourhoods (social reconquest) and (2) the strengthening of social cohesion in general (opportunity-driven neighbourhood policy).
- Make an individual, argued choice from the broad policy range with regard to social reconquest. Many good things are already happening in many places and administrators should thus, on the basis of an activating self-analysis, determine the priorities which fit their neighbourhood: the art of making policy means not doing many things so that you can do a few things very well.
- Also make a conscious choice for how the opportunity-driven policy will be implemented. Although many activities are developed which – taking a charitable view – can be assigned to this category, a coordinated policy in this area is seldom present. Many municipalities and social players thus miss opportunities for realizing a considerable social added value.
- Be prepared to redefine the culture within your own organization. The Scientific Council study shows that much is possible, but that current working methods are no longer sufficient for the task. So in order to get the maximum return from a neighbourhood policy, there have to be serious changes in the way that local government and social players think and act.

The Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 2005: 193) argues that in the neighbourhood there is a meeting of three types of logic: the institutional logic of government, the provision logic of the social players and the demand logic of the residents.

The Scientific Council (2005: 193) introduces two concepts: *a living neighbourhood*, where residents participate, because it is their neighbourhood. And a *learning neighbourhood* where residents, together with social players and government, want to increase their knowledge.

In order to inspire residents and policy implementers, policymakers should sketch out a concrete vision of the future in which people want to and are able to believe (Reijndorp, 2004: 197). Residents are too often disqualified by administrators who implicitly or explicitly communicate that they would prefer to have other residents (i.e. middle and higher incomes and/or native Dutch residents). This is disastrous: people can only build up self-confidence when others declare that they believe in them. Against this background, attention should be given to five points which often transcend the level of neighbourhood and even of municipality and which require support from regional and/or national government:

1. *Long-term continuity of the conducted policy.* Political leaders must set out and implement clear guidelines and also ensure that all involved parties commit for a longer period.
2. *Creation and development of the civil society.* Although the civil society is characterized by personal initiative, the government can promote the growth of organized groups and thus prevent a neighbourhood from sliding back into neglect.
3. *(Prospects of) employment.* There is a need for structural job creation, including policy initiatives for traineeships/internships for students in lower secondary professional education and also 'entrepreneur houses' geared to the experiences and perspectives of residents and where start-up entrepreneurs can receive useful advice.
4. *Better opportunities for children.* There is insufficient support and advice for pupils and parents for the transitions to primary school and to secondary school. Above all, the lack of support for students in lower secondary professional education is unacceptably great.
5. *Social mix in neighbourhoods.* Socially successfully neighbourhood residents serve as a source of inspiration for others and promote bridging to the 'outside world' in recovering neighbourhoods. If black-white mixes or mixes of ethnic groups are planned, however, then one must ask whether the advantages outweigh the damage resulting from the breaking of fragile social networks. A multicultural society is, from whatever perspective, a complex task which all those involved need to address (Duyvendak & Veldboer, 2001).

Finally, the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 2005: 212) presents a recommendation with far-reaching consequences: place the main responsibility for social reconquest with the housing associations when it concerns physical and social structures, place the responsibility with the police with regard to safety and place it with the schools with regard to education. The Scientific Council study clearly shows that the more dynamic and pro-active members of these groups are able to bear this greater responsibility. They have a direct interest in the issues and are permanently present in the neighbourhood. Their work is made easier by a successful social reconquest, and in the case of the housing associations their property even increases in value. The task described here fits in well with the public task of housing associations in the Netherlands (Priemus, 2003). They also have the scale, the resources and the infrastructure to ensure continuity; the restructuring of depressed neighbourhoods often requires a major effort lasting several years.

When the reconquest nears its completion, then the housing association, the police and school are – thanks to their permanent presence – better able to revert to a 'peaceful' level. These three social players thus receive a more pronounced role than other neighbourhood institutions such as welfare bodies. In the scheme proposed by the Scientific Council, the traditional leading role for social and community work is transformed into the role of subcontractor.

When dealing with problems at the level of district or neighbourhood one should also consider the 'water-bed effect': the problems are not solved, but simply shifted to other parts of the city.

10.   What can Canadian federal government learn from international experience?

I am not sufficiently informed about current practice and current policy of Canadian federal government to judge the current urgencies in the facilitation of urban renewal and neighbourhood revitalization. One problem is that the Dutch housing associations, with a market share of 36% of the total housing stock, mostly with abundant financial means, are pretty unique and have no real equivalent in Canada. In at least one respect, however, the situation in Canada is more complex than in the Netherlands: in my country there is one official language and not two as in Canada.
But in general, I surmise, the issues in Canadian cities are comparable with those in Dutch cities. In Canadian neighbourhoods too, the position of the police, the schools and social housing institutions seems to be crucial. Here too the local government has an important coordinating and facilitating role. The improvement of the quality of housing and housing environments is crucial in Canadian cities as well, including the need to redifferentiate the housing stock of a neighbourhood according to tenure, price/rent, size and housing type. It is important to raise safety in every neighbourhood to at least an acceptable level and to stimulate the active participation of residents. In Canadian neighbourhoods, too, the vast majority of the residents are part of the solution, and not so much part of the problem. One recommendation is to focus in particular on households in the neighbourhood which are working to improve their socio-economic status. They may have plans to leave the neighbourhood if no appropriate housing opportunities are available there. When it becomes possible for them to improve their housing situation within the neighbourhood, they may form the key to a successful urban renewal process and a high level of social capital.
Finally, there is no such thing as a standard solution. The best approach depends heavily on local circumstances, local leadership and the personal qualities and relations between the public and private actors. In particular local governments and local officials have to play a stimulating role. It is important to identify the best practices and to visit those areas where the interventions have

been successful. These conclusions seem to be valid for European countries as well as for Canada.

References

Cohen Commission, 1997, **Rapport Markt en Overheid** [Report Market and Government], The Hague (Ministerie van Economische Zaken).

De Boer, N., 2001, De opkomst van de wijkaanpak als dominante strategie in het sociaal beleid, in: J.W. Duyvendak & L. Veldboer (red.), **Meeting point Nederland. Over samenlevingsopbouw, multiculturaliteit en sociale cohesie**, Amsterdam (Boom).

De Boer, N., H. Broekman, P. Kagie, A. Sprinkhuizen & J. de Wild (red.), 2003, **Heel de buurt gebundeld. Een staalkaart van vier jaar buurtgericht investeren**, Utrecht (NIZW).

Duyvendak, J.W. & L. Veldboer (red.), 2001, **Meeting point Nederland. Over samenlevingsopbouw, multiculturaliteit en sociale cohesie**, Amsterdam (Boom).

Engbersen, R., E. Snel & A. Weltevrede, 2005, **Sociale herovering in Amsterdam en Rotterdam. Eén verhaal over twee wijken**, WRR-Verkenning nr. 8, Amsterdam (Amsterdam University Press).

Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer (VROM), 1997, **Nota Stedelijke Vernieuwing**, The Hague (Ministerie van VROM).

Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer (VROM), 2004, **VROM-begroting 2005** [Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment Budget 2005], The Hague (Sdu Uitgevers).

Pooley, C.G. (ed.), 1992, **Housing Strategies in Europe 1880-1930**, Leicester, London & New York (Leicester University Press).

Priemus, 1995, 'How to abolish social housing? The Dutch case', **International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 19**: 145-155.

Priemus, H., 2003, Dutch housing associations: Current developments and debates, **Housing Studies, 18**, no. 3: 327-351.

Putnam, R.D., 1993, **Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy**, Princeton NJ (Princeton University Press).

Putnam, R.D., 2000, **Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community**, New York (Simon & Schuster).

Reijndorp, A., 2004, **Stadswijk. Stedenbouw en dagelijks leven**, Rotterdam (NAi Uitgevers).

Uitermark, J., 2003, **De sociale controle van achterstandswijken. Een beleidsgenetisch perspectief**, Utrecht/Amsterdam (KNAG).

Van Doorn, J.A.A., 1955, Wijk en stad; reële integratiekaders?, in: **Prae-adviezen voor het congres over sociale samenhangen in nieuwe stadswijken**, Amsterdam.

Veld, R. in 't, 1995, **Spelen met vuur: over hybride organisaties** [Playing with fire: about hybrid organizations], The Hague (VUGA).

Verhoef, R. & M.O. Simon, 2001, 'Hybride organisaties als omstreden arrangement' [Hybrid organizations as contested arrangements], **Bestuurskunde, 10**, no. 8, December: 368-379.

Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR), 2005, **Vertrouwen in de buurt**, Amsterdam (Amsterdam University Press).