Out of place? Emotional ties to the neighbourhood in urban renewal in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom
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1. Introduction

1.1 What is the Problem?

Many cities in Western Europe are faced with persistent social problems. Popular neighbourhoods of the past, situated on the outskirts of city centres, are nowadays characterised by low-income populations, high unemployment levels, high crime rates, racial tensions and low levels of social capital among its residents. However, the problems are not only social. The housing stock in these neighbourhoods does not comply anymore with the housing demands of today’s market. The houses, mainly built before or shortly after World War II, are often too small, poorly maintained and designed for a lifestyle that has rapidly changed and diversified over the last six decades. In short, the problems housing associations face are as much spatial as social.

Housing associations and policymakers have tried to deal with these problems by focusing on the spatial redesigning of deprived neighbourhoods. They assumed that they could kill two birds with one stone: by demolishing large parts of the old housing stock and by replacing them with more up to date and diversified housing, they hoped not only to solve the problem of a mismatch on the housing market, but also to solve the persistent social problem in these neighbourhoods. The new housing should attract higher income groups to poor city areas, which should also benefit the less fortunate living there. The new arrivals should bring money to the neighbourhood to strengthen the economic base of the area, while also bringing a vital ingredient for neighbourhood life: social capital.

Policymakers and housing professionals believed that residents in deprived areas were not only deprived of labour market and educational opportunities, but especially lacked the right kind of social capital. Living too close to people, with the same lack of opportunities, reduced their chances for upward mobility, and kept them trapped in their deprived position. By knowing the right kind of people, residents should acquire access to much needed information and skills to move up
the societal ladder. Towards this goal large restructuring programmes are set up in the Netherlands, which aim not only at renovating the housing stock, but specifically focus on attracting higher income groups to the deprived centre areas of the big cities, in order to help poor residents bridge their social capital deficit. Enabling a social mix became a central ingredient of Dutch urban renewal policy.

Critics of these programmes have warned against the opposite effect: urban renewal programmes do more harm than good for the social bonds of people in a neighbourhood: residents are forced to move out to make room for the new bourgeoisie (gentrification), uprooting their already distressed social networks and leaving the neighbourhood more segregated due to different time-space patterns between old and new residents. The new occupants, on the other hand, are not interested in their poorer neighbours and prefer to spend their resources and time elsewhere and with more like-minded people. Research seems to confirm these claims. Blokland (2001) showed, for example, that higher income groups do not develop more civil action in neighbourhoods than lower income residents and Kleinhans, Veldboer and Duyvendak (2000) demonstrated that even under this assumption mixed neighbourhoods do not lead to more socially vital communities. ‘Meeting’ (the possibility of contact) rarely leads to ‘mating’ (engaging into meaningful contact), because residents prefer to interact with people who are more like themselves. Instead of interacting with each other, different groups are mainly living together, apart. There are some middle class exceptions to this rule, but they remain limited (Veldboer, Engbersen, Duyvendak, Uyterlinde, forthcoming). In short, the direct positive effects of mixing appear to be modest or even problematic.

Evidence on the claim that the results will be counter-effective is more inconclusive. Gentrification is visible, though, not in every city (Duyvendak, Veldboer, Baillergeau, Van der Graaf (2005). Research by Kleinhans (2005) suggests that, to some extent, networks are indeed uprooted, but to a limited and relatively harmless extent: residents that are forced to move out of their neighbourhood relocate in adjacent neighbourhoods thus in close proximity to their old neighbours leaving these networks virtually intact. Contacts that are lost are not usually mourned, because the neighbourhood is only a small node in their network that is easily replaced by contact elsewhere (through work, school, family and friends). In
sum, loss of social capital is limited both in extent and magnitude, and seems easily restored.

However, Kleinhans’ research points to a new direction, where losses are greater and potential gains are higher. He demonstrates in his dissertation (2005) that relocated residents did not mourn the loss of social capital, but the loss of attachment to the place they lived in. The emotional ties they developed over time with the place where they lived provided an emotional source of comfort and identity which is cut by moving; causing distress, feelings of displacement and not belonging. These findings suggest that in specifying the effects of social-spatial interventions more attention is needed to the social-emotional ties of residents’ place attachment. Although much research is devoted to the uprooting of and changes in the social networks of residents in urban renewal, much less is known about the changes in the social-emotional ties of people to the neighbourhood.

1.2 Out of Place?

This research will, therefore, focus on the social-emotional ties of residents and research how these ties are affected by urban renewal. How do residents feel at home in their neighbourhood and do these feelings change during urban renewal?

My motives are both conceptual and practical. I believe that social interactions and the physical settings where these interactions take place are intrinsically connected: social behaviour is influenced by the design of places and the quality of spaces is, in turn, influenced by the social behaviour that takes place in these spaces. This insight is not new. However, many attempts to use this relationship have failed in the past: all too often a renewed space is not used the way in which it was intended by the designers, illustrating that this is not a straightforward relationship that can easily be manipulated. Many post-war neighbourhoods that were designed with a specific ideology in mind, often based on the ideal of a self-supporting community, are classified today as deprived areas and targeted for urban renewal and major ‘restructuring’ programmes.

The question of how to combine social and spatial measures in urban renewal is central to the current political debate in the Netherlands and was one of
the main causes for my research. Although the social-spatial question is a political issue, I argue that in order to research this question scientifically a redefinition is required. This concerns the framing of the social dimension of urban policy not exclusively in terms of social capital or social mobility, but as well in terms of emotional ties of residents to places. I believe that emotional ties strongly influence the perception of space in the neighbourhood for the residents, and therefore how they will use (or avoid) this space. Although feelings related to a place are fluctual and even volatile, they always refer to a set geographical location, which is more fixed and resistant to change. The same place can evoke many different feelings for many different groups and individuals, accommodating for social differences, but also for social change. Social change does not necessarily have to result in a neighbourhood out of place with its new population, if the neighbourhood space allows different emotional ties to settle in and attach themselves to the environment. When the physical environment is successful in making different groups feel at home over time in the neighbourhood, this environment does not always need to change shape to accommodate social change. Therefore, spatial interventions need to take account of the emotional ties of existing and new residents, by creating both new environments and by sustaining existing ones, which allow a changing and diverse population to feel at home in their neighbourhood.

So far, attention for the emotional ties of residents in urban renewal has been almost non-existent or at the very least has not been framed as such. More implicit references are made in the hot Dutch political debate on immigration, although these references are ambiguous. Politicians state that it is important for new citizens to feel at home in their new country, while at the same time they argue that immigrants should cut all emotional ties to their country of birth. Research on the place attachment of immigrants, however, shows that objects and rituals from their home country are important mediators for feelings of attachment to their new country. A simplistic and implicit conceptualisation of place attachment is used to describe and deal with the emotional ties of immigrants. The same holds true for urban policy. In the Dutch urban policy, implicit references are made to the emotional ties of residents: urban renewal programmes should protect and re-attract the original residents, who feel alienated from their neighbourhood
Introduction

by the decline of their area and the arrival of large numbers of immigrants in their
neighbourhood. The social programme is mostly defined by the rights and
obligations for those who have to move.

Equally simplistic and implicit conceptualisations are used when discussing
the role of middle class groups in urban renewal. In order to lure these groups into
the neighbourhood, much attention and resources are devoted to improve
neighbourhood reputations and to provide deprived areas with a new unifying
identity by redesigning the neighbourhood for different life styles and branding
areas with positive new images. However, these images often prove very difficult
to implement in the design, due to their vague and unproblematic nature (negative
reputations and differences between residents are ignored) and because they are
unrelated to the daily practices of residents and professionals.

Explicit attention in urban renewal is needed for the emotional ties of
residents, not only as a separate and valuable goal in itself for urban renewal, but
also because it is linked with the two other social goals of urban renewal:
increasing social cohesion and social mobility of residents. It is important to specify
the different relationship between these three social goals in order to get a clearer
view of the effects of urban renewal programmes and design more effective ways
to attain the social goals.

1.3 Aim and Research Questions

This research deals with feelings of home in a changing environment: the feelings
of people whose neighbourhoods are being regenerated. The term ‘regenerated’
has a positive connotation, implying new opportunities for the neighbourhood.
However, regeneration is not always positively received and perceived by residents
whose neighbourhoods are being demolished. It can evoke uncertainty about the
future: where to live, who will return, what will happen to the neighbourhood in
between? Feelings of home surface and become challenged by the regeneration
process: “Will I feel at home in the new house or neighbourhood?”, “Will I still feel
at home in the same neighbourhood when all the people I know have left?”
Central to my research is the following question:

*How do urban renewal programmes affect the emotional ties of residents?*

This key question was broken down into the following sub questions:

- What types of emotional ties can residents develop to their neighbourhood?
- Do emotional ties of residents differ between resident groups, places and over time?
- (How) do urban renewal programmes aim to affect the emotional ties of residents to their neighbourhood?
- What (spatial and social) interventions are used in urban renewal programmes that could affect the emotional ties of residents?
- How do different urban renewal programmes change the emotional ties of residents to their neighbourhood?
- Does the effect of urban renewal programmes differ for resident’s groups and places?

To answer these questions, different types of data have been used, both quantitative and qualitative. Existing quantitative survey data on housing needs and neighbourhood satisfaction (WBO/ WOon) were re-analysed to explore the emotional ties of residents in deprived neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, focusing on 56 so-called priority neighbourhoods which receive additional funding from the government to implement spatial, social and economic projects for tackling poverty, deprivation and degeneration. Changes in the social emotional ties of residents in deprived areas were studied over time and compared to non-deprived areas to research the possible effect of urban renewal on the emotional bondings to the neighbourhood.

The statistical analyses, however, could not reveal what the particular effects are of different urban renewal programmes on the emotional ties of residents in deprived areas. Each city designs its own urban renewal programme and although ambitions and goals are often similar, the ways in which urban renewal programmes are implemented differ widely between cities and therefore
there are potentially different effects for each urban renewal programme. To study the effects of different programmes, more detailed information was required on the specific make-up and implementation of urban renewal programmes. This qualitative information was be gathered in two Dutch case studies; the first case study was conducted in the neighbourhoods of Angelslo, Bargeres and Emmerhout in Emmen, and the second case study took place in the borough of Hoogvliet in Rotterdam. The case studies were based on earlier research I was involved in as a researcher at the Verwey-Jonker Institute and were extended for the purpose of this research to explore the effects of urban renewal on the emotional ties of residents. The research in Emmen was commissioned by Emmen Revisited to evaluate the impact of their urban renewal programme after 5 years (Van der Graaf & Duyvendak, 2005). The research in Hoogvliet was conducted as part of a larger research project for the borough of Hoogvliet, in collaboration with the University of Amsterdam and the OTB research institute in Delft (Veldboer et. al., 2008).

Both case studies are part of the 56 priority neighbourhoods and have developed their own programmes to tackle deprivation. In doing so they developed projects that implicitly and explicitly try to influence the emotional ties of residents. How do they work and what can we learn from them, as much from their mistakes as their successes, for the use of emotional ties in urban renewal? The qualitative case studies will allow further elaboration on the analyzed effects from the survey data. Changes in patterns of emotional ties can be connected to the implementation of specific projects in order to establish their effectiveness.

Urban renewal and the search for combined spatial, social and economical efforts is not an exclusive Dutch affair; many West-European countries are faced with similar problems and many of them look abroad for innovative approaches. International networks are established to share experiences and extract good practices and a large body of international comparative research is carried out to establish the relative effectiveness of each country and different cities within countries across Europe. This research will contribute to this endeavour by
comparing notes with the United Kingdom\(^1\). The United Kingdom is not only my new home country, but also an interesting case study for my research. Just like the Netherlands, the United Kingdom has a large social rented housing sector, which is even bigger than the private rented housing sector. The housing markets in both countries show comparable developments in the second half of the 20th century, although behind these similarities major differences are visible between the social housing sectors in both countries. In England and the Netherlands large scale urban renewal programmes are set up to tackle deprivation and within these programmes the attention to social and emotional ties varies greatly, although in the United Kingdom there appears to be more attention to emotional ties to places in urban renewal. This is reflected in the consistent references made in policy documents and scientific articles to housing as homes: dwellings are not merely places of bricks and mortar, but are places of home to the people who live in them. Before any attention is given in British urban renewal programmes to the role of higher income groups, activities focus on changing the identity and reputation of an area. Making people proud of their home ground in order to prevent them from self-destructive behaviour is one of the elements of this community-approach. Do these differences in approaches lead to different effects of urban renewal programmes on the emotional ties of residents in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom?

To research this effect of urban renewal in the United Kingdom comparable quantitative and qualitative analyses will be performed. For the quantitative analyses, data will be used from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), collected by the University of Essex. BHPS started in 1991 and follows a representative sample of households, yearly interviewing face-to-face every adult member, making it one of the longest running panel surveys in the world. Similar to the Dutch data, changes in the emotional ties of residents in deprived areas will be

\(^1\) The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, commonly known as the United Kingdom, the UK, or Britain, consist of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales - the four constituent countries. Great Britain means the countries of England, Wales and Scotland considered as a unit. The term Great Britain is often used (incorrectly) as synonymous with the UK. However, the UK and Great Britain are not equivalent since the UK is a state formed from the union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (www.wikipedia.org). My research focuses on one of the four countries of the United Kingdom, England, although I will use the terms English, British and the UK interchangeably, referring to the country of England, unless otherwise stated.
Introduction

studied, over time and compared to non-deprived areas, in order to research the possible effect of urban renewal on ties. The added bonus of this data is that the panel design allows for stronger assumptions about causality. The effects of different urban renewal programmes will be studied in two English case studies: one in the neighbourhood of Sale in Manchester and one in the area of Newcastle and Gateshead. In both Manchester and Newcastle-Gateshead the emphasis in the regeneration programme is on changing area reputation and behaviour of residents. In the former the regeneration partners opt for an individual approach while in the latter a collective approach is preferred based on a large scale public art-programme. The case study of Manchester is also based on earlier research I conducted at the Verwey-Jonker Institute, while the data for the case study on Newcastle-Gateshead is newly collected for this research and chosen for its focus on a culture-led generation as a means to influence the emotional ties of residents through urban renewal. More details on the research data can be found in chapter three.

1.4 Overview of the Research

In chapter two, the concept of ‘feeling at home’ and attachment to the neighbourhood is explored. What does it mean when people say they are “at home”? And how can we measure something as intangible as feelings about a place? The sociological literature on emotions and place is explored to find clues for the study of this concept, resulting in the adaptation of the social-psychological concept of ‘Place Attachment’ as a theoretical framework for the research. Based on this concept, different dimensions of feeling at home are distinguished in order to explore patterns of emotional ties to the neighbourhood in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

In chapter three the different dimensions of feeling at home are operationalised by discussing both quantitative and qualitative data sources. For each data source a research strategy is described: variables are selected from the Dutch and English survey data on each dimension of place attachment and the four
case studies, two in each country, are introduced, including the research methods that will be used in each case.

In chapters four and five the results are discussed of the secondary analyses on the Dutch and English Survey data respectively: the Housing Needs Survey (WBO) by the Dutch Ministry of Spatial Planning, Housing, and the Environment (2002-2006) and the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) by the University of Essex (1998-2003).

Before discussing the case studies an overview will be given in chapter six of the housing sector and urban renewal policy in each country. The case studies will be discussed individually in chapters Seven to Ten.

The urban renewal programme of Emmen Revisited is discussed in Chapter seven. The development of Emmen Revisited demonstrates an ongoing search for combining physical urban renewal with economical and social interventions. This search has widened the social scope considerably from purely resident participation to include social cohesion among residents, and even initiatives that recognise the importance of neighbourhood attachment.

Chapter eight investigates the urban renewal programme in Hoogvliet. In the regeneration of Hoogvliet, the partners developed a two bill strategy for increasing neighbourhood affection: directly by designing a new neighbourhood identity for its residents and indirectly by increasing the social mobility of individual residents. Improved job and educational qualifications of residents should benefit the neighbourhood at large by improving the reputation of and attachment to the area.

Chapter nine looks at a tenant reward scheme developed by a local housing association in Sale, Manchester to increase the involvement and independency of residents (mostly on welfare benefits) and in doing so, their attachment to the housing association and the neighbourhood.

Chapter ten discusses culture-led regeneration in Newcastle-Gateshead. Central to this programme was the development of eye-catching culture venues, combined with a large scale public art programme aimed at a radical improvement of the area reputation through the strengthening of local identity.

Finally, in chapter eleven, lessons will be drawn from the results of the case studies and the survey analyses. Are the reported changes in line with the goals set
Introduction

by policy makers and city planners at the start of their urban renewal programmes? And what does this mean for future policy and urban renewal practices? Do they need revising, or are new tools and practices required to achieve these goals?