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

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6. Social Housing and Urban Renewal in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom\textsuperscript{12}

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter the main differences are discussed between Dutch and English social housing in line with the urban policy in both countries. Knowledge of these differences is necessary to be able to compare research results between the two countries. Are differences in place attachments between Dutch and English residents related to differences in social housing and urban policy, or are the issues faced by English politicians and urban professionals radically different, affecting the place attachments of English residents in a very different way (also in the attention to emotional ties in urban policies)? The main focus is on England in this chapter because I assume the reader is more familiar with the Dutch literature on social housing and urban policy and is more interested in the English case.

6.2 Housing in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands

Just like the Netherlands, England has a large social rented housing sector, which is even bigger than the private rented housing sector. The main forms of housing in Britain are owner-occupation, local authority housing and private rented housing. Registered social landlords operate in the area of social renting, alongside local authorities and are independent from government. These are often small corporations that manage no more than 250 houses. In total, 1,388 housing associations are active in England but the vast majority of the market is in the hands of a number of “big guys”. Four percent of the corporations own 52% of the

\textsuperscript{12} 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 (see also footnote 1).
housing stock. The housing associations mainly serve the lower income groups with 83% of their customers entitled to housing benefits. Within the various forms of living, important shifts have occurred in the 20th century.

**Figure 6.1 Stock of dwellings by tenure**

[Diagram showing the percentage of owner occupation increasing from 10 to 67% of the housing stock, while the privately rented market saw its share drop from 90 to less than 10%. The social rental sector, mainly consisting of council housing, increased to a third of the housing stock, only to decrease again to 25 per cent.]

Source: Communities and local government (http://www.communities.gov.uk)

The percentage of owner occupation has increased from 10 to 67% of the housing stock. This went at the expense of the privately rented market that saw its share drop from 90 to less than 10%. The social rental sector, mainly consisting of council housing, increased to a third of the housing stock, only to decrease again to 25 per cent.

**Table 6.1 Housing stock divided into ownership form for the United Kingdom and the Netherlands**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership forms</th>
<th>UK Housing Tenure, 2006</th>
<th>Dutch Housing Tenure, 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupation</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private rented</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social rented</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to England, there is a relatively small percentage of owner occupation in the Netherlands. On the other hand, the social housing sector is very large. 41 percent of the housing stock consists of social housing, compared to 25 percent in Britain. The Netherlands has 783 housing corporations that collectively possess 2.4 million housing units. Compared to England, the Dutch housing stock is young and in relatively good constructional shape. The quality of social housing led to this sector being widely accessible and far less stigmatised as being exclusively for the poor than in England. As a result, the threshold to buy a house is high in the Netherlands, compared to other European countries. Only in the highest quarter of the income division does the majority own a house even though it must be stated that this is currently changing. Because the public housing sector is so large in the Netherlands, there is a different distinction between renting and buying there. The division of incomes is still stronger in England than it is in the Netherlands. In England, the share of owner occupation in the lowest income deciles is smaller than in the Netherlands, whereas in the highest income deciles there is more owner occupation than in the Netherlands.

### Table 6.2 Date of construction of Dutch and English housing stock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of construction</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>The United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1945</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>41% (-1964)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-1959</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22% (1965-1984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-1969</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25% (1985 or later)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1979</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13% (1985 or later)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 or later</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Both housing markets show comparable developments in the second half of the 20th century. The role municipalities play in the allocation of accommodation becomes increasingly smaller in favour of (privatised) housing corporations. The central government tightens the financial leash in the 1980s and 90s and tries to stimulate the market focus. (In the Netherlands “the golden strings” between the government and housing corporations are eventually cut and housing corporations become independent private associations). Control is increasingly handed over to
central bodies such as the Housing Corporation, the National Housing Council (NWR) and the Central Housing Fund (CFV). Individual citizens become increasingly subject to centralised control. To a large extent, building subsidies for housing projects make way for individual rental support (housing benefits). Furthermore, the housing sectors in both countries have to deal with comparable problems. Accommodation that is dated and limited, particularly in big cities, the degeneration of central district in big cities, not enough staff in the social housing sector and too little development in new housing projects; all these elements lead to a tight housing market.

Behind seemingly comparable developments in the Dutch and English social housing sector lay major differences between the two systems. These differences can be traced back partly to other historic developments in both countries. What follows is a short summary of the most important developments in the housing sector of post-war Britain, followed by a discussion of the post-war history of the Dutch housing sector.

6.3 A Short History of Social Housing and Policy in the United Kingdom

Local authority housing grew immensely after WWI and WWII (two million new houses after WWI, and four million houses after WWII) in order to satisfy the big need for houses. The working class was the major target group and the stigma associated with them is still more or less attached to council housing. The sector itself is partly to blame for this by mainly using council housing from 1930 onwards to accommodate people after slum clearances. After WWII, references to the working class are removed from documents and councils begin to concentrate on replacing the housing stock, particularly by demolishing old houses. They were mainly replaced by industrial high-rise buildings, heavily subsidised by government. Quantity was more important than quality. However, this does not automatically imply that nothing new was built anymore. Until the end of the 1970s, the sector has been responsible for the majority of production. In the early post-war period, a staggering 70 to 80% of the total English housing production was realised by the municipalities.
In the 1970s, the production of houses for the social housing sector diminished (for local authorities in particular) to around 50 per cent. In these years, the tide turned for council housing because the Conservative government under Thatcher (1979-mid 1990s) withdrew her support in favour of registered social landlords (RSL’s). In the 1970s and 1980s, the council housing sector moved to an increasingly marginal position and started to dedicate itself to welfare work and vulnerable groups. The government increasingly turned off the current of general subsidies and replaces them with an individual subsidy, the housing benefit. The role of local authority housing companies was pushed further back through regulations, like the ‘Right to Buy’ and ‘Pick Your Own Landlord’. Large parts of the municipal stock were passed on to independent housing associations (RSL’s) that were given an important role by the government. This preference was fed by the distrust the Conservative government has towards local governments, which were thought to be too bureaucratic, slow and over centralised. In contrast, RSL’s were perceived as varied and innovative participants in the market that also stimulated volunteer work. In 1988, the tide turned for RSL’s with the introduction of the Housing Act, which compelled RSL’s to invest their own money in addition to the government subsidies they already received. From then on, RSL’s had to make an effort to attract investors to finance them. By doing so, the government shirked its financial risk to the RSL’s and increasingly pulled back from the social rented housing sector.

In addition to the local authority housing stock being transferred to RSL’s, a large part of the social housing stock was sold to tenants in the 1980s. Today, seven out of ten houses in England are owner occupied. The bad and stigmatised reputation of the rental housing sector has led to people preferring to own their homes. Since 1980, 1.5 million households have been able to buy their own home thanks to these measures. Based on the number of years a house has been rented (with a minimum of two), people could get a discount of up to 70% on the sum of their house. People who are unable to find the purchase price in one go could use their rent as mortgage. The corporations were forced to co-operate and had to give huge discounts on the market value of the houses. This programme led to the best part of the social housing stock being sold and RSL’s having trouble keeping the quality up of the remaining stock. At the same time, the corporations’ financial reserves were siphoned off and rents increased considerably.
The quick changes in the 1980s caused a number of problems. The waiting list for social housing was long and residents became highly dependent on housing benefits. Encouraging owner occupation among the lower income groups led to many payment problems when rents rose dramatically at the end of the 1980s. Furthermore, people from the lower income groups experienced problems with the quality of their own homes. This group did not have sufficient means at their disposal to maintain their homes, leading to back repairs and overdue maintenance. Selling one’s home and returning to social housing was not an easy option, considering the long waiting lists. As a result of the problems, policies were changed drastically at the beginning of the 1990s. There was less support for owner occupation and only limited sale of the social rented housing stock.

6.4 New Labour: Social Exclusion, Liveability and Sustainable Communities

As illustrated in the previous paragraph, the (Conservative) UK government strongly believed in the benefits of privatisation in the eighties and early nineties of the last century: it sought to reduce the role of the public sector and to increase that of the private sector in relation to cities. It reduced many of local authorities’ powers and resources. Many local services were privatised or opened up to competitive tendering. Local control over revenue and capital spending was reduced, as was national financial support to local authorities. New players from the private and community sectors became involved in delivering urban services and urban regeneration. Although this resulted in an explicit national urban policy, it was not linked to mainstream programmes. The increased resources for the narrow urban programme were counteracted by reduced expenditure on mainstream programmes for cities and the allocation of resources on the basis of competition rather than need meant a highly fragmented local service provision. The impact of resources was diluted by being spread across too many initiatives.

Therefore, the Labour government, which took office in 1997, decided to change the rudder. They concluded that policymaking had become too centralised, bureaucratic and remote from local people. Furthermore, the creation of large numbers of quangos (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations) required
new ways of working between local, regional and national partners. Of great concern to the new government was a rapidly widening gap between poorer and richer urban neighbourhoods and regions combined with declining local voting, which demonstrated the need for democratic renewal, modernisation of local government and new forms of citizen engagement.

This has resulted in an enormous amount of activity and change in England’s urban policy during the past seven years. There has been a large number of independent and government reports assessing the conditions and prospects of English cities. The most notable include: *Lord Rogers Task Force on Urban Renaissance* (DETR, 1999), the government’s own white paper in 2000, *Better Towns and Cities: Delivering an Urban Renaissance*; the *National Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy* in 2001 (SEU, 2001) and The Sustainable Communities Plan in 2003 (ODPM, 2003). There have been white papers, green papers and legislation on housing, planning, regional government and local government. The papers produced different ground rules for urban policy, which largely opposed the policy effort of the past government in the eighties and nineties.

The government no longer regarded cities as liabilities but increasingly as economic opportunities and tried to improve working relationships and to reduce conflicts with cities. National resources to cities were increased and competition between cities for those resources was reduced, as well as controls over local authorities. It established a Social Exclusion Unit to address the problems of deprived neighbourhoods and launched a range of new area-based initiatives, like New Deal for Communities, Education Action Zones, Health Action Zones, Sure Start and Employment Zones. Of particular importance for this research is the New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative.

Unlike the Zones and Sure Start, New Deal for Communities (NDC) focused on areas as a whole. It was designed as a catalyst for the intensive physical and social regeneration of specific low-income areas, premised on having residents involved in the design and conduct of the regeneration, “putting residents in the driving seat”. There are 39 NDC areas, each with around 4,500 homes. These areas were given £50m over ten years; how this is spent differs from area to area, following needs identified by residents and the NDC Board.
Furthermore, to improve the co-ordination of regional economic strategies and to provide a strategic framework for local regeneration programmes, the government set up business-led Regional Development Agencies. Finally, the government tried to integrate different departments by giving them joint targets for improved urban performance.

According to Caroline Paskell and Anne Power of CASE, who evaluated the local impacts of housing, environment and regeneration policy since 1997 (2005) three themes are central within the UK government’s thinking - ideas that have motivated its commitment to tackling urban and neighbourhood problems. These are: social exclusion, liveability, and sustainable communities. They are key to understanding the urban policies and initiatives of the Labour government.

Labour made clear in its bid for election in 1997 and from the start of its first term that addressing area-based deprivation would be a priority of office. It stated that the aim was to address not only poverty itself (in particular, child poverty) but also broader problems of disadvantage - the complex set of problems referred to as ‘social exclusion’. This had become prominent in Labour’s ideology in the years preceding the 1997 election and within four months of being in office, Peter Mandelson announced that the Cabinet Office would set up a ‘Social Exclusion Unit’ to develop cross-departmental policies for a problem that “is more than poverty and unemployment; it is being cut off from what the rest of us regard as normal life” (Mandelson cited in Paskell & Power, 2005).

The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was part of a wider effort to understand and address problems of specific places. This began with an overview of the problems faced by deprived neighbourhoods. In 1998 the SEU published an initial report Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (SEU, 1998). The report set out new initiatives to address multiple problems faced by low-income areas, and restructured the Single Regeneration Budget to fund these. The creation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) in April 2001 reaffirmed this focus on the needs of low-income areas. After further consultation the strategy was published as an action plan for addressing multiple problems in “the hundreds of severely deprived neighbourhoods” (SEU, 2001: 5) in England and Wales. It required local authorities in the 88 most deprived areas to set up local strategic
partnerships (LSPs) involving public, private, voluntary and community bodies to promote joint working and draw up local neighbourhood renewal strategies to improve deprived neighbourhoods. It set up a neighbourhood renewal fund\(^{13}\) to support improvements in mainstream service delivery in those areas and appointed neighbourhood managers. By establishing the Social Exclusion Unit and National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, the Labour government quickly identified local regeneration as crucial to improving Britain. The subsequent aim was that “within 10 to 20 years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live” (ibid.: 8). The government established a set of floor targets to improve economic and social conditions in the poorest neighbourhoods and convergence targets to close the gap between them and the average.

Better housing and physical environments were specific objectives within this broader goal (ibid: 8), but the government’s efforts to improve housing and local environments are framed not only by this concern with social exclusion, but also by concern for the areas’ quality of life or “liveability”. The government refers to this issue, how quality of life is affected by local conditions, as “liveability”. It sees this as something that is key to the management and renewal of low-income areas and also views it as relevant to other neighbourhoods, indeed to all neighbourhoods: “The quality of our public space affects the quality of all our lives ... everybody’s local environment should be cleaner, safer and greener”. (ODPM, 2002: 5) The government’s concept of liveability focuses on public space. This includes housing, as part of the built environment, but the emphasis has tended to be on open and green spaces (Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, 2002) and, more recently, on the ‘street scene’ (CABE, 2002). The government has represented the main challenge as ensuring that local areas in general are ‘cleaner, safer, and greener’. This focus links to the third theme underpinning housing and local environment policy - that areas should not only be liveable now but viable in the future, i.e. that they should be ‘sustainable communities’.

Sustainability is promoted by the government on two levels. The original, over-arching objective is for “sustainable development”, for which the government set out four principles in 1999: steady economic growth; social progress to meet the needs of all; environmental protection and prudent use of natural resources.

\(^{13}\) The NRF provided £200 million in 2001/02, £300 million in 2002/03 and £400 million in 2003/04.
Progress on these has been measured through 15 headline indicators (DETR, 1999). The other, more specific objective is to ensure that neighbourhoods are sustainable, as set out in the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003). The concept of ‘sustainable communities’ develops on ideas from the Urban Task Force, which the government commissioned in 1999 “to identify the causes of urban decline in England and recommend practical solutions to bring people back into our cities, towns and urban neighbourhoods” (mission statement: Urban Task Force, 1999).

Its introduction as a policy objective also reflects the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal in emphasising housing quality and local environmental standards. The Sustainable Communities Plan restated and reinforced the concepts of ‘decent housing’ and ‘decent places’ (first laid out in the National Strategy) and set clear targets for attaining these standards across all areas. It also aimed to establish how the simultaneous issues of housing shortage in the south-east and low housing demand in the midlands and the north could be addressed, providing housing where needed without undermining established communities in developing areas or areas of low demand. This resulted in new initiatives, like Growth Areas and Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders. Neighbourhood management was identified by the government as a key strategy for addressing social exclusion and promoting local regeneration. In 2000, the government published a report on the nature and potential of neighbourhood management (SEU, 2000) and launched 20 long-term neighbourhood management pathfinders in areas of high deprivation, with an additional 15 pathfinders announced in December 2003.

14 All social housing should reach a minimum standard by 2010. The English standard is for housing to be warm, weatherproof and to have reasonably modern facilities.
6.5 Social Housing and Policy in the Netherlands\textsuperscript{15}

Although the housing stock in Dutch neighbourhoods is in pretty good shape and the Dutch cities are mostly doing well compared to other European cities in terms of economic standards, this does not mean that the social housing is without problems in the Netherlands. Particularly in the big cities (>100,000 inhabitants), the once popular post war neighbourhoods situated on the outskirts of city centres are nowadays characterized by low-income populations, relative 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 not 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.

The double-sided nature of the problems became more and more central in the big cities policy initiated in 1994 by central government. The starting aim was to reduce the relative backward social and economic position of cities in terms of employment, educational performances, economic activities and safety. The four big and 27 medium-sized cities were invited to formulate their own initiatives in these fields. If the plans were accepted, the cities could receive extra financial support. Since 2000, physical programmes for urban regeneration (that received national support since 1997) have become incorporated in the big cities policy. Since that time the policy has been redirected at integrated, area based policy, based on three ‘pillars’; economical, spatial and social interventions. In practice, however, despite ideas about coordinated governance, each pillar mostly developed its own programmes with little collaboration between different sectors,

causing neighbourhood renewal to be dominated by spatial redesigning with spatial players sometimes developing social programmes themselves.

Thus, the spatial interventions are almost in all cases, the dominant and enduring factor in this ensemble. Social programmes by social players are far less intensive, more fragmented and hardly long term, earning the social programme the nickname of being a ‘projectencarroussel’ (ferry wheel of projects). Central to the spatial pillar is a large-scale urban renewal programme developed by the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Housing, and the Environment. Part of this programme is a community based approach of 40 deprived neighbourhoods towards which additional budgets (Investeringsbudget stedelijke vernieuwing) are located to facilitate local initiatives in the hope that this will accelerate the urban renewal of these areas. Every five years, local councils are given the opportunity to submit proposals for urban renewal projects in the selected neighbourhoods.

The biggest slice of the cake is spent on new property development. Housing associations and policymakers assumed that they could kill two birds with one stone (solve both types of problems with one type of intervention, i.e. spatial). Large parts of old neighbourhoods were demolished and replaced by a more diversified housing stock to cater for different population groups. Large-scale ‘restructuring’ would not only solve the problem of a mismatch on the housing market, but would also benefit the people living in these neighbourhoods. By attracting higher income groups to poor city areas the less fortunate living there would benefit from the economical and social capital these groups would bring with them.

However, not all middle class groups are attracted to the newly developed neighbourhoods outside the city centre. Most of the middle class residents prefer spacious single family dwellings in green suburban areas, while urban seekers primarily look for attractive housing and areas close to the city centre. The groups that are attracted to the newly developed neighbourhoods are (ex) students or young workers, who just entered the housing market, social professionals, who can not afford the expensive housing within the city centre, and social climbers who are already living in these post-war areas. The latter are provided with an opportunity to stay on their home-ground as they move up the housing ladder.
Another interesting target group for this research are people labelled as ‘spijtoptanten’. Numerous projects for urban renewal take into account residents who have moved out of the deprived areas but who have regretted their move ever since. They miss their old neighbourhood and neighbours and do not feel at home in their new place. These residents are given priority for the new social housing units in the newly developed area and are targeted by incentives and marketing campaigns to buy houses in their former neighbourhood. A clear example of this policy can be found in the Amsterdam Bijlmer, an area with a traditionally large group of Surinam inhabitants which went through a serious period of decay. For a while, the better off Surinam households left the Bijlmer to live in more ‘decent’ areas (yet returned often during daytime to visit family and participate in events). After the renewal, a large group of these residents who did not feel at home in their neighbourhood moved back to the Bijlmer (Veldboer e.a., 2008).

Less warm welcomes are reserved for new residents: they are sometimes accused of initiating the (forced) retreat of the lower income residents who cannot keep up with the rent and property price increases. Indirectly, housing associations underline this assumption by stating the need to de-concentrate or to regroup different classes at other levels of mainstream society. According to this view, there is a limit to the problems (for example, the influx of poor immigrants) a neighbourhood can take and, therefore the groups that are ‘too much’ need to be taken out of the neighbourhood one way or another. This type of policy is mostly aimed at immigrant groups that, according to local residents, take over the area. Their removal could be the effect of urban renewal, but also the result of specific labelled measures. This type of policy was pioneered by the city of Rotterdam in the first decennium of the new millennium by prohibiting the entrance to poor neighbourhoods for new poor arrivals.

Policies of problem dispersal (which are rarely classified as such) might present troubled neighbourhoods with temporary breathing space, which gives them the opportunity to turn around the negative spiral. On the other hand, such interventions do not solve the problems faced by the dispersed individuals in question. Therefore more recently, housing associations and city councils have expanded their repertoire by recognising the need for investment in local human
capital. Programmes aimed at developing the potentials and skills of vulnerable groups are popular at the moment.

In a recent advice the Ministry of Housing’s official advice counsel, the Vromraad (2006), argues that until now the social mobility of residents has not been emphasized enough. Social mix programmes are labelled too often as ingredients for better social cohesion and neighbouring. The Vromraad urges policymakers to formulate their plans as new opportunities for people. What is needed, according to the advice council, are more stepping stones for poorer and less educated residents on the societal ladder. The counsel argues that the problems need to be addressed on the level where they are most persistent: by providing labour market and educational opportunities for less fortunate residents and by providing and orchestrating contact possibilities with middle class groups. This advice did not weaken but strengthened the spatial-social strategy by housing associations and city councils, although the tone is slightly different. To retain ‘capital rich’ middle and higher income groups for deprived city neighbourhoods, the housing stock needs to be diversified to cater for their needs (and the needs of poor people). However, the social mobility of the ‘capital poor’ is not only helped by the presence of middle class; investments in their human capital and skills have become increasingly important.

So far, the big cities policy is rarely reviewed in terms of individual social mobility. Benchmarks are made on city mobility or neighbourhood mobility (see Boelhouwer et al. 2006; Marlet & Van Woerkom, 2006). The results of these studies show that safety and liveability have increased in renewed areas, as well as the housing prices and the number of better educated people. The size of the middle class housing stock shows only little progress despite large and time consuming operations. Unemployment figures have improved during this time, but not in the same way for immigrants or in the same way as in suburban areas. The least performing city is Rotterdam, which still suffers from its industrial heritage.

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 (see also the debate caused by the WRR-report ‘Identificatie met Nederland’ after publication in 2007).

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 by the decline of their area and the arrival of large numbers of immigrants in their neighbourhood. At the same time, Dutch politicians stress the important of making new citizens feel at home in their new country and neighbourhood, resulting in conflicting or at least ambiguous statements on the emotional ties of Dutch residents: one group doesn’t feel at home because of another group’s presence.

6.6 Neighbourhood Identity in Dutch Urban Policy

More explicit references to the emotional ties of residents are made in the more recent focus in housing on lifestyle and branding (the case study of Hoogvliet is good example and is discussed in more detail in chapter 8). Neighbourhood identity is increasingly popular with city planners, architects, housing associations and social professionals alike, seeking new ways to regenerate deprived neighbourhoods. No urban renewal programme is complete these days without a reference to identity of place. Identity is used as a weapon in the war on increasing degeneration and deprivation of inner cities: by emphasising or, if necessary, by reinventing the positive values of an area, city councils and marketing experts try their best to improve the bad reputations of these areas and turn the tide of degeneration. A meeting called by the Dutch Expertise Centre on Urban Renewal in 2006 concluded that:
Searching for the identity of a renewal area can increase the quality of urban renewal programmes; the search unites all parties living and working in the neighbourhood, stimulating co-operation and thought on the direction of change in the neighbourhood. It prevents an approach dominated by an exclusive focus on every day practices.

The concept of place identity is used in many different ways: ranging from an engaging method to interact with residents and other local parties to an important measure for property value. Used as a participatory tool, it tries to involve local residents in the urban planning by discussing favourite spots in the neighbourhood and the values and meaning attached to the places. The results are used to extract core values for the neighbourhood, which are used to design a new neighbourhood profile. However, the mobilisation of an engagement with local residents is more important: discussing place identity organises and involves residents who would otherwise not show up for public inquiries. This method has been used successfully in the urban renewal programme of Nieuwland in Schiedam.

Place identity has also been used as an enticement for middle class groups to lure them into deprived areas with an improved reputation. To prevent ‘living apart together’ of old (poor) and new (rich) groups, common values are defined for the involved area. This recipe has been tried and tested in Utrecht for the neighbourhood of Ondiep, where the city council promoted their regeneration scheme for the area with the theme of “a proud neighbourhood where residents speak their mind”, in the hope of attracting new families to the neighbourhood who would connect to the brand. However, it proved to be a difficult task for a working class neighbourhood to become attractive as a desired living area for well off families.

Therefore, other cities, like Rotterdam, have used place identity in exactly the opposite way, by stressing different values and lifestyles between residents’ groups and designing different place in the neighbourhood, where each group can feel at home within its own group of likeminded neighbours. This strategy starts from the (more realistic) assumption that people prefer to live among people that look and behave like them and allows for, even stimulates, spatial segregation. Place identity is used to design different places in the neighbourhood that appeal
to different groups: one part of the neighbourhood can entice residents who prefer privacy and peace, while another part is more suitable for people who enjoy living in a lively working class community. Research has shown that the enticement strategy benefits most of the groups who are already better off: in an evaluation of multicultural housing project, Ouwehand and Van der Horst (2005) conclude that:

*It is more often an oriental gift wrapping for higher income groups, which enable them to feel on holiday in their own back garden, while little room and sympathy is left for the emancipation of ethnic and religious groups, who also try to claim an expressive place in the urban landscape.*

In these last two scenarios, place identity is regarded as an economical or social commodity that can be wilfully redistributed to the resident population, or as a social-cultural glue that can be attached to an area to connect the different groups that live there. They focus more on values and characteristics of people than on identity of places. Two popular models are the mentality-model of marketing agent Motivaction and the brand strategy research-model of SmartAgent. Both models attempt to map the social-psychological and cultural motives of housing consumers by dividing the Dutch population into different lifestyle groups with distinct values and housing preferences and giving them sophisticated names such as “active individualists”, “hasty middle classes”, “tolerant socialisers” and “sketchy idealists”. Both models are criticised for their static views and abstract, stereotypical labelling, which limit the use in practical interventions.

The different uses reflect the main pillars of the Dutch urban renewal policy: participation of residents in urban renewal is a longstanding tradition in the social pillar, while the enticement of middle class groups to newly flavoured deprived inner city areas reflects the enduring debate on social mix within the physical pillar and “the deprivation policy” (achterstandsbeleid) of the social pillar. Old jackets find new coats in the use of place identity within urban renewal policy. Moreover, the different place identity-strategies in urban renewal share a common belief in

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16 Instead, policy makers and researcher return to classical distinction like class, status and social-demographic characteristics for the mapping of housing preferences.
the changeability of society: bad reputations and relationships can be fixed by applying the necessary amount of place identity.

This obscures the other side of the coin: emphasising the positive hides or plainly ignores the negative that caused the bad reputation in the first place and connecting people on the bases of shared values comes at the cost of excluding others who do not share these values; what unites also sets people apart from others. This provides city planners and marketing experts with a new dilemma: how far can you go in facilitating diversity based on different place identities without damaging the social cohesion in the area? And which kind of diversity do you allow: is it possible to promote spatial segregation based on identity or lifestyle, while at the same time combating segregation based on income and ethnicity?

In sum, the images designed by branding and lifestyle approaching often prove very difficult to implement in the urban renewal programme due to their vague and unproblematic nature (negative reputations and differences between residents are ignored) and unrelatedness to the daily practices of residents and professionals. What the different experiences of applying place identity to urban renewal offer us so far, is recognition of the process of identity construction: it proves impossible to dictate a new reputation for a deprived area and unite different residents groups instantly under a new banner or brand. As a social construct place identity needs to be reproduced in everyday life to have any effect on the behaviour of residents. Too often new values, lifestyles and identity are invented overnight, which are detached or too abstract from existing and daily (re)used constructs of place identity. In spite of the urban potential and the good intentions what often remains of all the efforts to incorporate Place Identity into urban renewal is a pile of glossy project plans and brochures.

6.7 Conclusions and Remarks

In the Netherlands, the shift from local authority housing to privatised (social) housing takes place at an earlier stage. Already in 1965, housing corporations are preferred over local authority housing. In the 1980s, the last municipal housing corporations are forced to form separated structures. In England, the sector is still
struggling to catch up. For instance, in Manchester, the IVHA still has to fight for the agreement of residents to take over the housing stock from local authorities (Right to Choice). At the time, both England and the Netherlands were in a transition phase from a housing stock that is mainly characterised by social renting to a housing stock of owner occupied homes. This transition takes place very gradually in the Netherlands, while it was forced upon the English system in the 1980s and came about in fits and starts.

This had far reaching consequences in England. After the forced transmission of social rented houses to owner occupied houses, the rental sector that was left was one for the financially weak. The social housing sector is highly stigmatised in England and is often seen as a shelter for the very poor. If at all possible, you buy a house in England. After the “bruterieng”-measures, the Dutch social rental sector became one that was financially very healthy, of considerable size and had a reasonably mixed group of tenants. In England, the social housing sector was in a financially awkward position, the best parts of the housing stock having been transferred to the owner occupied sector and the tenant population coping with a very high concentration of the lower income groups.

The differences are also reflected in the nature and size of problems that are unthinkable in the Netherlands. A concentration of households with low incomes and less social possibilities often entails a concentration of social problems (unemployment, degeneration, and criminality). Streets where all the houses are boarded up and where the police do not dare to enter; these images are inconceivable in the Netherlands. The concentration and accumulation of social problems in the English social housing sector have also led to a more explicit link of welfare work to social housing. In the Netherlands, the two sectors are seen as more separate entities. Dutch corporations co-operate or compete with welfare institutions, whilst English housing associations employ youth workers. This difference can also be seen in housing regulations. Under English legislation, eviction is not an option since tenants have no place else to go.

The 90s saw a big change in urban policy in England and in the Netherlands, both by a change of government. In both countries, this signalled a change from predominantly physical regeneration to combined efforts in social, economic and physical renewal of deprived neighbourhoods, accompanied by a sharp increase in
funding and new powers for local governments to tackling deprivation issues. While in the Netherlands, local and national governments are struggling to combine social-spatial interventions, and more often resort to one or the other, in England, the Labour government strongly advocated a leading role for social and economical regeneration. Instead of an exclusive focus on the quality of housing in deprived areas, social and economical targets take priority in fighting poverty and social exclusion, supported by (instead of contributing to) physical regeneration (housing as a social service).

In both countries large scale urban renewal programmes are set up to tackle deprivation. Within these programmes the attention to social and emotional ties varies greatly. Urban social policy in the Netherlands has been primarily concerned with the social cohesion and, more recently, with the social mobility of poor residents. The Dutch case studies in the next two chapters are a case in point. In the urban renewal partnership of Emmen, resident participation and social cohesion take centre stage, while the partners in Hoogvliet emphasise social mobility among residents in deprived neighbourhoods. In both programmes 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 by the decay of the area or the arrival of large numbers of immigrants in their neighbourhood. As a solution, this other group should be spread and educated in order to behave and perform better in order to make new residents to feel at home in their new country. What is asked is adaptation: immigrants should cut all emotional ties to their country of birth.

In spite of the efforts made in the Netherlands to combine spatial and physical interventions in urban renewal, the emphasis is on spatial redesigning. Specific social interventions in renewed areas are usually seen as supporting acts and are aimed at socio-economic skills or social cohesion. In the minority of cases social interventions dominated the scene while spatial measures are lacking. Thus the Dutch cases studies provide examples of the extreme ends of the scale: either spatial (more often) or social interventions are dominant with little room for combined efforts.

The British welfare sector, on the other hand, is historically closer linked to housing; the sell out of social housing by Thatcher resulted in a heavily stigmatised
housing sector for the very poor. The concentration and accumulation of social problems have led to a dominating presence of social services in social housing, instead of an overall reorganisation in social services, which the United States has opted for. In the Netherlands, social services has always been viewed as a separate sector to housing, resulting in a more distant relationship between housing associations and social workers and ultimately, a more marginalised position of social workers in the Netherlands. The dominant presence of social services in the United Kingdom has resulted in innovative housing projects combining social and spatial interventions. In terms of governance, this seems to offer useful learning experiences for the Dutch social and housing sector. Moreover, English policy makers seem to be more aware of the emotional ties of residents. This already becomes clear 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.

The English themselves appear to be possessed by their house. No other country in the world spends so much money on DIY (Do It Yourself) for their house and garden: over £8,500 million disappears each year through handy English hands. No house is complete without having ripped something out and having at least one room in the house redecorated: a new house becomes a home for residents by putting their own personal mark on it. According to anthropologist Kate Fox (2004), who spend much time observing the English and their homes in search of the rules of Englishness, a house is, for the English, “the embodiment of their privacy, identity and the most important status indicator and property of an Englishman” (113). The English sensitivity to privacy can also be witnessed in the national discontent with estate agents: even people who had never had any dealing with them have an aversion to estate agents and complain that their stupid, ineffectual and insincere. Estate agents are favourite targets for the general dislike of the British public on par with traffic wardens and salesmen. According to Fox this has everything to do with the central role of home to the British identity:
Everything that estate agents do involves passing judgement not on some neutral piece of property, but on us, on our lifestyle, our social position, our character, our private self. And sticking a price tag on it. No wonder we can’t stand them (2004:124).

Fox continues by connecting the English nesting urge and privacy sensitivity to the typical English characteristics of social inhibition, reticence and embarrassment, which she sums up as “a lack of ease and skill in social interaction”. To compensate for this lack the English retreat to the protectiveness and security of their own homes 17. Safe behind their front doors the English do not need to worry about their lack of social skills. “Home is what the English have instead of social skills” (134).

The analyses in chapter 5 confirmed that the house plays an important role for the emotional ties of residents. Jobs in and around the house contribute to the attachment of residents to their neighbourhood. By doing these jobs they claim the space, make it their own place and develop an affection for the neighbourhood. This does not mean that the neighbourhood plays no part in the emotional make-up of residents. The additional analyses in chapter 5 demonstrate that different home feelings are related to different levels of focus in the neighbourhood: time spent in and around the house mainly increases the social attachment, while an appreciation of other residents stimulates the physical attachment of residents. The social community in their neighbourhood is equally important for the emotional ties of residents, but particularly their physical ties, while their passion for gardening and DIY is a signal of their social ties to the neighbourhood. The latter is confirmed by Fox:

If you do spend time squatting, bending and pruning in your front garden you may find this is one of the very few occasions on which your neighbours will speak to you. A person busy in his or her front garden is regarded socially ‘available’, and neighbours who would never dream of knocking on your front door may stop for a chat. [...] In fact, I know of many streets in

17 A notable exception and nuance to this bold statement of Fox, kindly noted by my father in law, Gerry Price, is the popularity of social clubs, especially in the North of England, where (older) working class Englishmen tune their social skills happily outside their homes.
which people who have an important matter to discuss with a neighbour will wait patiently - sometimes for days or weeks - until they spot the neighbour in question working in his front garden (2004:126).

The importance of home is reflected in English urban policy by the recognition of houses as places which residents need to make their own and therefore the government keeps a respectful distance from the front door.

Another point of difference between Dutch and English urban policy is where they start. Whereas Dutch policy makers look for help outside the neighbourhood and aim to attract middle classes to deprived areas, English policy makers and urban planners take the poorest residents as the starting point for their policies and designs. Under the assumption that middle class groups will only feel at home in deprived neighbourhoods when the behaviour of the anti-social residents has changed, much energy and resources are devoted to changing their behaviour before any time is spend on building homes for the middle class. Changing the attitude of the original residents is believed crucial in changing the reputation of an area, which is necessary for higher income groups to even consider living there (see the case study in Manchester).

Moreover, many urban renewal activities focus directly on changing the identity and reputation of an area and its people by using a more culture-based approach to urban renewal described as culture-led regeneration: urban renewal in which cultural facilities take centre stage in the redressing of an area with a deprived reputation. By designing eye-catching museums and theatres filled with important works of arts and artists, the area should acquire a new purpose and identity. Several English cities (Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Cardiff) have sought to incorporate production and consumption of culture as part of their efforts to sustain a new industrial future in the post-industrial world, where cultural investment provides an alternative to the de-industrialised past. The case study of Newcastle and Gateshead is a fine example of this approach: both councils have employed public art to link the regeneration of the area to the local culture and identity of its residents, strengthening their attachment to the area and redressing the reputation of the deprived area, not only by physical but also by symbolic improvements.
The different starting point and emphasis of urban renewal in England appears to pay off, as we have seen in chapter 5, at least in the NDC-areas of England. But also the priority areas in the Netherlands demonstrate remarkable progress with their different focus and approach. The question remains therefore, what different efforts in both countries lead to these results? Which interventions and projects make what kind of a difference to the emotional ties of residents in both countries? This question is answered in the following chapters by comparing urban practices in four cities, two in the Netherlands and two in the United Kingdom. For the Netherlands, the council of Hoogvliet in Rotterdam and the neighbourhoods Angelslo, Bargeres and Emmerhout in Emmen have been studied. For the UK, qualitative data has been gathered in the two areas, Sale in Manchester and The Quayside in Newcastle and Gateshead. By comparing the two case studies the influence of different context variables can be assessed, particular the differences between the Dutch and English housing sector. In each case the urban renewal programmes has been reconstructed with particular attention given to interventions which influence, both implicitly and explicitly, the emotional ties of residents to their neighbourhood. The four case studies are discussed separately in chapter 7 to 10.