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Realistic regeneration : housing contexts and social outcomes of neighbourhood interventions in Western European cities

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1. Introduction: How to understand neighbourhood regeneration

This is typical for falsification in social research. It is messy (...), it is partial (...), it is provisional (...).

– Andrew Sayer

This study is concerned with the regeneration of urban neighbourhoods. As William Grigsby and his colleagues (1987) once argued, the quality of any neighbourhood is always in a state of perpetual decline through aging and usage (see also Megbolugde et al., 1996). However, affluent residents are generally able to stall the decline of their homes perpetually. As a result, affluent neighbourhoods generally are well-maintained through private initiative. However, for many neighbourhoods, intervention in the form of physical redevelopment or subsidies is required whenever an area reaches a point at which it only attracts residents who do not have the means to ensure proper upkeep of the dwellings and the neighbourhood (see also Robson, 1975). In Western Europe, the quality of the dwellings is of (semi-) public concern in case of social housing. What's more, also the upkeep and liveability of the neighbourhood is ultimately seen as the responsibility of the public sector regardless of tenure structure. So, the state plays a major role in the regeneration of neighbourhoods.

Regeneration traditionally concerns the physical state of an area's housing and public environment and its effect on public health. However, when neighbourhoods are regarded as ripe for regeneration, they are commonly labelled as 'concentrated', 'poverty-stricken', 'segregated', or plainly as 'problem areas'. These labels are used in many Western European countries, which face different sorts of socio-economic problems in some of their older urban neighbourhoods. This suggests that some sort of social change is important as well in neighbourhood regeneration policies and practices. It may even be more important than physical deterioration or public health. In many cases, the problems of these neighbourhoods are associated with a concentration of minority groups or of a socio-economic class living within the area.

At least until the 1970s and 1980s, social economic divisions in Western European cities and societies were tackled through the social policies of the Keynesian welfare state. This structure of social agreements held the grand promise of universal care, social equality and full employment. However, as the Keynesian welfare state structure was inherently contradictory and unsustainable, it came under reform (Cerny, 2000). This means unsettling the old settlements and devising new settlements according to new, more market liberal, principles. Urban policies, that seek to regenerate neighbourhoods and revitalize urban economies, play a key role in the new settlements and in redefining what social policy should entail. It signifies a move away from grand scale redevelopment and new town policies to a more piecemeal approach to the city and how to manage its social problems. Furthermore, the limited territorial focus of regeneration policies also signifies a move from universalism on a national scale to selectivity with a focus on regional and local scales (Cochrane, 2007).

The rescaling of urban governance does not mean that the role of national state has become insignificant (see Brenner, 1999). On the contrary, it is central in understanding neighbourhood regeneration as many of the overarching policies and funding mechanism originate from the central state. A such, neighbourhood regeneration does not only produce social change in terms of liveability and social economic change at the local level, but is also socially produced itself within and by its context. This duality is central in this study.

This study deals with neighbourhood regeneration which aims for social change within the context of Western Europe. It will appraise the state's ability for social change at a local and supra-local level through policies and practices of regeneration. In addition, this study will focus on explaining the social strategies of neighbourhood regeneration. Like the social practice of neighbourhood regeneration, this study will place an emphasis on social change through housing-related mechanisms and on the housing context as the *explanans*. Before discussing some common characteristics of regeneration in Western Europe and the study's research design, a brief overview of academic explanation for social differentiation in the city will be given. Next, change in post-WWII neighbourhoods will be discussed. The regeneration of this type of neighbourhoods will form an important part of the empirical basis of this study, because many are currently deemed problematic by European politicians, policymakers, journalists, observers, academics and the general public.

1.1 Academic explanations for social differentiation in the city

Urban life in academia and the arts has always been depicted in terms of the differences in social standing between the city's inhabitants. Indeed, the multiple manifestations of differences in architecture, material goods and living styles are key in defining modern urban life. The diversity of urban life is reflected in the diversity of academic explanations since the early 20th century.

Social differentiation was central in the work by the members of the influential 'Chicago School'. The 'School' was characterised by a human ecological stance in research, which was taken from natural sciences (see Park et al., 1925/ 1967). The 'human ecology' method opened the door for several landmark studies which excel in descriptive grace and ethnographic richness (e.g. Wirth, 1927, Zorbaugh, 1929/ 1976). However, the method's focus on 'natural areas' within the city was ambivalent in terms of unit of geography. In addition, the cause for the social situation of the residents tends to be attributed to the social dynamic of the area itself. Furthermore, human choice and institutions within urban social systems received little attention (Chudacoff, 1994). A similar critique could be made for factorial ecology and social area analysis approaches, which also followed the human ecological approach. Both approaches were able to map socio-spatial relations within the city, but were insufficiently able to provide causal explanations (Van Kempen, 2002).

The behavioural approach, however, emphasised choice and preference and ethnic or demographic characteristics of individual households as the key to explain spatial patterns of urban social life (e.g. Rossi, 1980, Michelson, 1977, Clark, 1992, Clark et al., 1986). As the attention is focused on the demand-side of housing and less on constraints, the state plays only a minor role in this approach (Van Kempen, 2002).

Rex and Moore (1967) adopted a Weberian approach³ to overcome some of the limitations of the Chicago school. Their approach sought explanations for urban social formations in the struggle between classes over the use of houses. A class struggle in Weberian sense is likely to emerge when there is a difference in access to property between individuals in a market situation. The difference will lead to political and policy action by different 'housing classes'. However, the concept of housing class is somewhat problematic because it essentially obscures the relationship between individual behaviour and structural constraints. Nevertheless, this research was influential in its treatment of housing as a scarce commodity in the city and thus as a constraint for individual choice. Furthermore, the

3 In addition to Max Weber, their approach to sociological explanation was also influenced by Karl Mannheim and Gunnar Myrdal (Rex and Moore, 1967, p. 5).

approach implies that power plays an important role in the social formation of the city. In the 1970s several strands of urban research emerged which highlighted the importance of wider institutional frameworks and power relations in the social formation of the city. These strands include the neo-Marxist radical approach, the managerial approach and the political economic approach.

The neo-Marxist approach to the urban research kicked into gear with works of, among others, David Harvey and Manuel Castells. In his Marxist analysis of the city, Harvey (1973) argued that 'urbanism entails the geographic concentration of socially designated surplus product' (p. 246). In simpler terms, in the capitalist system, surplus of production is 'reinvested' in urban (re-)development with the aim to create extra surplus. As such, it shapes the face and soul of the city. So, the spatial residential pattern within the city, i.e. social segregation, is essentially a 'tangible geographical expression of a structural condition in the capitalist economy' (p. 273).

In his attempt to understand the laws that govern urban social practices, Castells (1977) focused on the political process and power struggles within the city. He sees space as an expression of social structure which is made up of the combinations of ideological, political and economic systems, which define urban social practices through time. Urban planning is essentially the intervention of the political to ensure a reproduction of the dominant mode of reproduction. Furthermore, in his view social movements act as a counterbalance in the urban class struggle.

Both authors were preceded by Henri Lefebvre who argued that the state from above and private enterprise from below both strive to absorb and suppress the city, and as such converge to segregation along ethnic and social economic lines. Despite anti-segregationist tendencies and good intentions, the social and political practice of class strategies aim for segregation (intentionally or unintentionally). However, Lefebvre also notes that social pressure and political power may change the good or bad will of politicians (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 140 - 141).

The neo-Marxist approach was valuable in its focus on a context of constraints and opportunities. However, its emphasis on structural conditions may leave little room for individual choice and behaviour in its interpretations. In addition, the Marxist premises tend to restrict venues for explanation to historical -and geographical- materialism. Furthermore, the state is often seen as a homogeneous and homogenizing power in its interventions in the city.

In the urban managerialism or the managerial approach (see also Lipsky, 1980), Pahl examines the role of technical experts and housing managers within the state and argues that they play a crucial role in the allocation of production surplus (in the sense of Harvey). Managers, or gatekeepers, are therefore 'central to the urban problematic' (Pahl, 1975, p. 285). Pahl's thesis has met some criticism with regard to the supposed centre stage of meso-level policy makers and manager and to the disregard for the 'top dogs'. Pahl acknowledged this critique and reformulated his thesis by emphasising the mediating role of managers between the state and the private sector and between the central state authority and local population (Pahl, 1977). However, also in Pahl's revised view the state remains an autonomous bureaucratic power which strives for some sort of 'national interest' (Harloe, 1977). This view takes the macro-level insufficiently into account.

While the managerial approach focuses on the state, the political economy approach emphasises the role of both private and public urban elites in the shaping of the city. So-called growth machines, coalitions or regimes aim for capital accumulation and growth maximalisation (see Molotch, 1976, Mossberger and Stoker, 2001, Terhorst and Van de Ven, 1997), and in doing so shape the development of the city, including residential areas (see, e.g. Palm, 1985, Kasinitz, 1988). This approach is mostly focused and based on the

US experience. Some studies aim to explain urban development in Western European cities from the political economy perspective (e.g. Savitch and Kantor, 2002, Fainstein and Young, 1992). The dominance of the (national) public sector over local business interests in many European countries means a different form of political economy. For instance, within the French context, Le Galès (2002) stresses the importance of elites and regimes within public policy networks rather than business networks. Policy networks may include private interests but are characterised by experts, mediators, different policy sectors, interest groups and political leaders.

In addition to class struggle or economic interests, other authors have put forward macro-level explanations for social differentiation and the urban form. These explanations include level of welfare state provisions, politics, demographic change, economic and labour market restructuring, globalisation and socio-cultural trends (see Van Kempen and Marcuse, 1997, Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998b, Murie et al., 2003, Wilson, 1987, Mingione, 2005). The next paragraph will shortly illustrate this multi-level approach for the situation in post-WWII neighbourhoods in Western European cities. However, it is important to note after this literature review that for this study supra-local level structures, notably state and market, on the one hand and individual choice and behaviour on the other hand are both essential to come to any explanation. Moreover, this study will employ an institutional approach which holds that these two come into being through each other (see below).

1.1.1 Change and challenges in post-WWII neighbourhoods in Western Europe

In the decades after WWII, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, large-scale housing estates have been planned and built in and around Western European Cities. Nowadays, a great deal of these estates is associated with a variety of difficulties and problems. These issues include design and physical obsolescence of housing types. More importantly, changes in demographic structures and immigration patterns have led to increasing concentrations of deprived households as well as the presence of new ethnic groups. As a result, some estates are faced with more instances of social conflict, youth problems, and anti-social behaviour. These issues, however, may also be very much related to the discontent or frustrations among residents with the management of the estate and with the stigmatising reputation of the estate and its inhabitants (see Wacquant, 2007, Wassenberg, 2004).

The space available only permits a brief highlighting of the difficulties and their causes (for a more detailed analyses see Hall et al., 2005a, Musterd et al., 2006, Prak and Priemus, 1984). However, for the purpose of this study, two mechanisms that are related to the economic and labour market restructuring and housing will be highlighted here.

Initially, many of these neighbourhoods tended to function well on the housing market and were not considered problematic or low in status. The standardised and industrial design and construction of modernist medium- and high-rise blocks in green environments fitted modernist and functionalist thinking. More importantly, the design fulfilled a pressing need for housing. However, many estates that were built to house low-income or unemployed households, remain attracting similar households or newcomers. As a result, these areas had a negative reputation and high turnover rates from the start. In other cases, changes outside the estate may have diminished its relative status and attractiveness. It should be noted though that the physical form of high rise housing estates does not automatically preclude processes of gentrification (Van Kempen and Musterd, 1991).

In addition, restructuring of the economy since the 1970s have led to changes in the urban employment structure and regional economy. As a result, the estates' proximity to work or transport may have altered. Moreover, deindustrialisation left some workers in the estates unemployed and unable to adapt to new occupational structures (Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998a).

Another external change that has affected many estates relates to the changes in the size and status of social-rented sector. As governments have been pushing homeownership as the most-favoured tenure, medium and high-income groups have been drawn away from the social housing sector. Furthermore, the privatisation of segments of the social housing sector has decreased the social stock. Consequently, the social housing sector increasingly caters for a more narrowly defined group. The change in housing preferences and choices affects the reputation and social and demographic characteristics of estates whose social housing stock has not been privatised. This process is referred to as residualisation, which has received considerable attention in view of British housing policies, but also in the Dutch and Swedish cases (e.g. Forrest and Murie, 1990, Jones and Murie, 2006, Turner and Whitehead, 2002, Schutjens et al., 2002, Van Kempen and Priemus, 2002, Elander, 1999). Indeed, even though housing systems differ, the general trend in European countries has been a decrease in social-rented housing, both absolutely and proportionally, and a matching increase in individual homeownership. Owner occupied housing accounts for more than fifty percent of tenure in most Western European countries. On the other hand, the share of public and social housing still exceeds one fifth of the housing in the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, and Sweden (Whitehead and Scanlon, 2007).

So in a typical scenario of decline, the social housing sector is becoming more residualised, the design and quality of the built environment unwanted, and economic restructuring changes the structure of employment and labour demand. Consequently, the position of the estate on the regional housing market declines, which further reinforces the concentration and stigmatisation of 'urban outcasts' (see Wacquant, 2008). In Western Europe, the decline in status has also been due to the local and regional supply of newer and more attractive housing, typically single-family housing. As a result, middle-class households move away and are replaced by residents who have less choice on the housing market, such as low-income households and immigrants (Hall et al., 2005b).

1.1.2 Policy response to urban social issues

So, changes in demography, immigration, developments in housing, the legacy of state interventions, and the economy and labour market shape the social situation of urban neighbourhoods. In the last two decades, a type of social policy has matured, which is commonly referred to as urban policy. Urban policies, together with housing policies, typically shape neighbourhood regeneration in Western European cities and as such affect urban life. As mentioned above, the design and philosophies of today's policy response to urban social problems is markedly different from those of the Keynesian welfare state. As such, urban policies and neighbourhood regeneration may constitute a new urban managerialism. Where the Keynesian welfare state failed to sustainably address poverty and social exclusion for an increasingly diversified population, the state now seeks to manage the urban social issues less comprehensively through new forms of governance and approaches (see Cochrane, 2007).

Although every policy response will be shaped by its institutional framework, Murie and Musterd (2004) were able to identify six common elements based on comparative research on deprived neighbourhood in Western European cities. These elements will form the basis to discuss the state's reaction to urban social issues.

New neighbourhood targeted initiatives

Policies tend to target a limited number of neighbourhoods within urban areas. The territorial response to urban social issues involves the integration of different policies and policy instruments in order to maximise effect (see Andersen, 2001, Andersson and Musterd, 2005, Lawless, 2006, Parkinson, 1998). This type of policy strategy is typically referred to as area-based initiative (ABI). The present study will deal with the territorial focus in relation to the objective for social change more extensively.

The focus on neighbourhoods also means more contact between housing managers, law enforcement officials, welfare and community workers and residents. These contacts can culminate in governance structures such as public-private partnerships (PPP's; see below).

New Policy Strategies for Policy Integration

There is a rich body of literature on the integrated approach within urban or neighbourhood governance (e.g. Andersen and Van Kempen, 2001, Jessop, 2002, Purdue, 2001, Healey, 1998, Healey, 2007, Jacquier, 2001, Van Beckhoven et al., 2006, Uitermark and Duyvendak, 2008, Ling, 2002, Le Galès, 2002). While the definition of governance is by no means unitary or unproblematic, all definitions share the notion of self-organising networks within or between organisations to exercise power and to instil or prevent social change (Rhodes, 2000). So, the integration may refer to different parties and actors working together to achieve a common goal. In neighbourhood regeneration, these networks are often referred to public-private or public-public partnerships. Partnerships typically mean that contracts bind the parties. Residential participation in policy may take place on a less formal basis.

In addition to the integration of policy actors, the integrated approach may also refer to an integration of policy domains. As mentioned, this type of integration often takes place within the context of area-based initiatives. So, policy integration typically involves a bombardment of initiatives and programmes within the confines of a geographical unit, whereby the intention is not only to practice governance but also to achieve a level of synthesis between the various programmes' methods and aims for social change. The synthesis of housing and social policies is of special interest to this study (see also Somerville and Spriggs, 2005).

Targeting Social Groups

While urban policies used to have strong economic development agendas or were concerned with deteriorating housing conditions (see Robson, 1987), policies have increasingly shown an agenda of social change. Consequently, policies have increasingly specified social groups, such as the unemployed or the poor, who are subject to economic and labour market policies (see below).

In addition, ethnic groups living in the targeted areas are of special concern. As mentioned, Western European deprived urban areas typically have higher concentrations of ethnic minority, or immigrant, residents. To the public eye, this increases the visibility of the neighbourhoods and to some observers adds to the social malaise and constitutes a form of social exclusion. Consequently, integration programmes typically aim to increase cross-cultural exchange and increase participation of ethnic groups in social events, labour market, and in the democratic process. Although the policy language of integration efforts in 'segregated neighbourhoods' may suggest otherwise, social or cultural

integration, or lack thereof, and spatial segregation of ethnic groups are not necessarily the same (see Andersson, 2006, Musterd, 2003).

Economic and Labour Market Policies

Provided that minimum income salaries are sufficient, work with income is generally seen as the best way out of poverty and social exclusion. Hence, economic and labour market policies are traditionally a cornerstone of remedial action against social economic issues. However, responsibility for these policies has increasingly been transferred from the national state to municipalities. Municipalities are able to translate and tailor large-scale general labour programmes to local contexts, specific social groups and even neighbourhoods. This means that municipalities have to set up their own programmes and institutions, or existing welfare agencies are tasked with new responsibilities. The programmes typically involve (re-)education, language courses, and internship projects. As such, the focus is on the demand side of the labour market. Murie and Musterd (2004) note that the implementation is often handled by offices, which are set up as private firms and have to deliver on specific targets. The business-like approach has led to a tough-love stance towards the unemployed.

Furthermore, there are also supply-side projects which aim to stimulate localised economic development for example in the form of new, or renewed, shopping centres. In Britain, the focus on economic development and social exclusion is typically framed within the aim to increase citywide, or regional, competitiveness.

Community Development

An important element in neighbourhood regeneration policies is the development of stronger resident and community involvement. This is done by strengthening and supporting individual residents as well as resident organisations (Murie and Musterd, 2004). The aim is to reduce social isolation or exclusion by stimulating social contacts and the exchange of social capital. Through local social exchanges, residents may receive more opportunities for employment, schooling, or some form of support or help (Delanty, 2003). As such, it is related to the social mix strategies in neighbourhood regeneration (Cole and Goodchild, 2001), which will be discussed below.

In addition to the social objectives, community development also serves the purpose of public services reform. The move from government to governance requires credible partners for the state to consult, bargain or cooperate with. Strengthening or creating residents, or community, organisations provides a bargaining partner and helps to legitimise policy. Community development and empowerment programmes have been known to involve residents in multi-sector partnership programmes within the framework of area-based initiatives (Goodlad et al., 2005, Alcock, 2004).

Although Murie and Musterd cite examples of community development in continental Europe, most of the literature on community and neighbourhood policy refers to the community politics of the Third Way government in the UK (see Rose, 2000, Amin, 2005, McGhee, 2003, Cowan and Marsh, 2004). These studies point out the implied morality of community policies. Moreover, they criticise the policy's focus on residents rather than more structural factors as the way out of poverty and exclusion. This particular point will recur in this study as well.

Restructuring Housing and Residence

A very important trait of policy responses to urban social issues is the reliance on urban and housing renewal to change the face and, in some cases, the very nature of the neighbourhood. Urban-centred policies after WWII have long focused on 'slum clearances' and later on renewal of deteriorated housing. As mentioned, the focus has shifted to

social issues. While housing renewal is rarely stated as a central aim of policies anymore, housing and public space renewal still play a vital role. This is to increase the liveability of an area by improving and beautifying the design and appearance of the neighbourhood. In addition, housing renewal may also involve housing market restructuring policies which typically change dominant tenure from social rental housing to owner occupied housing.

While housing market restructuring and public space renewal also serve their own purposes, this type of intervention is associated with the aim for social change. In that case, it is a form of social mixing policies (see Kleinhans, 2004, Musterd and Andersson, 2005, Ostendorf et al., 2001, Sarkissian, 1976, Uitermark, 2003). Social mixing in Western Europe typically means changing the social composition of a given area by reducing the share of 'problem categories', i.e. low income households or certain cultural groups, and increasing the share of middle class, preferably white, households. Housing market restructuring and renewal may serve as a strategy to obtain a new social mix within an area. Larger or more luxurious housing, usually owner occupied, and a more attractive public space can attract middle class households to an area. The assumption is that the middle class presence will have positive external effects on the area and its residents, while the negative effect of poverty and/ or ethnic concentrations are reduced. The external effects relate to processes of socialisation, social capital exchange, and role modelling.

1.2 Research approach

This work is interested in explaining the use of neighbourhood regeneration policies and practices which involve housing and the built environment with the specific aim to achieve social change. Before discussing the research questions, the next two paragraphs will elaborate on how this work will regard and explain the social phenomenon of neighbourhood regeneration. First, the critical realist approach will be discussed briefly. This approach forms the basis for how this study will seek to explain the form and outcomes of neighbourhood regeneration and forms the basis for the conceptual model below. Secondly and in relation to realism, a short overview of the institutional approach will be given to elaborate on agency and structure within social mechanism. The institutional approach is how this study views the interaction and mechanisms through which neighbourhood regeneration takes its form and, subsequently, has its effect on the social life in neighbourhoods and cities.

Critical realist approach

Scientific, or critical, realism is a philosophy of being (ontology), which can be applied to social research (see Archer et al., 1998, Sayer, 2000). Realism's most distinctive feature for social research is its analysis of causation. The stratification of social reality means that there is an interrelatedness of people's roles and identities which means that what one person or collectivities can do is dependent on the relation to others. This interrelatedness means that social phenomena and regularities are treated as emergent within social systems. They involve multiple elements and individuals within that system and in doing so may affect the system as a whole. This view is fundamentally different from a naive positivist ontology which tends to reduce social phenomena and regularities to independent individuals and elements in a cause and effect relationship. Also, critical realism offers an alternative view to extreme post-modernist views, which state that because the observer is part of the social world, there are no objective truths and therefore any explanation goes.

The realist view stresses the importance of social context in explaining social phenomena and how this context provides conditions and constraints within the causal

mechanism. In open social systems the same mechanism can have different outcomes according to its context, meaning the geo-historical relationship with other objects which can enable, block, or alter (social) action (Sayer, 2000, p. 10- 28). The realist proposition can be reduced to this simple proposition:

Context + Mechanism = Outcome

So, critical realism employs a generative model of causation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), which means that outcomes of social processes are generated within their context. For instance, an immigrant who recently arrived in a Western country to improve his or her quality of living will find different constraints and opportunities on his path depending on different contextual elements. Integration and employment policies will present opportunities, just like the presence of local support networks. However, institutional racism, stigmatisation of the social group or worsened economic conditions may present constraints and challenges to the individual's quest and development.

To be clear, the generative aspect does not imply determinism in explanations. As the next paragraph will discuss, the social context structures and influence individual behaviour, but does not determine it. The realist view, which appeals to our common sense, will form the basis for explanation in this work.

1.2.1 Social mechanisms: institutional approach

The ontology of social mechanisms to explain social action in the realist tradition is highly compatible with an institutional approach to social (re)production (Downward et al., 2002). Institutions are central concepts to any social enquiry about policy making and action (Rhodes in Lowndes, 2002). Since the 'behavioural revolution' in the 1950s, social and political scientists have been looking to explain why individuals behave in certain manners in certain contexts and environments (Goodin and Klingemann, 1996). However, the formal arrangements and representations that institutionalism was interested in no longer sufficed. Hence, authors from different backgrounds have theorised that behaviour is shaped by systemic power derived from capital/ labour relations (Marxist), or by politics as the interplay of self-interests (rational choice theorists, neo-classical economics).

In the 1980s, a new institutionalism emerged which sought to further 'socialise' the approach and go beyond assertions that institutions are merely aggregations of individual preferences. March and Olsen (1984) have asserted that institutions have a more autonomous role in shaping social and political outcomes. Collective action is embedded in rules and norms which regulate social action. Through the interpretation of actors, these rules and norms form socially constructed and accepted meanings and practices, which become institutions. Actions of individuals and collectivities occur within these institutions.

However, since the so-called institutional turn and the emergence of new institutionalism, the concept of institutions has taken hold in many disciplines. There are different strands, some of which are mutually exclusive, while others may complement each other. The variations are mostly the result of the particular interests of disciplines and previous research habits and traditions, resulting in various categorisations (in e.g. Hall and Taylor, 1996, Lowndes, 2002, Guy Peters, 1996). Most important in these categorisations is the cleavage between rational choice institutional theory, which relates to the economic discipline, and normative institutional theory, which is more sociological.

To begin with the latter, normative institutionalism stresses the effect of institutions on actors' beliefs, identities, norms, and values. Hence, these are the main explanatory variables. Rules and structures embody power relations and values, and as such determine

'appropriate' behaviour and decisions of political actors within given settings (Lowndes, 2002). This strand is also referred to as sociological institutionalism.

Rational choice institutionalism has its roots in studies of the stable majorities in United States congress over time (see Riker, 1980, Hall and Taylor, 1996). In contrast to normative institutionalism, rational choice institutionalists deny that institutions produce behaviour or preferences. These preferences are seen as originating internally and as relatively stable and predictable: favouring utility maximization or self gain. Institutions provide information about the likely behaviour of others, and about the possible incentives and disincentives for every course of action. Based on this information, actors can make strategic (and rational) choices. While normative institutionalists stress the cultural and temporal embeddedness of institutions, rational choice institutionalists regard them as social constructions that serve to solve collective action problems (Weingast, 1996, Lowndes, 2002).

Jessop (2004) points to several methodological advantages of the use of institutions in social inquiry. It allows overcoming several ontological opposites and contradictions. Firstly, structural determination and social agency is overcome by the structuration approach which sees institutions as recursively reproduced sets of rules and resources that enable and constrain social actions (Giddens, 1984). In very simple terms: actors affect structures and institutions, and structures and institutions condition the life and behaviour of actors. Secondly, as mesolevel phenomena, institutions may provide a bridge between holism and individualism, or between macro- and microphenomena. Furthermore, it allows accounting for authoritative pressure and steering from above such as national policies, as well as for constraining and reinforcing elements such as social movements or grass-root protests. Institutions may be the site for codification and mediation of power relations. Thirdly, institutions are not static formations, but are interpreted and renegotiated. As such, they are not fully determinative of social action, yet they do not allow any actions that are purely wilful and in sociologically and historically amorphous contingency either.

In addition to these and other methodological advantages, institutions may also be regarded as ontological. This means that institutions and institutionalisations are seen as 'the primary axis of collective life and social order' and they matter because they constrain, steer, and shape social action and relations (Jessop, 2004).

Jessop (2004), within the frame of his strategic relational approach (SRA), particularly stresses the importance of the relation between structures and actors.⁴ This relation is two-way. Firstly, institutions do not exist outside the specific action context, but their relevance lies in their structural tendency to reinforce, or to discourage, selectively specific forms of action, tactics, or strategies. In short, structures select behaviours. In this view we recognise the realist stance (compare Archer, 1995, ch. 5). Actors take strategic action, albeit not always totally rational or informed, based on the institutions in place. However, while institutions may steer and select, they do not determine action. There is always some freedom for actors to choose a course of action. Secondly, actors can also reflexively reconstitute institutions and their resulting matrix. The capacity to do so is dependent on the changing selectivities of institutions and on the actors' changing opportunities to engage in strategic action.

In sum, Jessop's take on institutions heuristically employs elements of rational choice institutionalism (e.g. the emphasis on strategic thinking of actors) and of normative institutionalism (e.g. institutionalisation involving not only the agents and conditions for action but also the very constitution of agents, identities, interests, and strategies). By stressing interplay, he desists from prioritizing either structure or behaviour, which is a source of (perhaps unnecessary) debate among academics (Goodin and Klingemann, 1996).

4 by employing Bourdieu's methodological relationalism

1.2.2 Research aims and question

Both the realist approach and some of the institutionalists (notably Giddens and Jessop), stress the importance of the interplay between the individual, or organisation, and structural forces within a social context in explaining social outcomes. This notion is also found in the realist approach to policy analysis by Pawson and Tilly (1997). They argue that policy should be seen as introducing a new social mechanism within the social context to produce a desired outcome. Whether this outcome is actually reached depends on the strength of the 'theory of change' of the policy. Furthermore, they emphasise social reality as complex and stress that any analysis should consider the social context in how policy has achieved social change.

As mentioned, this study is interested explaining neighbourhood regeneration with the goal of social change in terms of outcome. The main research question is twofold: *What is the capacity of neighbourhood regeneration policies for social and societal change, and how does the housing and policy context affect this capacity in Western European cities?*

The social practice of neighbourhood regeneration with the explicit aim for social change is the central theme of this study. Policy making is also a social mechanism in itself whose outcomes are contingent on its (housing) context. So, the objective is to explain and understand the practice of neighbourhood regeneration itself within a multi-layered context.

First, this study will focus on the aims and capacity of neighbourhood regeneration for social change. It is important to note that the outcomes are not defined in terms of how the governance, negotiation or implementation process went, but in terms of social change both on a local level and on a societal level.

Second, this study focuses on the context of neighbourhood regeneration policy and practice. As mentioned, context refers to the conditions, constraints and incentives which other social mechanisms impinge upon the process of neighbourhood regeneration policies and practices. In this study the focus of explanation will lie in the housing context. This means a focus on urban and housing policies on the national level and on the housing market characteristics on the urban and local level, including the mediating policymakers, professionals and managers.

1.2.3 Research strategy

As this study is interested in social contexts in explaining neighbourhood regeneration, the assumption is that social practice is embedded by social relations. The importance of social relations implies that there is a spatial dimension to institutions (Granovetter, 1985). Consequently, institutions are, among other things, geographical accomplishments (Philo and Parr, 2000).

So, this study is based on comparative case studies, which allows us to focus on the spatial differences and similarities in the social practice of regeneration and answer our main research question (Gerring, 2007). In addition, the case study research strategy fits the explorative and explanative propositions of this study's questions and aims and is best suited to research the main unit of analysis, neighbourhoods and their context. The following paragraphs on selection and the reading guide will reveal how the case study data will link to the propositions (see Yin, 2003).

This study deals with four contexts of neighbourhood regeneration with the exception of chapter 3, which adds 25 cases to the comparison. The cases are the regeneration within urban neighbourhoods in:

- 1) Sweden
- 2) the Netherlands
- 3) UK
- 4) Catalonia, Spain

The selection of cases was done according to two criteria (cf. Gerring, 2007). First, the cases share a common characteristic in that regeneration involves neighbourhoods from the post war period (see above) that, at least until recently, belong to the most deprived and most stigmatised neighbourhoods in the urban region. The assumption is that regeneration efforts will be most pronounced in their social change objectives in these types of neighbourhoods.

However, the selection was also diverse in housing context. An important starting point for this study is the state. To select the full variation of Western European state and policy frameworks, the welfare state typology of Esping-Andersen provides the categorical values for each case. Based on an analysis of levels of commodification and social welfare state provisions⁵, Esping-Andersen produced his influential welfare state typology, which, after some revision, holds that for advanced capitalist countries there are four types of welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990, Esping-Andersen, 1999):

- 1) Social democratic welfare state
- 2) Conservative, or corporatist, welfare state
- 3) Liberal welfare state
- 4) Family-based (liberal) welfare state

The four types mirror our case selection.⁶ Types 1 and 2 typically have more universal provisions. The social democratic approach to social policy is based on diminishing social division in society, while the conservative approach is based on patronage and maintaining society's hierarchal structure. Type 3 and 4 typically have more privatised social services and have higher levels of commodification. The approach to social policy relies on the benefits of free market and thus state intervention should limit itself to facilitate the market process. In type 4 familial relations play an important role in the facilitation of care and support.

As the author himself acknowledges, the typology's strength is also its main weakness: the graceful simplicity. Nevertheless, the assumption for this study is that these differences will have some effect on national housing and urban policies and ultimately on regeneration. Chapter 5 will explore further how housing policies and welfare states are related and in what way this affects housing (renewal) policies.

In addition to the policy and state framework, the four cases are also embedded within four urban regions which display diverse housing market characteristics such as housing market performance, management, regulation and segmentation. These variations are partly attributable to the national policy framework, but are also the

5 Excluding housing

6 Esping-Andersen actually categorised the Netherlands as social democratic. However, Esping-Andersen's scores for de-commodification in the Dutch case were also high for conservative and even the liberal type, confirming the hybridity. The Dutch case is classified as conservative/ corporatist, based on the development of the Dutch welfare state, which is marked by Christian conservative paternalism, rather than Social Democracy as in Sweden (De Swaan, 1988).

outcome of local and regional housing and political dynamics. For instance, housing market demand is considerably lower in the Birmingham region than it is in the Stockholm, Amsterdam and Barcelona regions, which may have consequences for regeneration efforts.

To explain neighbourhood regeneration this study will focus both on the national policy framework and on the mediation at the local urban level. While chapters 3 and 6 will focus on regeneration practices on the local level, chapters 2, 4, and 5 will deal exclusively with policies on national level. The inclusion of the national framework is essential to successfully compare and understand the outcomes of policies and politics at the lower urban levels (Denters and Mossberger, 2006).

1.2.4 Methods and analyses

Within the case study research strategy, this study will employ several research methods of data collection and analysis. First, this study was able to benefit from and build on the findings of the RESTATE research project, which ended in 2005. This research provided a foundation of data and knowledge which provided the starting point for further data gathering and analyses.

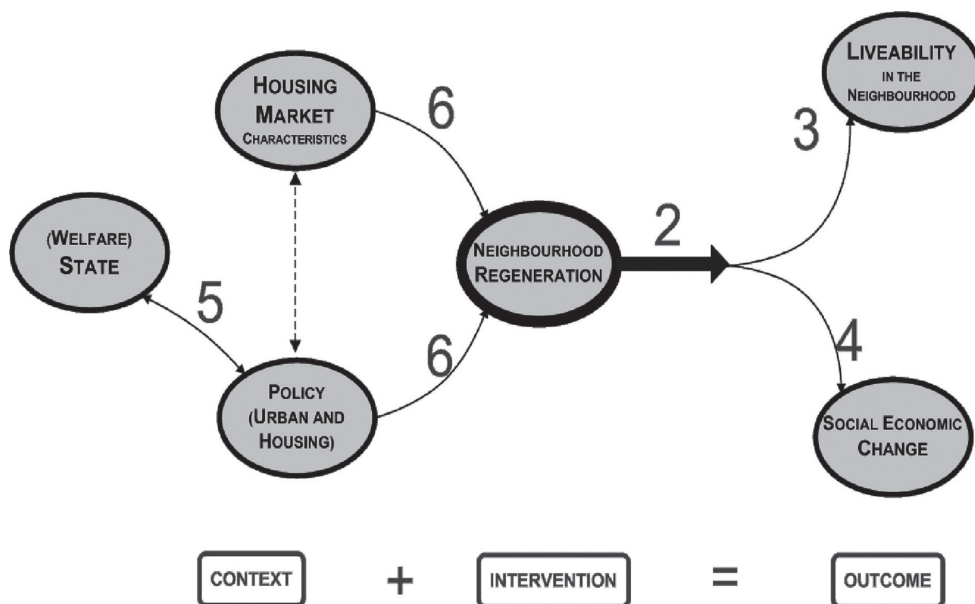
For the first part of this study, a large-N quantitative analysis of neighbourhoods in the Netherlands and a Comparative Qualitative Analysis (fs-CQA) will be used to gauge the potential for social change of neighbourhood regeneration efforts. Chapters 3 and 4 will include a more detailed discussion of these methods.

In both the first and second part, to understand how regeneration policies aim for social change and how the housing context impinges on neighbourhood regeneration, the study relies on policy analyses. This includes the policy documents and secondary literature, as well as interviews with stakeholders, managers and policy makers. These interviewees were mostly active within regional, municipal, and local organisations and serve as the intermediates between national levels of policy and politics and the local regeneration efforts or as direct participants in the efforts. The purpose of the interviews was to gain understanding in the common rationales and objectives of the practitioners with regard to problem definitions, objectives of regeneration, the extent and mechanisms of social change on a neighbourhood and urban level, and the role of overarching policies. In addition to what the interviewees were able to articulate, the interviews also revealed common understandings and presuppositions among practitioners with regard to the neighbourhoods and their regeneration.

The interviews were conducted in English in Sweden and UK and in Dutch in the Netherlands. Shortly after the interviews were concluded an extensive summary was sent to the interviewees to ascertain that the answers and narratives were understood correctly. In most of the interviews in Spain, a research assistant translated answers from Catalan or Castilian to Dutch.

Data from the interviews are explicitly discussed in chapter 6. However, it should be noted that these were used as grounds for understanding in other chapters as well.

Figure 1. Reading guide and conceptual model. Numbers refer to chapters.



1.2.5 Reading guide and sub-questions

The remainder of this work consists of five chapters with a sub-question each and a concluding section that will discuss the main question above. Figure 1 shows how the chapters are related to the overall research design.

Chapter 2 will focus on the outcomes of neighbourhood regeneration efforts by examining four national urban policies that employ area-based initiatives (ABIs) to address urban social problems. The territorial focus of policy implies that all problems are also territorially bound and related. An important point in this chapter is the differentiation between people-based social economic deprivation and place-based liveability and housing issues. It is argued that within the Western European context policies should indeed make this distinction in order to effectively produce the desired social outcomes, i.e. create liveable neighbourhoods and tackle social economic deprivation in European societies. The main question for this chapter is: *Which social problems are urban territorial policies meant to tackle within the Western European context, and how far is the territorial focus applicable and justified in tackling these problems?*

Chapter 3 and 4 will expand on the differentiation between types of neighbourhood problems made in chapter 2. Chapter 3 examines the effect of neighbourhood regeneration alongside several other factors on the liveability in 29 post-war neighbourhoods in major European cities. Liveability in this case means the average satisfaction and confidence residents feel about the state and future of their neighbourhood. In cases where there is a positive effect, we can state that regeneration is able to accomplish some social change at a local level. The main question for this chapter

is: *What factors affect neighbourhood satisfaction and dissatisfaction in large-scale post-war housing estates, and second, how do these factors relate to neighbourhood regeneration policies?*

Chapter 4 will focus mainly on the possible outcomes of one urban policy programme in the Netherlands, which has a social aim and a territorial focus. Several assumptions underpin the policy ambitions, such as a strong interrelationship between social economic deprivation and liveability; a clear social and spatial divide in Dutch society; and extra negative effects of problem accumulation. In this chapter, these assumptions are tested. The main question is: *How well is the actual neighbourhood targeted policy in the Netherlands connected to its stated intentions, particularly those related to social issues?*

As we can see in figure 1.1, chapter 5 is further removed from our central theme neighbourhood regeneration, but as will be highlighted in the concluding chapter, quite relevant for the context of neighbourhood regeneration practices. This chapter seeks to highlight the relationship between welfare state politics and housing policy. In doing so, this chapter reveals some institutional tendencies of the national housing context of each of our four cases. The assumption is that the tendencies and changes within the housing policies will reflect upon neighbourhood regeneration practices. The main question for this chapter is: *To what degree is housing policy being used as a tool for welfare state reform, and how do these policies relate to the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks and policy regimes?*

Chapters 6 will focus on the interplay between housing context and neighbourhood regeneration practices on a local level. More specifically, this chapter focuses on the regeneration practices which seek to achieve social change by changing the area's population through housing. These so-called social transformation strategies are particularly desired by local managers, administrators and policymakers who wish to improve an area's manageability, in physical and social terms. An institutional approach, as discussed above, will be used to illuminate how local managers are confronted with their housing context and how this affects social transformation strategies. The housing context includes the housing and urban policy framework, discussed in preceding chapters, and local housing market characteristics. As mentioned, this chapter heavily relies on interview data. The main question will be: *How do the housing context institutions constrain and enable social transformation strategies within the regeneration of post-war housing estates in Western European cities?*

Lastly, chapter 7 will summarise the arguments in the preceding chapters and will reflect on the research findings and on challenges for further research.

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