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

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7. Conclusions

Generalisations are like brooms, not to be left in the corner, but sweeping.
 – John Lukacs

This study was concerned with neighbourhood regeneration with the aim for social change, and sought to specifically answer two interrelated questions:

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?

This chapter will answer the two questions conjointly and reflect on some of the overall findings.

7.1 The capacity of regeneration for social change

The state employs neighbourhood regeneration to achieve social change at a local and societal level simultaneously. Typically, regeneration involves renewal of housing and public space as well as an array of social economic programmes. The aims of these interventions are related to improving place as well as improving the cultural and social economic predicament of individuals. The four cases in this study display differences in emphases through their stated objectives and the selection of target areas. Nevertheless, the policies were surprisingly similar in their rationales for a territorial focus and in their wish to tackle social problems at different scales. In general, there are three stated ambitions for social change; liveability issues, social economic deprivation and integration.

First, the policies aimed at social change at a local level in relation to the satisfaction of the residents with their dwelling and their neighbourhood. For policy this comes down to the liveability of an area. Liveability is an important issue in neighbourhood regeneration. The quality and safety of public space and housing have been long been important pillars of urban policies and neighbourhood regeneration. Indeed, place-based issues which are specific to some areas or perhaps even to a certain type of neighbourhood, may require a targeted approach. For instance, deterioration of a type of housing from a certain age, environmental pollution, or traffic nuisances may need area-based interventions. Moreover, this study confirms that intensive neighbourhood regeneration efforts, and good housing, may indeed produce a higher overall level of satisfaction and a positive outlook among residents concerning their neighbourhood. However, a focus on place rather than individual residents means that in some cases the regeneration forces residents to move (see below). So, the objective of liveability does not necessarily imply a better residential environment for all long-term residents.

Second, neighbourhood regeneration also strives for social change beyond the local level. The issue of social economic deprivation, or social exclusion and poverty, is an important theme in neighbourhood regeneration, particularly in the problem statements and objectives of regeneration. A lot of political, symbolic and financial capital is spent on these issues. Indeed, targeted neighbourhoods typically do have concentrations of poor, unemployed, or lower educated households. While it is understood that local residents will reap the benefits, the rationale for the state to be so selective in its social assistance is related to the aim of mending social divisions in society. These divisions are assumed to

be spatially expressed in a set of neighbourhoods. Also, the societal division is supposed to be reproduced in these neighbourhoods through negative neighbourhood effects. However, these assumptions are highly questionable.

In general, policies fail to specify the mechanisms, or neighbourhood effects, which they attempt to alter. Moreover, the nature and extent of neighbourhood effects in Western European context are subject to an ongoing academic debate. This means that the existence of negative effects of deprived neighbourhoods on life chances is not a foregone conclusion. So, there is insufficient evidence for the reproduction of social economic deprivation through place on a large enough scale to warrant a territorial focus.

In addition, there are no 'critical representations' of socially and economically deprived households in the selected areas in the Netherlands or in Sweden. Less than ten per cent of those in need of social assistance live in neighbourhoods that were targeted by nationally setup area-based interventions (see Andersson and Musterd, 2005, Van Gent, 2009). It is likely that this is also the case for the UK or Spain. As a consequence, the dreaded societal divide cannot be corrected in a limited set of neighbourhoods because the large majority of those who need assistance do not live in these neighbourhoods.

So, there are no reasons to assume that place-based phenomena and people-based social economic deprivation are related on a neighbourhood level. This is particularly striking as actual interventions are also designed and meant to instill some sort of social transformation, which involves a change in population composition through housing-related mechanisms. However, when 'social mixing' is not effective, the aim of tackling social economic deprivation with a territorial focus will not go further than helping a few residents that participate in various employment and education programmes. While these programmes may yield some individual results, they tend not to make convincing social economic change, not even at a neighbourhood levels (see Lawless, 2006). More important, it is hard to justify a policy strategy which is highly selective in nature, but lacks any evidence that it will yield additional results in tackling urban social problems.

Third, there is the societal issue of cultural integration of immigrant groups, which constitutes the 'hidden problem' of neighbourhood regeneration. Except in Sweden policy where integration of first generation immigrants is more explicit, policy documents treat the presence of immigrants cautiously or circumspectly. For instance, ethnic presence is never used as a selection indicator. This taboo is probably out of concern for being accused of institutional racism. Nevertheless, interviews with policy makers and the political discourse reveal the importance of an immigrant or ethnic presence in neighbourhood regeneration interventions. Especially concentrations of lower class residents from immigrant backgrounds are thought to be problematic.

While this study didn't focus on cultural integration specifically, integration is treated by policymakers as a people-based change. So, like tackling social economic deprivation, it is highly unlikely that interventions in a few areas with concentrations of immigrants will trigger some integration or assimilation of an entire immigrant group into native culture. Even if all residents within an area are reached, the focus on a few areas is too limited.

7.2 The effect of housing policy frameworks and housing market on regeneration

The second part of the main research question dealt with how the housing context, i.e. housing policy framework and housing market characteristics, affect neighbourhood regeneration. Although all chapters make references to this relationship, chapters 5 and 6 dealt specifically with this part of the research question. Chapter 5 attempted to paint a picture of some of the political dynamics within Western European welfare states and the connection to housing. Chapter 6, however, was more specific with regard to neighbourhood regeneration and the local managers' quest for local social transformation. Based on the chapters, several explanations from a state perspective for the present form and meaning of neighbourhood regeneration can be identified. These will be discussed from macro-level downward.

Welfare state change
The emphasis on social deprivation within neighbourhood regeneration policies and interventions should be seen against the backdrop of the constant renegotiation, retrenchment and revision of welfare state arrangements, or social contract. Particularly important in this case are the notions and discourses that outline the state's responsibilities and tasks with regard to social policies, personal responsibilities, ownership and economic enterprise (Schmidt, 2002, Cochrane, 2007). We can outline three trends in welfare state change in the last three decades which are related to neighbourhood regeneration policies with an emphasis on social ambitions. These are: a shift in what is deemed the social responsibility of the state (1), the selective and temporal aspect of regeneration matches the retrenchment agenda away from universal provisions (2), and shifts in economic and employment policies from national to urban, from demand-side to supply-side (3).

First, since the 1970s there has been a slow shift away from universal interventions with the intention to secure some sort of social equality. While the state is still held responsible for social malaise and social policy, its task has shifted from ensuring a degree of social equality towards guarantying equal opportunities, i.e. a level playing field, within competitive urban-based economies. In this respect, neighbourhood regeneration's emphasis on place as something which may hinder individuals' life chances is in line with this emphasis on equal opportunities.

Second, the retrenchment of welfare state arrangements means small steps by tinkering with rules of eligibility and duration of support (Pierson, 1998). The selective territorial focus and programme-like character of neighbourhood regeneration and urban policies are also in line with this tendency to make social support more conditional and short-term.

Third, urban policies also fit the shift away from post-war Keynesian economic policies. These policies were focused on ensuring full employment and a source of family income. To achieve this, policy was characterized by demand-side action through government spending. However, as this became unsustainable and a new liberal doctrine took over, economic policies became focused on controlling inflation while adopting a stronger laissez-faire stance. This stance meant less direct government intervention in market demand for labour (Cerny, 2000). Instead, labour policies that focus on supply-side (i.e. labour side) action, i.e. retraining, internships, from welfare-to-work type programmes, became more important. As a result, in addition to an urban competitiveness agenda (see Cochrane, 2007), it is no surprise that regeneration efforts include measures that seek to bolster employment by stressing education, work experience or even by increasing individuals' assertiveness and aspirations (see Raco, 2008). These measures are often framed as the empowerment of communities and residents (see below).

Welfare state, housing policy and regeneration
While neighbourhood regeneration with social aims fits new attitudes towards the meaning of social policy within the welfare state, it does not quite explain the use of housing as a mechanism to achieve social change. This study has outlined how welfare state politics tie into the restructuring agendas within housing policies. The UK is a clear example of where the promotion of owner occupancy is framed within terms of ownership, personal responsibility and securing additional income to augment care and pensions. As a result, neighbourhood regeneration in the UK is concerned with owner occupancy for low income households and with housing market performance rates (cf. Malpass, 2008, Cameron, 2006). Furthermore, since the Right-to-Buy legislation British government has actively sought to transfer or privatise social council housing. Consequently, regeneration subsidies from the central state may include conditions on tenure privatisation or transfer, as was the case in Central Estates (see chapter 6).

In Sweden, retrenchment of the state did mean privatisations of municipal housing associations and the sale of rental dwellings (Turner and Whitehead, 2002). However, while privatizations have occurred, these were without an explicit ownership discourse like the UK (Kemeny, 2005). Consequently, regeneration in Sweden typically does not include large-scale tenure restructuring or the wish to promote owner occupancy among low income households. To be clear, regeneration in Sweden does involve constructing middle class dwellings to achieve some social change, but it does not typically involve the demolition of public dwellings to make room for owner occupied housing. In other words, transformation strategies are less invasive and destructive for existing social networks.

Regeneration in the Netherlands, however, does often involve the restructuring of tenure. Tenure restructuring policies are less related to welfare state services, but do include notions of ownership and personal responsibilities. Furthermore the 2001 housing memorandum directly connects owner occupancy to neighbourhood regeneration (VROM, 2001). Middle class occupants are expected to act more responsibly and set a good example for (lower class) tenants. In addition, regeneration is also depicted as a way to bolster lagging housing values in certain areas of the city region, thereby ensuring sufficient growth of housing equity. So, while social housing had been the norm in Dutch housing policies in the 1980s, the promotion of owner occupancy became more important since the 1990s. However, the social housing legacy means that the large social rental stock and their caretakers, housing associations, provide the state with opportunities for extracting social housing wealth. This is done directly through taxation, but also by offloading some of the cost and risk of regeneration to the associations.

The politics between welfare state and housing are quite interesting in Spain because of its specific welfare state- housing nexus. Owner occupancy and private property have long been cornerstones of the family-based welfare state in Spain. As a result, owner occupancy is high and neighbourhood regeneration interventions have to work with and around the fragmented ownership of housing and land (see below). However, the issue of affordability of middle class housing in the Barcelona region has forced the Catalan government, which has considerable autonomy in housing policy, to action. New housing policies specifically focus on creating an affordable rental housing stock for weak groups, but also for young families. This can already be seen in current regeneration projects in Barcelona, where new housing will be sold or rented under a social regime to young families or social economic deprived households. More importantly, the new emphasis contrasts with the tendencies towards owner occupancy in the Netherlands, UK, and, to a lesser degree, Sweden. It remains to be seen whether this emphasis will change the housing system or is merely an attempt to hold up the welfare state- housing relationship.

The main point here is that the agenda of welfare state reform forces politicians to seek opportunities within, among other policy realms, the housing system. Because

the reform agendas differ and because national housing systems have their own institutional legacy, housing policies and housing market characteristics vary, and so does neighbourhood regeneration.

The welfare state typology by Esping-Anderssen (1990, 1999), which served as a means for case study selection (see chapter 1), appeared to have limited explanatory value in the fields of housing policy and neighbourhood regeneration. Its significance today lies mostly in explaining the degree of ownership ideology in Sweden (low) and in UK and Spain (high). Like its classification in Esping-Anderssen's work, Dutch policy is more ambivalent in its ownership ideology.

Political considerations and moral panic
Although the preceding paragraph already highlighted the political component, this chapter should also mention the political support for neighbourhood regeneration for the sake of intervention. This study termed this as the Something Is Being Done syndrome. Urban social malaise poses a complex and challenging issue for policymakers and politicians. To provide some sort of policy response, the integrated and localised approach of neighbourhood regeneration is an attractive option. It shows the state and its elected officials directly intervening where the malaise seems worse.

Furthermore, media and public outcry over incidents can put further pressure to act and affect policy deliberation (see Hajer, 2005). An extreme example of this phenomenon was the aftermath of a series of incidents in a postwar neighbourhood in Gouda, the Netherlands, in the summer of 2008 (see Zonderop, 2008). After several incidents of threatening and abusive behaviour by youth towards bus drivers and a robbery, the bus company cancelled its route through the neighbourhood (de Volkskrant, 2008). This was picked up by the journalists and commentators and quickly evolved into a media hype. The supposedly Moroccan identity of the perpetrators as well as the concentration of Moroccan residents in the neighbourhood were particularly important in the moral outrage. The defensive behaviour of (Moroccan) residents towards the media crews looking for quotes fueled the familiar journalistic discourse of 'ethnic ghetto's' (see Wacquant, 2008: p. 137- 145). The moral panic culminated in an emergency meeting of the Dutch parliament whereby members of parliament were questioning the responsible Minister about the race riots in Gouda. Although no race riots had taken place, the identity and place of residence of the assailant unknown and youth programmes were already active, extra funds and attention were put in the youth work, the installation of CCTV systems, and initial planning for regeneration of the neighbourhood.

The extreme Gouda example shows the power and importance of moral panic in the deliberations and decision to tackle problems on site. The four estates discussed in chapter 5 were also subject of moral panic and branded 'ghetto's' leading up to the call for regeneration and social transformation. While it may induce a sense of urgency and bring some vigour to neighbourhood regeneration, the anxiety over moral decay and social chaos also narrows the focus down to the neighbourhood and obstruct the view on more structural trends in society. Consequently, policy deliberations are structured towards a place-based approach to urban social problems.

Local Managers
Lastly, the role of local managers and their wish for a stable, 'normal', and, above all, manageable area was highlighted as well. To the surprise of the researcher when conducting the interviews, the wish for stability and transformation is almost universal among Western European managers, administrators, and policymakers. As such, the social aims of neighbourhood regeneration, especially when it involves social transformation of areas, is supported and called for by local managers. Their support for

regeneration may even have some impact on the design of national housing and urban policies (see Uitermark, 2003). Nevertheless, local managers have to deal and work with the opportunities and constraints of the housing context. As mentioned, this context includes the policy framework, which is shaped by multiple layers of politics discussed in the preceding subheadings. In addition, the housing context refers to the local housing market characteristics, which provides its own opportunities and constraints. Nevertheless, the call for social transformation from those in the lower echelons of state and semi-state agencies undoubtedly facilitates the aim for social change within neighbourhood regeneration.

7.3 In sum

This study links the housing context to neighbourhood regeneration interventions and how this affects social outcomes. The outcomes appear to be limited when confronted with the promises made by politicians and policy makers (chapter 2). While liveability and neighbourhood satisfaction may be increased when dealing with a set of areas with specific problems (chapter 3), the social economic agenda is hampered by the selective territorial focus and by the social transformation agenda (chapter 4). The reason for the current form of regeneration, i.e. with social ambitions and social transformation agenda, can be found in its context of multiple layers of government which involve the changing European welfare state, the politics of welfare state and housing (chapter 5), urban policies and moral panic (chapter 2), and local managers trying to effectively manage 'their' deprived areas and achieve some sort of social transformation (chapter 6). There appears to be a great need for distinguishing between strategic policy intervention at the urban, regional and national levels and the ad-hoc needs of local actors involved.

7.4 Reflection

The remainder of this chapter will reflect on the results of this study. In other words, why should we care about current purpose, form and shape of neighbourhood regeneration in Western Europe? Isn't this a case of the proverbial no harm no foul?

7.4.1 Neighbourhood regeneration's misguided, or misguiding, social aim?

Among those involved in regeneration, many cite the unrealistic modernistic expectations about human behaviour and social engineering ideals of 1960-70s town planning as a significant cause for social problems. There is then perhaps some historical irony in their 'solution'. In the end, transformation strategies and the notion of social mix in regeneration also amount to a form of social engineering, or social tinkering at least.

The original plans were inspired by visions of a 'modern man', content to leave his family in his healthy and spacious dwelling. While this monochromic breadwinner commuted to the city centre, his family stayed behind in a well-serviced and green residential zone. This utopia has been replaced by the community ideal, where social heterogeneity in household composition, ethnicity, culture, income, age and gender is recognised but do not pose a challenge or threat for social contact, exchange of social capital, volunteering, and altruism. The new utopia expects middle class households to leave their brand new apartments and terraced houses to engage and help lower class households to become educated, employed, empowered and integrated. While there are examples of social capital exchange, these ideas constitute a lot of wishful thinking. Research indicates that there are limits to the amount of social contact and exchange between groups that share large differences in terms of income, interests or culture (Galster et al., 2008, Cole and Goodchild, 2001, Blokland, 2002). Also, chapter 3 showed a positive effect of perceived social mix on the level of neighbourhood dissatisfaction. What's more, the professed social benefits of mixing to social economic deprivation in the city are insufficiently supported by research evidence (see Galster, 2007). In addition, radical transformation may even have negative effects of poor individuals when their local support networks are ripped apart (Pinkster, 2009). In some cases the ensuing social disorganisation and instability after restructuring may even result in higher crime levels rather than lower (Van Wilsem et al., 2003), so an area may (temporarily) become less manageable.

So, the political and financial costs may not warrant it when social economic deprivation is the objective.[23] Nevertheless, these social engineering ideals are still professed and reproduced in the correction of post-WWII housing estates and other types of neighbourhoods for reasons explained above. Apart from the waste of resources and the negative aspects of displacement effects, the hollow social ambitions in neighbourhood regeneration may even be harmful.

An important risk of neighbourhood regeneration with social ambitions is the pathologisation of poverty. The social policy focus on the poor themselves and on their living environment implies that these individuals and their neighbourhoods are seen as the cause for their exclusion or destitution. As a result, regeneration can increase the stigma of poverty and exclusion rather than lift it. More importantly, this policy focus ignores

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23   Some policy makers and managers realise this deficiency. In the most extreme case of social transformation in chapter 6, the regeneration of the Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam, several interviewees noted that poverty and exclusion continue to be problems which have to be dealt with more extensively in order to truly transform it into a 'normal urban neighbourhood' without displacements.

more structural causes in society. When regeneration policies do not yield the desired results, it may even amount to blaming the victim, i.e. the poor and excluded, for their predicament. Social justice may be better safeguarded through domain-related actions and structural measures in the fields of education and labour markets. These efforts may take some toll on economic enterprise, but do guarantee a living wage (cf. Wacquant, 2008).

7.4.2 Housing and sustainability

The discussion about neighbourhood regeneration as a form of social policy above implies a broad, national level, view. Indeed, this study dealt with national policies with aims that affect social conditions on a local scale (housing and liveability issues) and beyond the local scale (exclusion and deprivation). This work has been most critical of the broader social ambitions of neighbourhood regeneration. However, regeneration, and particularly the social transformation strategies (see chapter 6), also raise some issues on an urban-regional scale.

As we have seen, transformation strategies can fit multiple purposes; the promotion of homeownership, privatisation of social housing, modernisation and renewal of housing with low qualitative demand, and increasing the attractiveness and upkeep of public space. Nevertheless, the problems that cause alarm with managers, policy-makers, residents, and the public are more related to social economic deprivation than housing deterioration issues [24].

However, to accomplish a reduction of deprivation in the city, the transformation of neighbourhoods with visions of social mix may not be a sustainable strategy in the end. As transformation strategies rely on upgrading, rising house prices or decreased availability of low-income housing, this may push low-income households towards other neighbourhoods in the region. This phenomenon is referred to as displacement, spill-over or knock-on effects (see Musterd and Ostendorf, 2005, Slob et al., 2008). When a significant amount of residents move towards a limited amount of areas, new neighbourhoods may need to be transformed or 'remixed'. In the high-demand region of Barcelona, displacement will further add to the pressing problems of housing affordability, especially for low-income households.

Also, the tenure restructuring strategy may prove to be unsustainable. When the social rental sector is diminished and residualised through tenure restructuring projects and privatisations while ownership is promoted among low income households, urban poverty and social issues will not remain constricted to tenants in the (social) rental sector, but will increasingly manifest itself across other tenure forms as well. To put it simply, poverty is not bound by tenure. When this is the case, owner occupancy may bring new problems. This is evident in the massive privatisations of the public rental stock in Middle and Eastern Europe in the 1990s. After privatisation, many residents found themselves owning a dwelling which they could not afford to maintain (Murie et al., 2005).

When new interventions in the area are necessary in the future, the advantages of consolidated ownership through (semi-)public housing associations will be lost. Compared to regeneration in areas where ownership is consolidated and residents rent, regeneration and social change in areas with high shares of owner occupancy is harder to achieve with higher costs, as the Barcelona case in chapter 6 showed. Furthermore, when residents are dependent on a tight ownership housing market, their means from their previous dwelling in a low demand neighbourhood may be insufficient to purchase a new dwelling within the region.

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24   The Catalan case is a notable exception. Concern over housing deterioration did shape
        regeneration in Barcelona's postwar neighbourhoods.

Conversely, transformation in Amsterdam and Birmingham benefited from the consolidated ownership of housing and land, and from the presence of the rental stock which could (temporarily) house tenants elsewhere. These conditions may no longer be present after restructuring when the share of the rental housing in neighbourhood is lowered and the city's social housing stock marginalised.

In sum, the social transformation strategy may not prove to be sustainable. When low income housing diminished through tenure restructuring or processes of gentrification, the risk of affordability issues and displacement increases. In addition, from a policy standpoint, it will be harder and more costly to regenerate neighbourhoods when ownership is fragmented. Moreover, a regional housing stock should have a sustainable balance of different tenure types. An owner occupied dominated housing market is extremely vulnerable to displacement effects, and may endanger the ability of future generations to effectively regulate the housing market and renew dilapidated areas. Any regeneration strategy should take this point into consideration. In this respect, the Swedish case which showed a 'tenure neutral' regeneration strategy, is most sustainable from a housing point of view.

7.4.3 The ethical questions of regeneration

The preceding paragraphs were quite critical of neighbourhood regeneration, in particular of the social transformation strategy. The basic ethical question was: Does helping a few individuals warrant the neglect of many more? For the case of neighbourhood regeneration, we could find no justification to do so. This study showed that in its current form, the social and financial cost of regeneration will not yield the benefits of stated ambitions. Moreover, the current social agenda can even be stigmatising and distracting from addressing the real causes of social malaise.

However, this does not mean there should be no state intervention at all. While the social agenda should be toned down considerably, neighbourhood regeneration does have a potential for changing the city for the better. Regeneration can improve and restore dilapidated places. Also, a well balanced housing stock makes a housing market more flexible when market conditions change. Neighbourhood regeneration may be a means to this end.

However, even without a distinct social economic deprivation ambition, regeneration efforts may still have to include renewal and moving residents for instance in case of physical deterioration. So, there will always be a social cost to neighbourhood regeneration. This cost will be related to either breaking up social networks or to some form of displacement. This displacement may be due to renewal or may be the result of gentrification processes (see Lees et al., 2008).

In sum, neighbourhood regeneration should not only be treated as a political and organisational question, but also as an ethical question; do the benefits of transformation strategies outweigh the negative effects? Consequently, the challenge for every regeneration effort will always be to find a balance between the benefits of improving housing and public space and the social cost which regeneration may entail. The next paragraph will give some hint of who we should look to.

7.4.4 The guardians of regeneration

While there is reason to be skeptical about the social transformation and social agenda, neighbourhood regeneration also offers opportunities for city life. Together with more economy-oriented redevelopments, neighbourhood regeneration constitutes the never-ending reinvention and remaking of the city. As was highlighted in the literature review in chapter 1, a city's housing, physical and social spaces are essentially formed by interests and politics (see Robson, 1975), working through (housing) institutions and the actors confronted by these institutions. This study particularly focused on the state, which, although not unitary, arguably has the biggest impact on the aims and strategies of regeneration. Nevertheless, residents may play an important role in safeguarding the quality of the regeneration. The residents are likely to be most concerned with the fate of their neighbourhood along with self interest. A concern for the neighbourhood will likely be higher when a place has a social meaning for ethnic groups, such as the Surinamese community in the Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam or Pakistani in Sant Roc, Barcelona (see chapter 6). Some form of residential input may guide the improvement of place and housing. Moreover, it will most likely lead to a more responsible and sustainable form of social transformation. However, this will probably not go without conflict, as the interest of policy makers may collide with residential interests. Consequently, policy makers and managers often find residential protest a nuisance. Nevertheless, the involvement and engagement of residents in the regeneration process tends to improve the quality of the regeneration rather than damage it (Van Gent, 2008). However, before residents can even start to think about their neighbourhood and participate in any regeneration, they will first need not to worry about the livelihoods of themselves and their families. Hence, a state guarantee for steady income is a prerequisite for residential involvement and ultimately vital neighbourhoods. This is contrary to the current philosophy of regenerating neighbourhoods to provide the poor with income.

7.5 Challenges for further research

To help answer the ethical questions of regeneration, there are several venues for further research which will help our understanding of neighbourhoods and the capacity for social change. First, the scope of research may be broadened to include other institutional environments. An interesting option would be to expand the gaze towards Middle and Eastern European countries. The housing contexts in these post-Communist countries are substantially different from those in Western Europe due to different historical-geographical trajectories. These trajectories have led to differences in urban issues and policy responses. The heritage of the communist years, the large scale sale of public-owned housing in the 1990s, the overall economic conditions and employment situation, and the absence of large-scale immigration will likely produce different housing and urban policy frameworks for regeneration (see Hall et al., 2005, Van Beckhoven, 2006). In addition to including different national policy contexts, further research may also benefit from including more types of urban-regional environments. This includes more variation in terms of employment structures and urban economy as well as the regional housing market. An expanded variation of different types of housing market characteristics would give us further understanding of social transformation strategies within neighbourhood regeneration. Low demand regions with large shares of private owned housing will likely produce different outcomes than high demand markets dominated by private rental housing or owner-occupancy.

Second, as mentioned, neighbourhood regeneration and cultural and social integration of immigrant groups provides several interesting topics for further research. Issues of immigration and integration are definitely deemed relevant to urban issues and their solution. This warrants more research and discussion on the way these issues impinge upon the aims and strategies of neighbourhood regeneration in European countries (see Uitermark and Duyvendak, 2008). Furthermore, it would be interesting to look at the possible and real outcomes of the integration aim. In other words, what is exactly the capacity of neighbourhood regeneration to achieve integration of immigrant groups into society? This study remained skeptical about what was possible with a territorial focus, but the integration aspect of regeneration needs more attention.

Third, this research study was conducted before the 2008 housing and financial crises, which will likely have major societal and political consequences. As the crises take their toll in the fields of housing and employment, it will have a profound influence on the political arrangements and agendas, which are driving housing and urban policies. Sustained recession may even trigger new rounds of state subsidies for housing development as was the case in Europe after WWII, and in the the Netherlands, Sweden and Spain in the 1980s. Furthermore, in most European cities, housing market prices are already showing decline. It is unsure how long this trend will continue, but previous slumps have shown that the impact of less demand is immediately felt in deprived neighbourhoods. Moreover, social transformation through restructuring or upgrading will be harder to achieve as spill-over demand for middle class housing will be considerably less. In general, the crises have provided both research and policy with major challenges as social hardship increases and urban issues change.

Fourth, further research could be done to investigate alternative scenarios for enhancing liveability and social mobility for urban dwellers. It would be a 'false choice' to assert that neighbourhood regeneration has to entail social transformation strategies or not be applied at all (see Slater, 2006). Despite its dilemmas, neighbourhood regeneration can have beneficial effects for residents in terms of liveability. The exploration of alternative approaches which would consider both the ethical and the practical would surely benefit policy development.

Fifth, this study researched and discussed neighborhoods as singular units at one point in time, much like policy tends to treat them. This approach offered some advantages and useful insights. Nevertheless, neighbourhoods are, of course, units defined by their inhabitants, their housing structure and their physical form. Opening up 'the black box of neighbourhood' and illuminating the relationship between types of households and types of housing over time can provide useful insights. The relationship between housing and households can be seen in the light of housing careers rather than solely as a structurally determined relationship. Further research could investigate whether certain types of housing which are deemed universally unwanted by policy (e.g. social rent, from post-war era, small), may serve a demand from some types of households or in some types of neighbourhood. Furthermore, research into this relationship would also contribute to debates about gentrification, household displacement and entrapment.

Lastly, there is a major research challenge in the critical evaluation of area-based policy programmes with aims for social change. Evaluation of their aims, strategies and outcomes ex post should be done regularly and with proper resources. Social researchers and institutes are not the only ones to blame. Presently, insufficient policy budgeting for research means that evaluations are scarce, limited in scope, haphazard or underfunded. This is essentially pennywise pound-foolish. These policy programmes are also meant to improve insights in neighbourhood regeneration practices. Without proper research, both mistakes and good practices will go unnoticed. What's more, without sufficient evaluations there can be no (theoretical) debate on how regeneration and other types of social policies can achieve social change which is sustainable, ethical and realistic.

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