

Report workshop creating stronger neighborhoods together

Workshop at ISHF, 15th June 2022, by Steven Kromhout (AFWC), Marion Kranenburg (Eigen Haard), Judith Breemer (Parteon)

With participants from Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Finland and Spain, we discussed the challenges of urban renewal and creating stronger neighborhoods. With three examples from the Netherlands, we looked into different approaches. 'We Amsterdam' is a collaboration of six social housing associations in Amsterdam. They share information and data, from surveys amongst tenants and analytical models. With the data, they select neighborhoods that need extra attention and coordinate interventions and policy. The Masterplan Zuidooost and Pact Poelenburg are examples of such neighborhoods, where many stakeholders joined forces to create change.

Questions and specific topics we discussed:

- *How to involve the residents?* How do we make renewal not only 'about' them, but 'from & for' them? The aim is not only to get residents more involved but also to create better interventions & policy, and to 'level out' the professional bias. From Italy came an example of senior residents, who take care of many issues in the area. With younger people, a lack of awareness is sometimes a problem. *Foster the elderly!* From the UK came an example of a Youth Summit. They specifically are trying to *bring in the voice of a younger generation*. In a project in Finland, young and active residents get a discount on the rent to *promote their active contribution*.
- *Should we, in our policies, replace the word 'neighborhoods' by 'people'?* Do we find the solution for urban problems, in renewal of buildings & surroundings or should we focus more on creating jobs, better education and health? As housing associations, our main responsibility is creating more and better housing. But at the same time, we need to involve all stakeholders for a broader vision and approach.
- *Is mixing the solution?* Participants agree that mixed neighborhoods can contribute to positive change. At the same time, foster the community that is already there. With mixing, especially look into opportunities to create more housing for the younger generation. And, don't expect that getting 'higher educated, higher income people' into the neighborhood automatically means, this will benefit the residents that are already there. In contrast: it might drive them out of their own beloved neighborhood, and it can create tension between newer and older groups of residents.
- *Some neighborhoods are in top5 of the wrong lists for over more than 30 years. What have we been doing wrong, or how do we shift our approach to really change things?* This question is brought into the conversation by Pere Picorelli (Barcelona). All participants of the workshop agree this is a fair question, but find it difficult to answer as well.

To end the session, we conclude that it is necessary to *'be in it for the long run'* and start programs with *communal funding from all stakeholders*. We should invest in *more and better housing stock*, but in *social targets* at the same time. Is this new, did we not know this already? We did, but we need to keep on learning together and exchange experiences from all over Europe to find new ways to deal with housing problems and create stronger neighborhoods & people.