

Valid reasons vs hidden political agendas behind the production of new social housing

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SOCIAL HOUSING PRODUCTION

– economic foundations of building and dwelling

IBA Research Lab

Vienna

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Doubts about new social housing

The construction of new social housing is usually a very good thing. However, sometimes there are **hidden political agendas** behind such actions which have to be uncovered before becoming extremely glad about the new stock of social housing.

New social housing should be analysed with extreme care if it is **directly connected to the demolition of existing social housing**. There are usually the following arguments raised.

- **upgrading/regeneration** of the housing stock
- achieving more **social mix** of the population
- aiming for the **compact city with the densification** of the inner areas of the city.

Upgrading/regeneration and social mix

- The construction of new social housing can be questioned if it is connected to large-scale demolition of acceptable quality existing social housing, either with reference to the low ('outdated') quality of the existing stock or to the need for more diversified neighbourhoods.
- In such cases new social housing can be considered as a cover operation for state led gentrification.
- Case study cities: Rotterdam and Lyon

Rotterdam case

In the first decades following World War II, housing policy in the city focused on **increasing the number of social rented dwellings as a result of the government policy to create affordable housing in return for wage controls.**

In the 1970s, the needs of low-income households in run-down neighborhoods dating from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century were met with a **very comprehensive and effective urban renewal program spearheaded by the principle of “building for the neighbourhood,”** which entailed the construction of mostly or only social housing for established residents (Priemus, 1978).

This improved housing conditions and led to a **high proportion of social dwellings (up to 85 percent) in older parts of the city.** Additionally, urban renewal had the unanticipated effect of creating barriers to gentrification (Burgers, 2001), and because **urban renewal projects were built for established residents, often with low incomes, they contributed to the concentration of low-income households** (Stouten, 2010).

Around the end of the 1980s, the principle of “building for the neighbourhood” was superseded by the principle of **social mix under the slogan, “Rotterdam, undivided city”**, aiming initially to prevent income-based segregation, but by the turn of the century, the emphasis on ethnicity was getting stronger all the time.

Housing allocation is one of the instruments that can create a more “balanced” population distribution. Rotterdam politicians wanted to introduce a policy that would **exclude “disadvantaged” households from “distressed” neighborhoods by setting up a system of housing permits that placed extra demands on house-seekers**. A legal framework in the form of a government act had to be developed for this system, i.e. the “Act on exceptional measures concerning inner-city problems,” better known as the **Rotterdam Act**. This was passed at the end of 2005, created a legal basis for special regulations on housing permits for a period of four years (with the possibility of a once-only extension for another four years). Permits were based on the **120 percent minimum wage criterion**, on income from paid employment, a pension or a study allowance. The Act was particularly geared toward **excluding renters on social benefit from outside Rotterdam**.





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Rotterdam, Tweebosbuurt

- Residents of social housing in the neighborhood were told three years ago that the neighborhood would be renovated. The pre-war neighborhood had to make way for new construction.
- For the 524 social rental homes that will be demolished in total, 137 new social rental homes will be returned. There will be 101 free sector rental homes, which are unaffordable for many current residents. 143 homes are going up for sale, also unreachable for many current residents.
- According to housing association Vestia, renewal of the neighborhood is necessary. According to Vestia, the houses are outdated and doing nothing leads to problems in the neighborhood and a deteriorated image. But according to local residents, it is a result of gentrification. Upgrading a neighborhood at the expense of the poorer residents who are driven out of the neighbourhood.



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<https://nos.nl/artikel/2385983-rotterdamse-tweebosbuurt-gesloopt-goed-voor-de-leefbaarheid>



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Public sector led gentrification

Public sector led gentrification might be motivated by

- the local government's need to strengthen its tax base
- the developers' pursuit of profit
- looking for a response to the housing demands of a new middle class
- an attempt by state actors and housing associations at generating social order in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

In poor areas of Rotterdam gentrification is used to pacify tensions and to reduce concentrations that pose a problem for authorities. In many cases, residents support this strategy, either actively or passively.

But interaction between low-income and higher-income households, and between renters and homeowners, in restructured neighbourhoods are often superficial at best and hostile at worst. Thus, gentrification undermines social cohesion and thereby reduces the chance that residents will find solutions for tensions in the neighbourhood.

State-led urban renewal mega-programmes

- Haussmann's renovation of **Paris** 1853-1870
- **UK**: property-led urban regeneration in inner cities, 1981-2010
- **China**: Shantytown Redevelopment Projects (2008) in *danwei*, urban villages
 - In 2017 only: 6M homes 'upgraded', \$280B
- **Turkey**: urban renewal, Regeneration of Areas under Disaster Risk Law (2012)
 - 6-7M homes (40% of total housing in Turkey)
 - \$400-500B over 20 years
 - In 2012-2016, 7M m2 with 1M people 'upgraded'
- **Criticism**: pro-growth elites' enriching exercise; mass evictions; destruction of social ecosystems; highrisification; inequality-maintaining character



Danwei in Beijing



Moscow: aggressive demolition of Khrushchevski



Expectancy



- Monopolistic construction process
- Transformation of city morphology
- The output x2 existing densities (from 10K m²/ha to 25K m²/ha)
- Lack of infrastructural capacity
- Reduced green spaces
- Destruction to social ecosystems
- Negative externalities on neighbourhoods







Social Mix

Aims at **changing the social composition of areas with high levels of socio-spatial segregation**

Different definitions across countries, with two main types:

- **introduce better-off residents in deprived areas** (create better mix through managed gentrification minimizing unwanted displacement)
- **transfer disadvantaged people into well-off areas** (statutory quotas, inclusionary zoning, etc.)

Mainstream policy but **very controversial**; evidence on effects not conclusive

Amsterdam South: Bilmermeer housing estate

















Kamengiestraat
1000 Brussel

Kamengiestraat

Lyon







PHARMACEUTICALS

5556 AH 68



ATAC

Super Marché Entrée

Densification of the city

- **Compactness of urban development** is an important aspect of sustainability.
- However, in some cases (especially in growing cities) compactness is given **too high importance** or it is used as **an excuse for other interests or policies**.
- An example of aiming for the **compact city with the densification** of the inner areas of the city can be found in Rotterdam



Pompenburgflat, Rotterdam

Residents of the Pompenburgflat and the Rotterdam SP party are **opposing the demolition of the social housing complex with 226 homes.** There will be an anti-demolition meeting in Doelstraat.

The municipality would like to see a **residential tower of 250 meters and two towers of 150 meters built** on the southeastern part of Hofplein. The Pompenburg flat would have to be flat for that.

At the same time, the municipality promised that the current social housing will be rebuilt and all tenants can return to new construction. **The number of social rental homes - and the number of square meters - will remain at least the same.**

The residents and the SP **just don't believe it that way.** They want hard guarantees.

<https://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/bewoners-voeren-actie-tegen-sloop-van-sociaal-wooncomplex~ab2cc6bc/>

- And much more new development is to come...



8-9-2022

An introduction to urban development in Rotterdam

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Is new social housing always questionable?

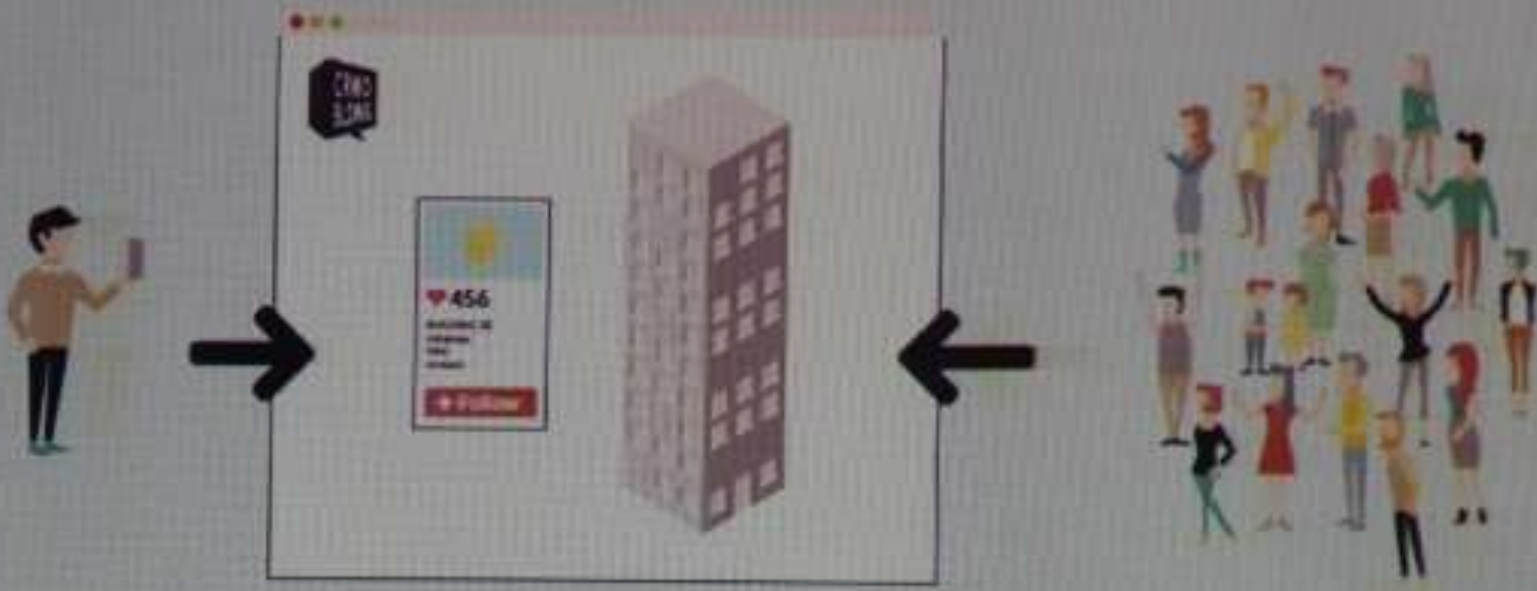
Of course not.

New social housing was questioned from my side **if connected to the demolition of existing social housing.**

Instead of demolishing and building, there are **alternative forms** of expanding the stock of new social housing:

- **transformation of non-housing stock into housing**(offices NL),
- **buying back housing into public ownership** (Berlin, HU proposal for rental housing agencies...),
- **densification of existing stock** (Vienna: rooftop housing, Israel piecemeal extension of buildings)

Rotterdam: Crowdbuilding, converting office buildings into residential





HIER BOUWT EEN CROWD!
www.crowdbuilding.nl

ALEIDISSTRAAT ROTTERDAM



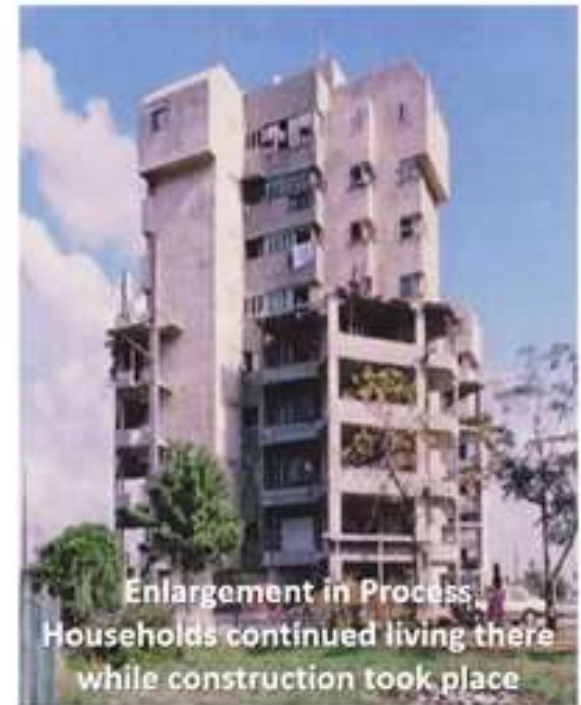


Innovative upgrading: Israel

Israel's 70 years experience* with urban densification

Phase 1: Soft, organic process

- ❖ **Small-scale** residential projects; most common is one multi-unit building, 2-8 floors
- ❖ The process was motivated by the wish of individual households to improve their quality of life
- ❖ Individual or small groups initiatives, in low-middle-class areas, with **little involvement of the authorities other than soft regulation**; in Project Renewal neighborhoods also insured loans (no grants) and technical assistance
- ❖ For 50 years, a gradual process of **sophisticated self-help 'updating' and enlarging a big share of the housing stock of small apartments**, built around the country in the first 30 years of Israel as a State; from adding a room to doubling the dwelling area



* Documented experience, See Carmon&Oxman, 1986; Carmon&Gavrieli, 1987; Carmon&Hill, 1988; Carmon 2002A; 2002B; in <https://naomi-carmon.net.technion.ac.il/>



Taken from a PPT presentation of Naomi Carmon, May 2021

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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