

WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR URBAN RENEWAL. A CASE STUDY IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Abstract

The concern of this paper is urban renewal projects; it investigates how such projects get off the ground. A variety of bodies have examined and devised instruments to tackle the inherent difficulties.

“How can cities overcome critical factors in the successful start of urban renewal projects” is the main research question, explored using three supportive questions. An embedded case has been selected to illustrate a successful urban renewal project. Kingdon’s opportunity windows framework provides the theoretical background.

The concepts provided in the theory were discussed and operationalized. The core issue is opportunity windows. We explored the occurrence of these concepts and processes in the Hart van Zuid case.

We argued that successful projects are an illustration of policy windows of opportunity. Becoming successful in renewal projects entails opening and taking advantage of windows of opportunity. We have pointed out factors that influence the occurrence of opportunity windows in the studied case.



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Introduction

The City of tomorrow must be built on the city of today. Cities can often be seen as engines of growth; they generally fulfill many roles in society and economy. Cities are also known for negative aspects – such as economic decline, physical deterioration, pollution, poverty, social exclusion; deprived neighborhoods exist in many forms. Large and still growing numbers of people live in urban areas, creating deeper divisions between areas that prosper and those that do not.

A large and still growing number of people are living in urban areas; these areas are attractive for many reasons: jobs, amenities, affordable housing, etc. Urban areas are diverse: some cities are thriving, while others are declining in several respects. The restructuring of the urban economy and competition between places has increased pressure to improve social, environmental and labor amenities in cities.

In the European Union over 60% of the population lives in urban areas of over 50,000 inhabitants; a figure that is expected to rise in future years as economic development increases. Four out of five European citizens live in urban areas, and their quality of life is directly influenced by the state of the urban environment. The attractiveness of European cities will enhance their potential for growth and job creation. A high quality urban environment also contributes to the priority of the renewed Lisbon Strategy to *'make Europe a more attractive place to work and invest'*. The importance of an integrated approach to urban regeneration becomes even more apparent in this context.

Most cities are confronted with a common core set of challenges such as poor air quality, high levels of traffic and congestion, high levels of ambient noise, poor-quality built environment, derelict land, greenhouse gas emissions, urban sprawl, and generation of waste and wastewater. The environmental problems in cities are particularly complex as their causes are interrelated.

Therefore, environment and urban regeneration are issues getting increasing attention throughout the world. Regeneration typically designates a renewal process, i.e. some form of repair or improvement. In the context of public policy, the term is used to describe courses of action to transform some set of physical and socioeconomic variables. A regeneration process is therefore commonly targeted at revitalizing problem areas – namely by addressing shortcomings in natural and built environments, heritage conservation, social integration and employment and economic activities – in cities and their surroundings, but also in rural settings. The focus is essentially to improve the sustainability of the built environment and the quality of urban life (van Kempen et al., 2005).

Research setup

In order to investigate further this issue we formulate the following main research question and three supporting questions:

“How can the cities overcome critical factors in the successful start of urban renewal projects?”

We will argue that successful urban renewal projects are illustration of the coupling of policy windows of opportunity. Therefore, becoming more successful in urban

renewal projects is a matter of opening – and taking advantage of- more windows of opportunity. Essential coupling of streams and connecting problems to solutions and political attention get such projects off the ground.

- “What are the funding opportunities and the challenges, for urban renewal projects?”

Regarding this research question, the task is to locate the research in a more general theme of urban renewal. We need to define some essential concepts for studying the urban renewal literature, as well as overview some strategies directed at redressing urban renewal projects’ shortcomings – mainly market failures. We also aim to create an overview on how does the EU face these problems.

- “What are the critical factors in the successful start of an urban renewal project?”

For the purposes of our research, we have stopped upon Kingdon’s framework of policy windows of opportunity (Kingdon, 1995). This model deals with the question of state and non-state influences on agenda setting by focusing on the role played by policy entrepreneurs both inside and outside government in taking advantage of agenda-setting opportunities, policy windows-to move items onto formal government agendas.

- “How did the studied case approach an urban renewal project?”

The case is investigated by means of interviews and document analysis. We have analyzed the data collected, from the point of view of the theoretical framework, using the questions, concepts, and variables selected from Kingdon’s theory. The material follows the same three main themes: agenda setting, alternative specification, and opening of windows and policy entrepreneurs.

The main research question and the subsequent supportive questions focus onto the urban renewal project as units of analysis. We will analyze mainly the institutional actors, and their interactions. An embedded case has been selected to illustrate an urban renewal project: the Hart van Zuid project from Hengelo, Netherlands, part of the REVIT network. The case has been selected for reasons of proximity and availability of information. The scope of the study will cover a case from the initial emerging of the idea, until the final approval has been obtained, without discussing the actual implementation and all the subsequent phases.

This research aims to produce explanatory knowledge; in operational terms, our purpose is to outline how a successful urban renewal project begins, and how it gets off the ground my means of opening windows of opportunity. The strategy for approaching data collection is the case study. Two methods were used to collect data from different sources. These methods are interview and document analysis. For the interviews, open protocols have been developed that consist of general themes for discussion and open ended questions. The other data collection method is document analysis. Documents have been analyzed, for example, project plans, minutes, electronic databases, and legal documents.

Urban renewal projects overview

Urban planning is now a political issue. Policies are involving more and more business and community agencies of various kinds. At the beginning of the new millennium, urban policies can be characterized by five dimensions: an attempt to integrate policy fields; a shift from government to governance; promotion of the empowerment of the inhabitants of cities and specific neighborhoods; a shift from universalistic to area-based approaches; growing attention for efficacy of policies. These directions, and a policy towards partnerships, are directed at expanding and improving the financial means available for addressing the aforementioned shortcomings (Andersen and Van Kempen, 2003).

It is widely recognized that deprived urban areas suffer from several market failures or socially undesirable results of functioning markets, and that market forces alone will not redress the downward spiral that occurs once a certain level of deprivation has been reached. These market failures prevent a unitary and targeted approach towards urban issues. Public intervention is therefore considered necessary, including the use of public funds, to start a regeneration process (de Graaf, 2005).

Redressing the market failures or socially undesirable outcome that have been perceived to characterize cities requires new and innovative thinking, alternative policy vehicles and more transparent information flows regarding performance of regeneration areas.

Although brownfield regeneration represents only a part of all the aspects that concern urban rehabilitation, the principles and techniques for attracting and using financial resources are applicable and useful. There is substantial literature on funding brownfield regeneration projects. For example, Nijkamp focuses on the success factors for sustainable brownfield redevelopment (Nijkamp et al., 2002), Bartsch addresses from a broad perspective the financial mechanisms for brownfield redevelopment financing from the U.S. (Bartsch and Wells, 2005); in a recent article, Groenendijk analyzes the same issue from a European perspective and proposes a set of principles to be used as a guide in brownfield actions (Groenendijk, 2006). The Concerted Action on Brownfield and Economic Regeneration Network –CABERNET- is a multidisciplinary network comprising six expert Working Groups that aims to facilitate new practical solutions for urban brownfields. CABERNET was originally supported by the European Commission under the Fifth Framework Program.

Brownfield redevelopment is mainly concerned with land use issues and spatial structures. It attempts to address shortcomings resulting from transitional phases in the economical destination given to an area, mostly by means of physical intervention on the landscape. Urban rehabilitation has a wider scope; it targets the problems of an urban area in not only physical and economical terms, but also taking into consideration societal aspects, such as social integration, employment, heritage conservation, etc.

Below we will focus on describing the conceptual models used by CABERNET to study brownfields. There is no such thing as a typical brownfield site. Brownfields are inherently varied in character, in terms of location, physical condition, accessibility of the site, fragmentation of the site et cetera.

- Generally, if private benefits exceed costs -and profits are to be made-, redevelopment will be rather unproblematic from the financial perspective. This is the type of projects that have been labeled *self-developing sites* or *A-sites*. These are sites with high property value and low reclamation costs, and have their own dynamic development potential. In most cases, the redevelopment implies an increase of the value of the site and there is no need for specific public sector intervention. These projects are –largely- private-driven.
- Sites with a specific development potential but with significant risks of development because of costs of remediation and after-reclamation value, can be labeled the *B-category* or *middle tier of passive-developing sites* or *potential development sites*. The market value -after being cleaned-up- may be slightly above or slightly below the combined cost of clean up and development. Special policy concepts in the shape of public-private partnerships are needed here for redevelopment to take place aimed at risk sharing and co-coordinated planning and financing. Policy initiatives must be aimed at raising anticipated end-use values, reducing anticipated costs, or a combination of the two.
- Lastly, there are *non-developing* or *reserve sites*. These are sites without development potential at least during the foreseeable future: the *C-category* or bottom tier of sites. Some of these sites require public-driven reclamation and interim management (2007).

These three categories of brownfield sites clearly depict the difficulties of attracting financial resources. Market failures prevent private finances to flow and sustain redevelopment projects. In essence, two market failures dominate: externalities, and uncertainty and risk: developers tend to have a narrow perception of the benefits of brownfield redevelopment as they focus solely on their own financial interests. Private markets fail to capture collective benefits such as environmental benefits, improved neighborhoods, creation of jobs, and public health impacts; the second market-failure is that risk-averse developers may undervalue their own commercial benefits and/or overvalue the costs of brownfield redevelopment (Groenendijk, 2006).

To overcome these market failures, cooperation between the public and private sectors is necessary. Different forms of cooperation can be distinguished.

First, there is *private development*. The private sector is in charge of the process throughout all stages, but assistance may be offered by government during the planning and financing stages. Second, there is *public development*, in which private parties act only as buyer of redeveloped sites. The initiative to redevelop is taken by government, which plans, finances, takes care of remediation, and builds. Moreover, government remains firmly in charge of the operation of public facilities on the site. Thirdly, there is *procurement & concession*. This development is publicly driven, but there is significant involvement of the private sector in the project by means of procurement of at least one of the phases of the redevelopment. Private involvement can extend over almost all phases of the process. Finally, there are *alliances*; with alliances, there is equivalence between the parties involved (Deloitte Consultancy, 2005).

The EU has dedicated special regulatory frameworks and funding opportunities for urban regeneration and revitalization programs. We could mention, for example, the

Thematic Strategies within the Sixth Environmental Action Plan, the two phases of the URBAN program; most recent is the JESSICA program -Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas- (Martens, 2006). These programs are updated continuously, and new forms of financial aid are devised. Some of these programs like URBAN II, can be considered as benchmarks for future initiatives.

Critical factors in urban renewal projects

For the purposes of our research, we have stopped upon Kingdon's framework of policy windows of opportunity. In 1984, John Kingdon published a study about agenda setting and decision processes inside the U.S. power structures (Kingdon, 1995). Among other subjects, it has been used to describe and assess the nature of US health-policy making; the politics of privatization in Britain, France and Germany; the nature of US domestic anti-drug policy; the collaborative behavior of business and environmental groups in U.S. and Europe (Levine, 1985).

Kingdon describes the process of opening a policy window as involving three convergent streams: the problem stream involving problem identification and recognition often based upon indicators or focusing events; the policy stream populated by disparate policy communities producing alternatives and proposals; and the political stream incorporating shifts in public opinion, administration changes, and interest groups in the determining of actor receptivity.

These streams, all flowing independently with a life of their own and driven by differing forces, are coupled by policy entrepreneurs at critical points in time in an effort to influence agenda setting and advocate policy alternatives. A policy window then opens "because of change in the political stream or... because a new problem captures the attention of governmental officials and those close to them," thereby providing the opportunity for action in the form of policy proposals and alternatives.

In essence, a policy window opens in either the political stream or the problem stream leading to coupling efforts on the part of entrepreneurs and a place on the decision agenda. If, however, coupling does not occur when the problem or political streams set the governmental agenda, there is little chance an item will raise on the actual decision agenda on which action is to be taken, as the streams by themselves are not capable of setting decision agenda items. Thus, when a problem is identified and the political environment favorable, it is vital that the policy stream produces viable alternatives. Otherwise, the risk of an item fading from the decision agenda is vastly increased.

In Kingdon's terms, solutions and alternatives are floating around, in various combinations, waiting for problems to attach to and attention from the political factors. We see the start of urban renewal projects as successful coupling of alternatives, problems and political attention. The convergence of all the three streams increases dramatically the chances of a good start. In other words, an open window of opportunity is essential for getting such projects off the ground.

Each of the three streams develops independently, along a set of processes. However different these processes, as Kingdon observes, they belong to three main

themes: agenda setting, alternative specification, and coupling and opening of policy window.

By “**agenda setting**” Kingdon describes the process by which government narrows down the set of subjects that could conceivably occupy their attention to the list of which they actually do focus. To the question of how are governmental agendas set, his answer concentrates on three possible explanations: problems, politics and visible participants: how the two issues got on the agenda, what is the process by which conditions become defined as problems, how did this issue get politicians attention.

The next major theme discussed by Kingdon and crucial for our research is **alternative specification**. How is the list of potential alternatives for public policy choices narrowed to the ones that actually receive serious consideration? This issue relates to the policy stream. Who are the participants responsible for generating solutions? How do they select and advocate their ideas? Kingdon defines the locus of origin for the solutions as a hidden cluster of participants, which receive modest media and public attention, comprising academics, researchers, consultants, bureaucrats, staffers of elected officials, analysts, etc. A “policy primeval soup” could give a basic understanding of the process of endless search, trials and error, which characterizes this stage. There is a long process of “softening-up” the system, once a proposal makes its way forward. It includes familiarizing with various aspects and implications, by the public at large and by other communities and factors.

In the joining of streams by means of **coupling and windows**, Kingdon argues that each of the three streams described has a life of its own in terms of calendar, rules, participants, etc. There are also times when the three streams are joined, when for example, a pressing problem gets attention of the political factors and is coupled with an available alternative. Kingdon defines this as a policy window, implying that the probability of an item rising on the decision agenda is dramatically increased if all three elements -problems, proposals and political receptivity- are linked into a single package. By means of coalition building and spillovers, the momentum can be transferred to other initiatives. Windows are opened in either the politics or the problems streams; they can occur in predictable cycles, or without any cue.

The last theme explored by Kingdon related to the opening of policy windows is the people who achieve the coupling of the streams. They are people willing to invest their resources in return for future policies they favor; they are called **policy entrepreneurs**. Where are they located then and what are their resources and motivation? From the point of view of their place in the system, they can be bureaucrats, elected officials, staffers, consultants, or journalists; no one type of participant dominates the pool of entrepreneurs. Being found in so many locations, they bring a diversity of skills. They have claim to hearing, given by expertise, speaking abilities or authoritative position. They are also validated by political connections or negotiating skills, in other words the ability to bargain, compromise and achieve consensus. In addition, mostly, policy entrepreneurs are persistent, taking every opportunity to advance their proposals.

Empirical findings

This chapter is concerned with presenting the empirical findings of the Hart van Zuid project case study¹. Our purpose is to illustrate and highlight, by means of Kingdon's concepts, critical factors and processes that have contributed to the successful start of this project. We will have an overview of practical instances where streams converge and are coupled, and policy windows open for urban renewal projects. We will be able to highlight concrete actors, institutions and processes that contributed to the opening of a window of opportunity. We will observe and explore the policy communities, elected officials, staffers, bureaucrats, interest groups. Their interactions will provide an insight into the agenda setting and alternative specification. In addition, special attention will be paid to the coupling process and the factors that influence it, to the occurrence of policy windows and to the existence and role of policy entrepreneurs.

Four themes are the focus of this section: agenda-setting, alternative specification, opening of policy windows, and the role of policy entrepreneurs. Each of these themes comprises several key concepts and processes. The concepts and processes have been identified and highlighted in the case of Hart van Zuid.

Hengelo

Hengelo is located in the Eastern part of Netherlands, near the German border. Because of its strategic position, Hengelo is considered the centre of Twente region. Hengelo carries a strong industrial heritage, acquiring the name "Metal city" from as early as the 19th century. Due to achievements of companies like Stork, Dijkers and other, Hengelo remains a hub of the high-tech metal industry (REVIT, 2006).

Around 1821 Hengelo was a mere village typified by ribbon development and the presence of streams. Cottage industries based on wool weaving were a major source of income. The availability of trained workers and clean water from the streams were two important factors in the development of Hengelo into a textile and industrial city. The railway also had a major impact. Around 1920 Hengelo grew enormously as a direct result of the industrial revolution.

The urban structure of Hengelo -and Twente- is still based on a three dimensional split in company locations. The first generation of factories came to fruition because of the proximity of the railway. The second generation, which includes the chemical industry, developed around the port and canal. The third generation consists of companies sites linked to the motorway network. They all have individual spatial/economic characteristics. However, the first generation of factories is fast disappearing. The railway-linked economy is no longer based on large production units connected to goods transport facilities. They are being replaced by offices, homes and recreation

¹ Our interviewees in the Hart van Zuid case are civil servants within the Bureau of Public Affairs of the Municipality of Hengelo. Mr. Gerard Jilleba is coordinator for the Hart van Zuid project, and Mr. Frank Ankersmid is coordinator for the REVIT project. Interviews were digitally recorded; also, hand notes were taken during the interviews. There were a couple of follow-up questions after the interviews, mainly to clarify certain aspects and details.

facilities, which are based on personal transport facilities and proximity to the city centre (REVIT, 2006).

Hart van Zuid

The project subject of our research involves the revitalization of the former Stork-Dijkers complex, currently known as Hart van Zuid. This project incorporates approximately 50 ha of former industrial ground, being one of the largest inner urban revitalization projects of Netherlands. The projects envisions new housing, offices, a community college, leisure facilities, a World Trade Center office with hotel and congress facilities, a House for Europe, and other development proposals. These will be mixed with compatible industrial activities.

Following complex changes in industrial technology, trade and employment policies, an increasing number of industrial sites have lost their initial purpose and utility. As early as 1989, Stork Industries was looking for proposals for redevelopment of the unused parts of the site. However, one of the major constraints for redevelopment concerned safety restrictions due to the transport of chlorine produced in the vicinity. This has been a problem affecting all municipalities along the railway routes: safety zones had to be maintained and no housing, community or leisure facilities could be developed. Relocating the chlorine factory was the agreed solution; support was provided from the national, as well as the European level. In January 2006, the chlorine factory started operations in Delfzijl, thus freeing the development initiatives.

During 2000, a partnership was formed with the private real estate developer Van Wijnen Group; later the city administration also joined the partnership. The purpose was to rehabilitate and reuse the former industrial buildings and lands. The 'Hart van Zuid' Master plan, which was presented in the spring of 2001, is based on a staged transformation that will take place over a number of years. The site will be transformed from a mono-functional, industrial complex into a multi-functional part of the city.

In addition, during 2002 an application was submitted for EU funding in the framework of the INTERREG IIIB program, along with five other partner cities: Stuttgart as leading partner, Nantes, Tilburg, Medway and Torfaen. The REVIT partnership was therefore started and operational. The six partner areas involved in the REVIT project confront problems in the context of brownfield regeneration that are in essence very similar and need to be tackled more effectively by improved co-operation.

In Hengelo, the funding from the INTERREG program has contributed to the renovation of the former Stork foundry hall into the ROC Twente Community College, as well as major infrastructure improvements. The REVIT project is due to end in September 2007.

Research findings

Agenda-setting

In the case of Hart van Zuid, we need to investigate how do officials learn about the existence of some conditions, how are these conditions defined as problems, and how do politicians react to these problems. Indicators, focusing events and feedback

are some of the means by which officials acknowledge the existence of conditions. There is a variety of indicators used in the case of Hart van Zuid.

Environmental indicators are used to outline the importance and sense of urgency for action. Unemployment levels were not as important for signaling the existence and magnitude of a condition. Mostly this is because Stork and Dijkers companies did not resort to massive layoffs; there was no record of a massive and sudden increase in the number of unemployed workers. Financial indicators are powerful agenda-setters. They generally relate mostly to budgetary allocations and profit margins. Dropping profit margins for Stork, as well as costs related to relocation of some production facilities, renovation and maintenance costs of existing structures, tax spending, cost of land, etc.

Budget spending on part of the municipal administration was also a critical issue; failure to develop and rehabilitate the Hart van Zuid area would translate into ever-increasing costs and even higher budgetary allocations.

Because they have such a powerful role as agenda-setters, the methodology by which the facts are gathered and the interpretation placed on these facts became problematic themselves. For instance, environmental indicators are notoriously vague and elusive, in the sense that they do not pinpoint to a direct causal link.

Another powerful agenda-setting factor is focusing events. Events of these sorts frequently call on the media attention, thus stressing the sense of urgency and the call for action. We can spot a combination of use of symbols and personal experience on part of decision factors. Stork and Dijkers were for almost a century the flagship of metal and machine industry in the Twente region. Not only were they local and regional symbols of entrepreneurship, industry, innovation and reliability; in their high years, their success reflected upon the city itself. On the other hand, many of the council members and civil servants had at least one family member or close relative who was employed or connected, one way or another, with Stork and other enterprises. Therefore, the downhill path that Stork took in the late 1980s strongly reflected upon their region, their city and even their family. They could see their city's main employer and source of revenue struggling and relocating production facilities, and a substantial piece of inner city property lying underused.

Another agenda-setting factor comes in the form of feedback. Officials and decision makers receive feedback either through formal monitoring and evaluation, or informally by means of complaints, etc. The role of feedback as agenda-setter for Hart van Zuid is closely connected to the aforementioned feeling of pride and attachment to the industrial heritage and working-class aura of the city and the region. Citizens complain directly to their elected council members, who thus become more acutely aware about the deteriorating water quality –for instance. Feedback comes also in a systematic manner, through periodical screenings, monitoring and analyses –related for instance to employment levels, revenue from taxes, air and water quality, etc.

Citizen participation was mentioned several times as a key item in the debate over the project. People living in the neighborhood felt strongly that their opinions should be consulted, and that it was the responsibility of the municipal administration to oversee that. As a result, an organization was set up –Hart vor Zuid- to bring together

the stakeholders and inform the citizens, mostly by means of evening meetings, neighborhood campaigns, etc.

Comparison with similar units and category setting as agenda-setting factors present a more complex picture. Hart van Zuid may be a case different from the other urban rehabilitation projects; that is with more special features and challenges that the expectable variation between cases. For instance, the size itself of the affected area –over 50 ha- makes this case one of the largest and most challenging. Another special feature is the inner city location of this area –indeed in the heart of the city, like its name suggests; this location brings a set of new challenges and applicable regulations. For instance, acceptable noise levels for inner city areas are lower than outside city limits; all sorts of safety norms are also applicable. The pressure to preserve most of the spaces with historic and heritage values is another key feature. Finally, another trait that makes this project special is the fact that only one real estate developer was chosen to undertake most stages of the project, and the developer –Van Wijnen Group- had no previous experience with such large and complex projects. In the words of one of our respondents: “they were eager to prove that they can handle it”.

Also related to the agenda-setting processes, are the means by which a problem catches the attention of the politicians. A very interesting discussion can take place in this case around interest group pressure and lobbying. This concerns the problem posed by the presence of the chlorine production facility of the Akzo Company in the area. The production of chlorine in the vicinity and its transport by railway through the heart of the city posed serious hazards; therefore, strict building restrictions were in place. This inhibited drastically the development of the area, since no residential, educational, office or leisure facilities could be located in the vicinity. In addition, all the other communities located nearby the railroad faced the same problem.

The relocation presented several challenges: a suitable area had to be identified, moving expenses, profit losses from Akzo due to temporary cessation of production. To overcome these obstacles, the Van Wijnen Group, together with the Hengelo municipality began building a coalition with the other communities along the railroad, which were affected by the same restrictions. Public officials from these municipalities lobbied the provincial and the national government for intervention. The provincial government of the Overijssel province was the most responsive, in the form of subsidies. In 2004, the Akzo chlorine facility was finally relocated to Delfzijl, thus expanding greatly the development possibilities of the Hart van Zuid area.

Alternative specification

This is the second major predecision process of the governmental agenda. Alternative specification narrows down the large set of possible alternatives to that set from which choices are actually made. We aim to identify who are the people and organizations responsible for generating ideas, how are the solutions selected and how the message is conveyed to the political factors.

Kingdon hypothesized that there is not one locus where ideas spring from, and this is true for the case of Hart van Zuid. Indeed, several types of organizations and institutions are involved, in a variety of ways, in the flow of ideas. The Stork Company

commissioned outside consultants for the initial opportunity study. Then once Van Wijnen Group took over, their in-house consultants explored more thoroughly the available, focusing on financial issues. The municipal administration also made use of internal experts and analysts after the partnership with Van Wijnen was set. For the spatial planning part, an architecture bureau from Amsterdam was hired.

Also, in the REVIT project, it can be noticed extensive use of external expertise. After all, one of the main purposes of the EU funding was building a knowledge base and sharing mechanism across borders. Consultancy companies were commissioned for drafting reports on various aspects of the project; for example, Deloitte Consultancy submitted an extensive study on PPP techniques and opportunities. Academic area was also involved; the University of Twente from the neighboring city of Enschede was given the task of exploring brownfield renewal financing mechanisms. Moreover, not the least, the partner cities from the REVIT network supplied significant knowledge, mostly related to practical aspects of the project.

Thus, we uncover what Kingdon terms the “hidden cluster” of participants. They originate from a variety of environments: civil servants, in-house experts and analysts, consultancy companies, academia and knowledge sharing networks. These people and organizations, although highly diverse and dispersed, share their interest and acquaintance with the issue of urban renewal.

The form in which their ideas are known is also diverse: formal reports, analyses, papers, studies, memos. These documents circulate within this hidden cluster; they are transformed and combined into different versions.

Another issue is publicizing the alternatives and selecting a final alternative. We have observed the critical cooperation between the two main institutions, the municipal administration and the private developer. For this purpose, decision structures have been set in place. A Project Bureau comprises appointed members from both organizations, their participation being equal. They are mid-level management staff, and they are responsible for day-to-day coordination. The Project Bureau comes under the supervision of a Steering Group of four members: top-level managers on part of Van Wijnen, and elected aldermen on part of the municipality. The Steering Group manages strategic and long-term issues. Also in the REVIT project, a similar structure was set up, together with the other participating cities.

Within these two-tier structures, the ideas and alternatives are circulated. The selection process itself and the criteria are not very straightforward and easily observable. However, it is clear that a main point is the public acceptability of the presumptive alternative. Therefore, consultation mechanisms have been prepared. The aforementioned Hart vor Zuid organization, addresses the needs of the people living in the neighborhood of the Hart van Zuid area; its role is to inform the citizens and gather their feedback concerning the proposed alternatives.

Windows of opportunity and policy entrepreneurs

After exploring the two predecision processes –agenda-setting and alternative specification-, we will focus on the essential joining of the three streams and the

opening of the policy window. Kingdon brings the concepts of decision agendas, policy windows and policy entrepreneurs.

We have seen that agenda setting is the narrowing down of the subjects to which officials actually pay attention to; decision agenda is an even narrower list of items that is moving into a position of authoritative decision. In Kingdon's view, the probability of an item rising onto the decision agenda is dramatically increased if all three elements –problem, policy proposal, and political receptivity- are coupled into a single package. Partial couplings –linkage of two of the three streams- usually anticipate complete couplings.

In the case of Hart van Zuid, we can highlight two such partial couplings. One of them occurred in the initial stages of the project, when the need to redevelop the Hart van Zuid area was linked to the Van Wijnen offer. Thus, we see an event in the problem stream being linked to a viable alternative from the policy stream. The Stork Company was facing increasing difficulties, therefore decided to sell the land of the current Hart van Zuid area to a private developer for rehabilitation. Nevertheless, it wasn't until successful pressure, lobbying determined the Municipality of Hengelo to intervene –the political stream- that the window of opportunity opened, and project really got off the ground

Another illustration of partial coupling is the chlorine production case. For years, the production and transportation of chlorine by railway inhibited the development of a significant area. Transport safety regulations prescribed a security zone around the railway where no residential, public, office, educational or leisure facilities could be built. Since a large portion of the Hart van Zuid area is adjacent to the railway, this was a significant drawback. The chlorine transport issue was also affecting a number of communities located along the railway.

Plans to relocate the chemical plant have been floating around in various combinations. The core idea was to identify and move the production facilities in a location where other means of transport would be available. When the local politicians realized the long-term losses they could face, a strong pressure and lobbying began towards the provincial and national governments, and even the EU bodies, for funding and subsidies.

Finally, in January 2006, a new chlorine production plant was opened in Delfzijl, where water transportation was available, thus freeing the area from the safety constraints and greatly boosting the development opportunities. As early as May 2006, works on the new Twente Community College began, with REVIT funding, in the former foundry hall of Stork in the Hart van Zuid complex.

Therefore, we observe that until all three streams were combined –the chlorine problem, the solution of relocation, and the political receptivity- no significant action could be taken. The successful coupling opened a window for action, successful changes were pushed forward, which resulted in new policies being implemented.

Kingdon distinguishes between windows opened in the political or the problem stream, between predictable and unpredictable windows. In both instances of successful couplings described above, the windows of opportunity opened in the political stream. Pressure and lobbying on part of local politicians proved to be

the factor that made the difference. This means that events in the political stream -described in the agenda-setting section- such as lobbying and interest pressure, election turnovers and swings in national mood are very likely to create the favorable environment to push some problems and solutions forward.

On the other hand, these windows open quite unpredictably –in the sense that they are not tied to regular cycles –like elections, budget approval, legislation renewal, etc. This means that pressure on politicians to take attitude builds up gradually to a point when action is inevitable.

Next, we need to clarify who are these people responsible for coupling of the three streams. Kingdon terms them policy entrepreneurs; they are people willing to invest resources in return for favorable policies. Their gain is the form of policies they approve, satisfaction from participation, or personal benefits in the form of job security or career promotion.

They rely on critical resources, such as claim to a hearing, political connections, negotiating skills, and mostly sheer persistence. Kingdon claims that there is no single locus where they can reside; they might be career civil servants, elected officials, lobbyists, academics etc. However, they are always encountered at critical points in the process making the couplings we have just discussed.

In the case on Hart van Zuid, policy entrepreneurs belong in the political stream. Along the path of the project, they made the critical couplings that ensured the project getting off the ground. In particular, our respondents pointed towards Alderman Mr. Hans Kok as being the most active and persistent advocate of the project. From his position as elected politician, he has the necessary political connections, and from his position as alderman he has the executive authority. Perhaps the most important is the fact that he has been serving in office for over twelve years. Therefore, he is acquainted with the very early stages of the project, and he ensured the much-needed continuity throughout various changes in administration. We are unsure about the determinant motivations behind his persistence in advocating the Hart van Zuid project; we can hypothesize that they could include need for reelection and feeling of accomplishment.

Summary of findings

To sum up the findings of this research, the focus is on urban renewal projects. They are critical for addressing the number of issue that nowadays cities are facing. A holistic approach is needed on part of the decision makers.

Urban renewal projects fall into several categories, based on their economic potential after reclamation. Most of the sites targeted face economic obstacles in terms of market failures. The EU has recognized the urgency of this issue, and has initiated a multi-pronged approach.

Kingdon's theory provides a framework and tools to identify and outline critical factors for urban renewal projects. Key issues build up and interact in getting a renewal project off the ground. Within the selected case study, these themes and issues have been outlined and discussed.

We have identified within the agenda setting processes that financial indicators and feedback from the citizens have a powerful effect to bring a condition to the attention. Value violation is the most important tool by which a condition is defined as a problem. Pressure and lobbying from interest groups brought this problem to the attention of the politicians.

Alternatives and ideas originated from a variety of sources and circulated in different forms in a wide circle of audience. Although the selection process is not very straightforward, a two-tier organizational structure, as well as other associations was involved, and public acceptability seemed to be a significant factor for the final decision.

Partial couplings precede complete couplings in the opening of a window of opportunity –and we illustrated two such instances. Not until all the three streams are joined, action becomes possible. The intervention of the political factor seemed to play a critical role in both. In typological terms, the window of opportunity opened in the political stream, and was not related to any predictable cycles.

The policy entrepreneur responsible for the opening of the window for action belongs in the political stream. Seniority into position, political connections, and authority are the main resources for action. Need for reelection, as well as feeling of accomplishment seem to be the determinant motivations.

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