

Urban Governance in Dutch Urban Restructuring: Dealing with Collaborative Ideals or a Pragmatic Managerial Tool?



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Aim:

Identifying the success- and fail factors in the processes of urban restructuring and the lessons that can be learned from this.

Governance theory

Networks as a mode of governance

(Kooiman; Rhodes):

Principle: the role of government is to enable, steer and coordinate rather than control. The dispersal of state power is paramount.

Values: mutual trust, sharing, willingness to learn, mutual respect.

Post-structural theory in governance

(Jessop; Goodwin and Painter; Pierre and Peters):

Principle: Regulatory frameworks are determinants of governance practices.

The adaptation of state's power since the neo-liberal reforms of the 1980s.

'New' managerialism as a mode of governance

(Clarke and Newman):

Regulatory framework: more businesslike. Performance driven, meeting targets of the central state. Boundary management: targeting and the transfer of costs from the public to the private domain.

Result: horizontal cooperation is short-term, pragmatic and a calculated means to increase resources.

Research questions:

1. How do local stakeholders perceive the central-local relationship in urban governance?
2. Which perceptions do local stakeholders have of the problems in urban restructuring policies and what are the effects for the policy process?
3. What expectations do local stakeholders have of each other with respect to partnership working within the urban restructuring areas?
4. What are the successes and failures in network management in urban restructuring processes, which other intervening factors affect these processes?
5. Which factors contribute to sustainability in the cooperation of urban restructuring processes?



Method:

In-depth interviews with policymakers of the local authorities and housing associations and residents representatives in the area-based partnerships.

Research area's:

- The Hague: the neighbourhoods Morgenstond and Bouwlust
- Rotterdam: the neighbourhood Pendrecht
- Utrecht: the neighbourhood Hoograven
- Amersfoort: the neighbourhood Kruiskamp
- Arnhem: the neighbourhood Malburgen
- Zwolle: the neighbourhood Holtenkamp
- Breda: the neighbourhoods Heuvel and Noordoost

Stage:

Field work finished, two papers submitted for review, two papers in process, one abstract submitted.

Main result:

Neo-liberal 'new' managerialism dominates the urban governance processes in Dutch urban restructuring policies.

Features:

A centralistic performance driven regulatory framework. Boundary management of the state in the direction of the housing associations in order to increase resources. It creates conflicting pressures on partnership working in urban restructuring.

Domination of the institutional interests in the area-based partnerships. It leads to an institutional climate of avoiding any risk and results in closeness, inflexible contractual relationships, traditional hierarchical steering mechanism, and consequently a lack of innovation capacity.

The role of residents is restricted to implementation issues and they have no role in strategic decision-making in urban restructuring policies.

Network theoretical principles, such as trust, reciprocity, devolution of power to the community and flexibility in order to achieve a sustainable joint-working capacity are subordinated to the 'higher level' goals of new' managerialism of the state and of the local authorities and the housing associations.

Lessons:

Centralistic steering in the core domains of local government to arrive at effective urban governance practices is counterproductive.

A sustainable relationship in urban restructuring needs continue awareness of the various interests of stakeholders and continued adaptation to new circumstances and insights. Parent organisations must be subservient to this goal of sustainability.

Questions:

Can the same governance principles of 'new' managerialism be found in other policy domains within the Netherlands? (covenants, monitoring, closeness, inflexibility, very restricted role for citizens)