Displaced but still Moving Upwards in the Housing Career? Implications of Forced Residential Relocation in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT *The housing stock is being restructured in many Dutch post-war neighbourhoods. Through demolition and upgrading of social rented housing and the construction of new owner occupied dwellings, the housing stock and the living environment are being improved. This policy has triggered major residential moves in and beyond some neighbourhoods, partly involuntary. Residents whose dwelling is being demolished or heavily upgraded, are usually forced to move elsewhere. Knowledge of the social implications of forced relocation in the Netherlands is limited, especially on experiences and opinions of relocated households. This paper covers research in two recently restructured neighbourhoods. Movers were recruited to share their experiences and opinions in focus groups and interviews. Surprisingly, many movers were able to improve their housing situation, mostly due to their priority rights in the housing market. However, movers who were less able to take advantage of these rights reported a certain degree of degradation. Moreover, it appears that relocation processes must still be improved in order to reduce stress and refine communication with residents.*

Introduction

Many Dutch post-war neighbourhoods are undergoing radical restructuring of the housing stock. Through demolition and upgrading of social rented housing and the construction of new owner occupied dwellings, the housing stock and the living environment are being improved. Restructuring projects are grounded in a national policy for urban renewal, which was started in 1997. This policy aims at increasing the variation of residential environments, improving housing attractiveness, and strengthening the position of neighbourhoods in the housing market (MVROM, 1997; van Kempen & Priemus, 1999; Veldboer *et al.*, 2002).

While the focus is on maintaining and attracting middle-class and higher-income households to the city, physical measures in the housing stock initially

affect lower-income households. Large-scale measures trigger major residential moves in and beyond neighbourhoods. In particular, residents, whose dwelling is to be demolished or heavily upgraded, are forced to move elsewhere. The question is whether urban restructuring measures result in a degradation or improvement of the housing situation of these residents, or that it does not make any difference at all for them.

Forced relocation is a classic issue in urban renewal and gentrification (see e.g. Allen, 2000; Atkinson, 2002; Ekström, 1994; Fried, 1967; Gans, 1991; Goetz, 2002; Lyons, 1996). Nevertheless, knowledge of the social implications of forced relocation is surprisingly limited in the Dutch context of urban restructuring. Analysis of urban renewal policy documents of the 30 major Dutch cities has revealed that it is a neglected issue in renewal plans of local authorities (Kruythoff & Haars, 2002). Lacking these figures, an estimation of the magnitude of renewal-related relocation remains speculative.

Moreover, only sporadic research evidence is available on the experiences and opinions of relocated households in the Netherlands (Boersma & Bruins Slot, 1999; City of The Hague, 2001; Heins, 2001; van Kasteel, 2000). But several questions remain unanswered. Where did they move to? Did they experience freedom of choice in finding a new house, despite the forced nature of the relocation? Do they consider their changed housing situation to be better than or comparable to their previous residence? In their opinion, what are the benefits of the restructuring efforts? What do they think of the relocation process? Such qualitative knowledge is essential for the assessment of the social implications of forced relocation. This need is underlined by the increasing momentum of Dutch restructuring policy efforts, raising the numbers of households subject to forced relocation.

Therefore, the objective of this paper is to provide qualitative insights into experiences of forced movers, their opinions about forced relocation in advance, and how they view it retrospectively. These issues will be discussed within the context of Dutch legislative regulations for households in the social rented sector who are confronted with forced relocation. Through these regulations, these households are entitled to a comparable dwelling, special assistance and priority rights in the search for a new house. This system, which will be explained in detail, is supposed to prevent serious harm to the housing situation of social renters. But at the same time, this system does not guarantee an improved or even comparable housing situation in the context of urban restructuring. Hence, the paper assesses the extent to which forced relocation resulted in perceived improvement or deterioration of movers' housing situations and positions in their housing career.

This paper reports the results obtained from case study research in two areas that have been subject to demolition, upgrading and the construction of new houses. Focus groups and interviews were used for 65 movers who were obliged to relocate to another neighbourhood or a different part of the same district. The research was sponsored by the DGW-NETHUR Partnership, an association of the Dutch Ministry of Housing and the Netherlands Graduate School of Housing and Urban Research (NETHUR).

The paper is divided into six sections. The next section gives a detailed explanation of restructuring and relocation policy. This is followed by a review of relevant literature and the results of research carried out earlier. The fourth section describes the research design and analytical framework and explains the

research process and methods used. There is then a description of the main results of the research, focusing on five key issues of forced relocation. Finally, conclusions and recommendations for relocation policy are presented.

Housing Restructuring and Relocation Policy in the Netherlands

Housing Restructuring Policy

In many Dutch cities, early post-war neighbourhoods are the setting of considerable restructuring interventions in the housing stock. In these neighbourhoods, low-cost social rented apartment blocks, built after the Second World War often dominate the housing stock. These neighbourhoods are especially, but not exclusively, located in the four major cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. The social rented sector in these cities ranges from 39 per cent of the total stock in The Hague to 59 per cent in Rotterdam (MVROM, 2002). This social rented housing is increasingly not in accordance with current consumer preferences and high demands for housing quality. Therefore, low-income households with limited options often rent these houses. Middle-class and higher-income households often leave these areas which lack attractive housing career opportunities (e.g. van der Wouden & De Bruijne, 2001).

The policy memorandum *Urban Renewal* (*Stedelijke Vernieuwing*), issued in 1997, launched the instrument of housing and neighbourhood restructuring. Through physical interventions, such as demolition, new construction, renovation, upgrading and the sale of rented dwellings, attempts are being made to create greater differentiation in the housing stock and to improve public space. Thus, restructuring results in more diversity in dwelling size, form, quality, price and tenure (MVROM, 1997). The Urban Renewal Policy is part of a broadly oriented *Major Cities Policy* (*Grotestedenbeleid*). From a spatial perspective, the Major Cities Policy aims to strengthen the economic position of cities and reinforce the position of urban residential districts in the regional housing market.

During the 1990s, Dutch policy makers assumed that diversifying and improving the structure of the housing stock was the key to a stronger social structure and social climate (Kleinhans *et al.*, 2000; van Kempen & Priemus, 1999). The construction of more expensive dwellings, especially owner occupied, should promote a social mix within neighbourhoods, a supposed successful strategy in combating social segregation, and improving social cohesion. The introduction of higher-income households is thought to positively alter the social networks and contacts of current residents and provide 'role models' in behaviours and aspirations. Moreover, increased purchasing power was intended to improve shops and other local services (MVROM, 1997).

Many of these assumptions have provoked severe criticisms (e.g. Kleinhans *et al.*, 2000; Ostendorf *et al.*, 2001; van Kempen & Priemus, 1999, p. 654), because they are rooted in physical determinism. Generally, the conception that social problems can be solved by physical measures in the housing stock, has been heavily criticised. There are several examples of mixed neighbourhoods in which social conflicts and racism prevail, because of people with different lifestyles living together in the same area (Bolt *et al.*, 1998; van Kempen & Priemus, 2002).

After heated debates, the focus in restructuring policy has gradually shifted. The policy memorandum *What People Want, Where People Live* (*Mensen Wensen*

Wonen), issued in 2000, argues that a uniform socio-cultural structure of neighbourhoods is only a problem if it is involuntary or due to a lack of choice. "Redifferentiation can be sensible in order to retain wealthy households who are considering a move from the neighbourhood, by making sure that residents can make a housing career within their neighbourhood" (MVROM, 2000, pp. 76–77, my translation). At the same time, the focus is not exclusively on the wealthier groups in the housing market: "Much importance is attached to sufficient differentiation between residential environments, in order to meet housing preferences of both low-income and high-income households at a regional scale" (MVROM, 2000, p. 177, my translation).

Yet, these objectives cause a major dilemma at the neighbourhood level. Most restructuring areas are mainly inhabited by low-income households. Residents, whose dwelling is to be demolished or heavily upgraded, are forced to move if they cannot pay a higher rent or buy a new house in the same location. In this instance, opportunities to make a housing career within the same neighbourhood are cut off. From the perspective of the memorandum *What People Want, Where People Live*, this is undesirable.

At the same time, middle-class and sometimes even higher-income households reside in restructuring areas as well. Despite an outflow to the owner occupied sector, the shares of the highest income deciles residing in the Dutch social rented sector are still substantial, especially in the four largest cities (van Kempen & Priemus, 2002). More specifically, at least 19 per cent and at most 40 per cent of the households in the three highest income deciles lived in the social rented sector in the four largest cities (van Kempen & Priemus, 2002, p. 244, data for 1998). This could indicate two things. First, a part of this group may not have an opportunity to move out of the social rented sector, due to a lack of good alternatives in the owner occupied sector (van Kempen & Priemus, 2002, p. 240). Second, it is possible that they do not want to move out because of the attractiveness of social rented dwellings in terms of price-quality ratio and location advantages (van Kempen & Priemus, 2002).

Nevertheless, certain low-income households starting their work and housing careers may experience sharp rises in their disposable income, which causes higher demands on their housing situation as well. Thus, several types of households look for attractive housing career opportunities (i.e. single-family dwellings, owner occupation), which restructuring areas often lack. This leads to selective out-migration of middle-class and higher-income households from these neighbourhoods (MVROM, 2000; van der Vegt & Manshanden, 1996; van der Wouden & De Bruijne, 2001; van Kempen & Priemus, 2002). While this selective out-migration is not comparable to the renewal-related relocation of low-income households, it may have serious consequences in the long term. For example, it may erode the economic base of the neighbourhood and eventually, the city.

In short, the current restructuring policy faces the major challenge of providing housing quality and housing career opportunities for both low-income households and middle-class or high-income households. It is difficult to reconcile the needs of both groups, especially at the neighbourhood level. This contribution focuses on implications of forced relocation for low-income households. Before reviewing theory and empirical research, there is a look at relocation policy, in order to acknowledge the importance of the institutional and organisational context of relocation in urban restructuring.

Relocation Policy

The Dutch housing restructuring policy concentrates primarily on post-war urban districts with a high share of social rented dwellings that are let by housing associations. Local authorities, housing associations and also property developers work together to prepare and carry out the physical measures. Tenants in the Netherlands enjoy rent protection under the Dutch Civil Code. The landlord (often a housing association) may only give notice in strictly defined situations, such as demolition and drastic upgrading of dwellings. Hence, housing associations are legally allowed to relocate their tenants if necessary in order to carry out the restructuring measures. At the same time, eviction and relocation of tenants is subjected to strict rules and almost impossible without offering them a reasonable alternative. Tenants of housing associations are entitled to compensating provisions when they are forced to move out because of urban renewal. Basically, there are three regulations which apply to every local situation in the Netherlands. First and most importantly, movers are entitled to relocation in a dwelling that is comparable in size, type and tenure. Second, they must receive a reasonable allowance for relocation expenses. Third, they are eligible for extra assistance from the housing association, i.e. counselling in finding a suitable house. Local variations and arrangements are allowed as long as they are not in conflict with the basic principles of the standard rules in the Dutch Civil Code

In order to explain the process of relocation in the social rented sector, there is a need to understand the basic principles of allocation of social rented housing in The Netherlands. The current allocation mechanism is mostly referred to as the 'advert model' or the 'Delft model' (see Kullberg, 1997, 2002 for a detailed description). Dwellings available to rent are advertised in a weekly newspaper and on a special Internet site. The advertisements detail the characteristics of the vacant dwellings and the qualifying conditions, such as income levels and household size. House seekers interested in applying for a certain dwelling must send in a reply coupon to the housing association. Eligible applicants who have sent in this coupon are ranked by criteria such as age, number of years in their current residence or waiting period. The dwelling is allocated to the applicant with the longest residency or waiting period (Kullberg, 1997, 2002). In short, the advert model demands that house seekers respond to specific advertisements and must meet eligibility criteria in order to get a social rented house.

Basically, these advert model regulations also apply to residents who must move because of restructuring. Initially, they must seek a suitable alternative for themselves. Usually, a period of one year is arranged as the relocation period. If not all residents are relocated after a year, the period must be extended for some time. To speed up the relocation process, movers get a 'certificate of urgency' which gives them priority over regular house seekers in the social rented sector. When a mover with a certificate of urgency sends a reply coupon for a dwelling advertisement to the housing association, the vacant house is usually allocated to him and not to regular house seekers.

Besides the fact that movers must comply with regular eligibility criteria, the certificate of urgency is only valid for houses that are highly comparable to their current dwelling type. This restriction is established in the 'options profile', in which the housing association demarcates the relocation options available. Thus, the priority advantage is limited to the comparable social rented houses (Klein-

hans & Kruythoff, 2002). However, movers can register for other types of dwelling. The length of residency in the current dwelling is then the main eligibility criterion, not the certificate of urgency. Relocation residents may also be offered suitable relocation options. For example, they may have priority in choosing a dwelling in a new housing project developed by the local housing association. In this case, relocation residents must comply with eligibility criteria of the new housing project.

A final important aspect of relocation policy is about rent subsidies. Due to the Dutch rent subsidy system, households with an income below a certain level are eligible for rent subsidy (cf. Kullberg, 2002). Their income and the rent of their house determine the amount of the subsidy. In the case of forced relocation, these households maintain their rights for rent subsidy, even if the rent of the relocation dwelling is higher than the previous rent. While there is an upper limit to the rent price for which rent subsidy is available, movers can relocate to a more expensive (social rented) house without paying a higher bill every month. This is a disadvantage for households *without* rent subsidies, who have to pay the net increase of their monthly rent (Kleinhans & Kruythoff, 2002).

In conclusion, this section has dealt with restructuring and relocation policy in the Netherlands. As it is known how relocation is arranged, there is a need to know how forced relocation is seen from the point of view of residents and how they deal with it. Therefore, the next section reports theoretical perspectives and earlier research on experiences with forced relocation.

Theoretical Perspectives and Research Literature

Most literature on the relation between housing and well-being gives much attention to the concept of stress (Ekström, 1994, p. 370). Moreover, analyses of the consequences of forced relocation (e.g. Allen, 2000; Ekström, 1994; Fried, 1963, 1967; Gans, 1991) and displacement (e.g. Atkinson, 2002; LeGates & Hartman, 1986; Lyons, 1996; Marcuse, 1986) usually emphasise negative effects. At first sight, negative implications such as the loss of home, financial burdens, stress and potential loss of social networks are hardly counterbalanced by possible benefits of relocation. It must be emphasised that the implications are not exclusively determined by objective differences between the pre-relocation and post-relocation situation. Perceptions, expectations and needs play an important role. Because these can change during the process, this section attends to pre-relocation reactions, negative consequences, and conditions for positive implications afterwards.

Reactions to Forced Relocation before the Actual Move

When a household first receives a notice to quit the dwelling, many different reactions are imaginable. The reaction depends on several factors, of which four are discussed. The first factor is the meaning of home for the individual, which is amply documented (e.g. Despres, 1991; Saunders & Williams, 1988). For many people, their home is an important foundation for security and trust. Home represents a continuity in life, it can constitute a controlled territory (Ekström, 1994), and it helps shape the identity of its residents. Forced relocation is basically a violation and interruption of these features.

A second important factor is the residents' satisfaction with their house. Many

'traditional' models of residential moving behaviour assume that a certain adjustment will happen if satisfaction with the housing situation falls below an acceptable level or threshold value (e.g. Brown & Moore, 1970; Popp, 1976; Priemus, 1986). But Popp (1976) has pointed out that other, more obligatory causes can force a move to another dwelling, such as fire, divorce, sudden income decrease and demolition. It is important that Popp's model allows for the possibility that a notice to quit by the landlord is not obligatory, because the household has already been planning a relocation. Hence, forced relocation may be perceived as an opportunity to realise moving intentions.

A third factor is that movers have to deal with certain opportunities and constraints (see previous section), regardless of their opinions on the forced relocation. One of the main opportunities is the 'certificate of urgency' which gives them priority over regular house seekers in the social rented sector. According to Murie (1974, 1986), several barriers (filters) limit the available options for house seekers. Filters include lifestyle, house seeking behaviour, acquiring information, financial status, eligibility criteria and availability of the desirable housing option. The filters also apply to forced relocation, especially with regard to formal and informal allocation criteria of housing associations (cf. Kullberg, 1997; Murie, 1974; Pahl, 1970).

A fourth factor influencing pre-relocation reactions is the importance of residents' support for and understanding of urban renewal measures that require forced relocation. This factor strongly coheres with the three previously discussed factors. If residents agree with forced relocation, they are more prepared for substantial changes in their housing situation, which makes adaptation easier (e.g. Allen, 2000; van Kempen & Priemus, 2002) and lowers unwillingness and protest.

Negative Consequences of Forced Relocation: Affliction and Displacement

While Popp's model can be adapted to explain possible reactions to and anticipation on forced relocation, it fails to explain perceptions of the new housing situation after relocation. Apart from the relocation process, the move itself has a major impact on the well-being of residents. Any person will react and adapt differently to a situation of forced relocation, due to socio-economic and psychological differences as well as quality of the next dwelling, price, amenity, location, etc.

According to the psychologist Fried, people who are having difficulties adapting to the new situation can suffer from affliction, i.e. feelings of a painful loss, homesickness and inclination to idealise the former situation (Ekström, 1994; Fried, 1963; Teijmant, 1979). An individual's house and the immediate living environment are important for a sense of belonging and give a meaning to the area that is described as 'home'. This is even more important if social ties and networks are maintained in the familiar living environment. As the sense of belonging to the previous living area is stronger, the risk of affliction after relocation is higher (Fried, 1963, 1967). Gans (1991) points to evidence that demolition and urban clearance destroy not only housing, but also vibrant social structures (see also Allen, 2000; Couch, 1990; Ekström, 1994; Kleinhans *et al.*, 2000). It is difficult to assess the importance of this factor at present. There is a vast literature on the diminishing importance of intra-neighbourhood social interaction and social ties. These ties are often of a practical nature and stem

from practical help, joint use of neighbourhood facilities, and getting on at the level of everyday life. This implies a selective use of social interactions, in which residents are free to choose whether or not they want to engage in social interaction with neighbours (e.g. Bridge, 2002; Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Guest & Wierzbicki, 1999; Kleinhans *et al.*, 2000; Wellman & Leighton, 1979; Wellman *et al.*, 1988). Moreover, people can be socially attached to their neighbourhood without having social ties with other residents.

Recently, Goetz (2002) has compared effects of relocation for several groups in Minneapolis, i.e. involuntarily displaced households, families who voluntarily moved into replacement units and families who voluntarily used mobility certificates of the federal Moving to Opportunity programs. Goetz found sporadic support for his hypothesis that families forced into deconcentration would report fewer benefits from their moves, compared to voluntarily mobile families. This pattern emerged for several factors such as employment, income, poverty, social interaction of children and several items regarding neighbourhood satisfaction. In short, families who did not want to move out, were more likely to experience post-relocation problems (Goetz, 2002).

In the last two decades, forced relocation has mostly been associated with the issues of gentrification, displacement and urban clearance. In order to define displacement, some of the literature on gentrification is discussed here. Gentrification is commonly defined as "the rehabilitation of working-class and derelict housing and the consequent transformation of an area into a middle-class neighbourhood" (Smith & Williams, 1986, p. 1). Two common elements in the various definitions of gentrification (for an overview, see Hamnett, 1991) are physical improvement of a neighbourhood and selective migration, with poorer residents moving out and richer people moving into the area (Lyons, 1996; Palen & London, 1984).

Generally, displacement occurs when any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions which affect the dwelling or its immediate surroundings (HUD, in LeGates & Hartman, 1981, p. 214). Displacement is usually specified either as the consequence of certain processes or the way in which it is measured. Following Grier & Grier (1978), Marcuse (1986, p. 156) identifies several specifications:

- Economic/physical displacement; residents are priced out of a dwelling through rent increases or by physical means such as demolition and upgrading;
- Last resident displacement; a measure in which only the last resident is displaced;
- Chain displacement; counting includes all residents who have been displaced from a property during a certain period;
- Exclusionary displacement, which includes all people who have been unable to access property because it has been gentrified.

If Marcuse's typology is related to the Dutch context of urban restructuring (see previous section), it is clear that physical displacement is applicable to the relocation issue in this paper. Displacement occurs when dwellings are demolished or heavily upgraded, which necessitates a relocation of residents. This is exactly what happens in Dutch restructuring projects.

The majority of gentrification studies identify displacement as a significant problem (e.g. Atkinson, 2002; LeGates & Hartman, 1986; Lyons, 1996; Sumka,

1979). This is partly based on evidence or the premise that gentrification and displacement result in a degradation of the housing situation of displacees. But often it remains unclear how many people are affected and displaced. This is partly caused by the difficulties of developing methodologies capable of tracking the displaced (Atkinson, 2002; LeGates & Hartman, 1986; Lyons, 1996). Another complication is that groups labelled as displacees may not class themselves as such (Atkinson, 2000, p. 310).

These observations are highly relevant for the topic of this paper. As stated in the introduction, households in the social rented sector who are confronted with forced relocation, are legally entitled to a comparable dwelling, special assistance and priority rights. While all these movers can be considered as displacees, the question remains whether their housing situation deteriorates as well, as suggested by much gentrification research. Or do the legal provisions prevent serious harm to the social renters' housing situation? This question is addressed in the empirical part of this paper.

Conditions for Positive Consequences of Forced Relocation

The evidence of research into forced relocation implications shows a dominance of negative findings and effects. However, the possibility that forced relocation turns out well for movers cannot be excluded. Of course, there are several conditions for positive implications, apart from objective improvements in housing quality and size. Above all, disposition characteristics of movers are of importance. Again, an early example is the work of Fried (1967), who stated that "pre-relocation evidences of preparedness for change are the most important factors determining post-relocation adjustment-adaptation and tend to dwarf the importance of post-relocation situations and experiences" (1967, p. 100). However, he hurried to state that "objective improvement in the post-relocation situation does serve to counteract … tendency towards low levels of adjustment-adaptation" (1967, p. 99). Furthermore, he adds that objective improvements are more frequently associated with satisfaction for those who were ready to use the relocation as an opportunity for an increased range of choices.

While Fried did not explain in detail the scope of being prepared for change, it is clear that he refers to issues of disposition and control. From recent research into neighbourhood perception, it appears that dispositional optimism, mastery, coping mechanisms, and the intertwining of these with trust of authority and propensity to engage in civic activity are likely to influence neighbourhood perception (Greenberg, 1999). Dispositional optimists act to achieve beneficial outcomes, even in the face of difficult circumstances (Ekström, 1994; Scheier & Carver, 1987). Research into tenants' experience of estate renovation and its impact on their health and well-being also points to the importance of personal control, its degree of importance to the individual and, crucially, its negotiability (Allen, 2000, p. 443, see also Couch, 1990; Ekström, 1994). Tenants who are strongly confident of their own capacity, confront the problems they encounter head-on (cf. Lazarus, 1991). They obtain information, go with the right demands to the right people, and act strategically. On the other hand, tenants who doubt their own capacity, and/or feel shame and fear at the thought of being a nuisance, have difficulties in acting assertively (Ekström, 1994, p. 378). As a result, they can exert less control over the process and their own feelings. Lack

of control is a critical social issue when individuals who already have little opportunity to exercise control experience it (Thompson & Spacapan, 1991).

With regard to Dutch research concerning the Netherlands, Kleinhans & Kruythoff (2002) reviewed four evaluation studies of local relocation projects (Boersma & Bruins Slot, 1999; City of The Hague, 2001; Heins, 2001; van Kasteel, 2000). Overall, the outcomes of local evaluations are mostly positive. While the proportions are different, in each situation at least half of the forced movers have been satisfactorily relocated according to their preferences, within or outside their former neighbourhood. However, these local studies leave a number of issues untouched. First, these evaluation studies fail to provide an insight into the background of movers' motives and choices for alternative accommodations. Second, it remains unclear how movers perceived and dealt with forced relocation. Third, what is the perceived and actual freedom of choice in the context of the advert model of housing allocation? Are movers who are looking for a new house aware of the constraints and opportunities within the relocation regulations (see second section)? These questions must be answered in order to fully understand the implications for each individual household.

Analytical Framework and Research Design

The previous section highlights the gaps in the knowledge on forced relocation in the Dutch context. These gaps mostly concern qualitative knowledge of experiences, satisfaction, perceptions and the opinions of movers. This has important ramifications for the design and implementation of the research in this paper. The research traced and surveyed movers to determine their subjective evaluation of how they compare their new dwelling to the former one. This approach has been adapted in earlier American gentrification-displacement studies (for a review, see LeGates & Hartman, 1986).

The analytical framework presented here slightly resembles that of Allen (2000) who analysed health impacts of urban renewal. Allen's framework (2000, p. 450) looks like a scatter plot which represents the distinction between positive or negative feelings towards the outcome (*x*-axis), the final renovated state of the accommodation, and the feelings towards the process of renovation (*y*-axis). The framework in this paper is a cross table, in which the rows represent three broad types of pre-relocation attitudes derived from Popp (1976). The columns represent three broad perceptions of the post-relocation housing situation compared with the pre-relocation situation. All respondents are situated in this Table according to their position in both dimensions. For instance, an *a priori* feeling of coercion can negatively influence the evaluation of the new housing situation if it is worse than or not different from the former situation. But it may also combine with a perceived improvement in the new housing situation. At the other end of the spectrum, forced relocation may be perceived as an opportunity to effectuate moving plans and then, subsequently, 'launch' a household upwards in its housing career. However, the same perceived opportunity can also turn out as a deception if the new housing situation is worse than the former housing situation. Thus, the analytical framework broadly covers all possible perceptions, with the 'worst' outcome in the upper left corner and the 'best' outcome in the lower right corner.

The research design and available funds enabled two case studies, which were selected according to several criteria. First, the research was limited to former

Table 1. Analytical framework for the analysis of forced relocation

Attitudes towards forced relocation (before the actual move)	Perception of new housing situation compared to former situation		
	Degradation	Limited difference with previous situation	Improvement
Negative (obligatory)	…	…	…
Neutral (acceptance)	…	…	…
Positive (opportunity)	…	…	…

residents who received notice from the housing association that they had to leave. Movers who had left the neighbourhood before the announcement of restructuring were deliberately excluded from the research population for two reasons. First, their move had not been obligatory due to housing restructuring. Second, they were not entitled to the certificate of urgency, extra assistance and allowance for relocation expenses, which are all evaluated in this paper from the residents' perspective.

The second criterion implied that the relocation must have taken place less than three years ago and longer than six months ago. It was assumed that this time span excluded residents for whom it had been a long time since their relocation, and households who had not yet settled down and could not make proper evaluations of their experiences.

Third, the local housing association had to have a list with current addresses of movers, a prerequisite for inviting them to participate in the research. With these criteria, two restructuring projects in the cities of Utrecht and The Hague were selected (see Table 2). In Nieuw-Hoograven (Utrecht), 188 social rental apartments were demolished and replaced with 102 expensive owner occupied single-family dwellings. The relocation started in the autumn of 1998 and lasted for more than a year. Originally, the housing association in Utrecht had planned the construction of new social rented housing, in order to provide the movers with relocation options within the same neighbourhood. A housing needs survey highlighted the interest of many movers in these new dwellings. Unfortunately, the city council frustrated the construction plan of the housing association because it wanted to construct a special bus road directly adjacent to the potential construction site. In such a situation, environmental legislation demands high standards of sound insulation of the houses. This made the original construction plan too expensive and it was abandoned. Thus, relocation options were limited to the already existing housing stock.

In The Hague, an area in Morgenstond-Oost was selected. The restructuring project consisted of a mix of measures, ranging from demolition to renovation and merging of two houses into one dwelling (see Table 2). The relocation started in the winter of 1999 and lasted almost two years. During the relocation period, the housing association constructed two new apartment buildings in the same neighbourhood. The 'Erasmus' and 'Zuiderpark' buildings provided for 69 and 50 dwellings respectively, with rents below the market price. Movers who applied for these buildings were given priority over ordinary applicants for

these apartments. These apartments were crucial for the relocation programme. As many as 84 households moved into these dwellings. Finally, it must be mentioned that 55 households moved into temporary accommodation, waiting for their return into the renovated and merged dwellings, which is expected in 2003. These households are excluded from the research population, because they have not made a definitive move.

Both case studies are typical Dutch examples of a housing restructuring area. Low-cost rented apartments dominate the housing stock with rent levels below €300 per month. The apartments were often small and of relatively low quality. In particular, the dwellings in Utrecht had many physical defects. Households with low incomes and a low socio-economic status particularly occupied these apartments. The age structure and household composition were more diversified: not only young single households and couples starting their housing career, but also elderly people and families with children. The respondents in the research reflect this diverse demographic pattern; many types of households were represented. Unfortunately, specific population characteristics were not available for the restructured building blocks.

In The Hague, all moving households could be traced, but only 70 in Utrecht, because of inadequate administration by the housing association. The movers who could be traced, received an invitation letter or telephone call, asking them to participate in the research. This resulted in a moderate response: 25 per cent of all movers in The Hague and 13 per cent of all movers in Utrecht. It is impossible to check the selectivity of participants in relation to the research population. Nonetheless, the results of this qualitative study are illustrative for matters which are perceived negatively or positively.

In both case studies, two or three focus groups and a number of individual interviews with movers were conducted. Participants were assigned to focus groups as much as possible. The focus groups were organised in the neighbourhood, i.e. in the neighbourhood caretaker's office (Utrecht) or a meeting room in an apartment building (The Hague). For those who were unable to participate in a group (due to physical reasons, age, other activities on the date of the focus groups, etc.) or did not want to, an individual interview was arranged. Most interviews were conducted by telephone.

The basic principle of focus groups is a structured conversation between eight to ten people, co-ordinated by a moderator. This method has several advantages (cf. Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). First, listening to other people's opinions and experiences can help to formulate one's own opinion and recollect experiences. Second, the spontaneity is more substantial than with other research methods. Third, focus groups are relatively efficient, because several people are interviewed simultaneously. Finally, people often like participation in a focus group, not only for fun, but for expressing personal experiences and frustrations as well. A drawback of focus groups is that eloquent participants can dominate the discussion and hence influence the results. Presumably, the participants in this research may have consented to join a focus group because they wanted to voice frustrations or expected to gain some sort of benefit (see also Allen, 2000, p. 446). It is also possible that participants might want to boast about their accomplishments. Unfortunately, a final answer to this question cannot be given.

Both in the interviews and focus groups, several specific questions were asked about the process of relocation and its obligatory nature, the range of relocation opportunities, perceived and actual freedom of choice, several aspects of

Table 2. Characteristics of the selected case studies

Neighbourhood	Movers (households affected)	Respondents	Restructuring measures and net decline of housing
Nieuw-Hoograven, Utrecht	188 movers, consisting of: - 66 movers to other areas - 4 movers to existing stock in the same area - 118 untraceable due to inadequate administration	24 movers to other areas = 13% of all movers	Demolition of 188 houses, construction of 102 new houses *Net decline:* 86 houses
Morgenstond-Oost, The Hague	239 movers, consisting of: - 80 movers to other areas - 84 to new construction in the same area - 55 to temporary dwellings (not in research population) - 20 unknown (vacancies, inadequate administration)	13 movers to other areas and 28 movers into new construction in the same area = 25% of all movers, except movers to temporary houses	Demolition of 115 houses, renovation and merging of 124 houses into 79 apartments, construction of 83 new houses *Net decline:* 77 houses

the previous and current dwelling and the perception of the new housing situation. Moreover, several socio-economic factors were included, such as household composition, age, source of income (job, pension, etc.), ethnicity, and education. In the focus groups, these factors were not asked directly during the conversations. The focus group participants were asked to fill in a short list with questions about these factors, before or after the session.

Results and Discussion

All the movers who moved out of the area were relocated in several neighbourhoods across both cities or, in The Hague, out of the city into neighbourhoods in adjacent counties. The majority of the respondents in The Hague moved to urban districts very comparable to Morgenstond-Oost. The same pattern applies to the movers in Utrecht. Due to strict privacy regulations in the Netherlands, the housing associations did not disclose the actual destinations of all movers for this research. The housing association in The Hague only reported that 84 households (see Table 2) had been relocated in two newly constructed apartment buildings in the same neighbourhood. In the remainder of this paper, they are referred to as 'movers to new housing estates'. Otherwise, only the new locations of the respondents are known because they were questioned about it.

This section presents the empirical results of the two case studies. In order to do justice to the wealth of empirical material, the discussion is divided into five issues:

- Attitudes towards forced relocation before the actual move;
- Relocation opportunities within the neighbourhood;
- Perceived and actual freedom of choice for movers;
- Perception of the new housing situation;
- Opinions on special assistance, information and allowance for relocation expenses.

Attitudes Towards Forced Relocation Before the Actual Move

The reactions preceding the forced relocation show strong diversity among the respondents in both case studies. However, three interrelated factors turned out to be vital in this respect, i.e. the satisfaction with the former housing situation, the extent to which people had already been planning a move and the preparedness for change (cf. Fried, 1967). The more flexible people are, the fewer problems with the forced move and adaptation to the new situation are to be expected. These findings are similar to those of Allen (2000). He found that people who felt they were exercising control over their situation had essentially seen the opportunity to do so (p. 450). But it is not exclusively a matter of perception. Lack of control is a critical social issue when experienced by individuals with little opportunity to exercise control (Thompson & Spacapan, 1991). It appears that age is the most predicting factor in this respect. Mainly elderly people of 55 years and older reported difficulties in coping with the notification of the relocation. Many were strongly attached to their current housing situation:

I cried many tears when I handed in the house key. I had lived there

for so long and now, I had to wait and see where I would end up. (respondent from Utrecht)

In particular, the uncertainty 'where you would end up' caused much distress, not only among elderly people. Moreover, many feared the move and the accompanying chaos itself, because they actually had little opportunity for control.

They force you to leave your house, but they don't offer you an alternative dwelling. You have to do it all by yourself. (respondent from Utrecht)

Therefore, many matters were uncertain for them so their preparation for change was low, as well as their actual control possibility. In general, most respondents were initially very unhappy with the notification of their obligatory move. Among these respondents were three people (two from The Hague, one from Utrecht) who had already experienced forced relocation several years ago. One of them reported:

When I received the letter from the housing association, I thought to myself: "Oh no, not again" but indeed, I had to move once again. (respondent from Utrecht).

However, residents who were unsatisfied with their housing situation reacted in a far more calculating manner. Many of them had already been thinking about a move, but an intention to move was still a long way from actually doing so. The notification of the housing association acted as the final push to make up their mind and take action. Unlike the distressed people, the issue of control had a completely different meaning to them. A respondent from The Hague tellingly stated that:

After some time, I realised that I could have some benefits from it. You get priority over other house seekers, so you are on top of the list.

He and many others realised that the forced relocation might enable them to look for a better house or neighbourhood that would not be possible under normal circumstances, by virtue of their certificate of urgency. Hence, they felt they were able to take control over their position and the search for an attractive relocation dwelling. For several movers, this also came down to looking for a different neighbourhood:

I was just waiting for the demolition, so I could get out of that area.

Unlike the group of distressed people who were mainly 55 years and older, the positive and calculating reactions came from very different kinds of respondents, whether old or young, married or single, with or without children and with or without rent subsidies. They all shared the intention to take maximum advantage of the certificate of urgency instead of being bothered with the nature of the forced relocation itself.

Relocation Opportunities Within the Neighbourhood

Forced relocation does not always imply leaving the neighbourhood. Sometimes movers succeed in finding another house in the same area, usually in the

existing housing stock. More importantly, restructuring can provide attractive relocation possibilities in the same area, for example in newly constructed dwellings. Intra-neighbourhood relocation in new housing estates is only possible when the movers can afford the rent of the new houses. Very often restructuring results in new dwellings which are too expensive for the residents from the demolished or upgraded houses.

The case studies are very different with respect to relocation opportunities within the neighbourhood (see previous section). Originally, the housing association in Utrecht had planned the new construction of social rented housing, but this plan was abandoned. As a result, relocation movers were deprived of attractive relocation alternatives within the neighbourhood. Several respondents expressed strong complaints about this procedure:

> After our move, we have never heard again about the new social rented dwellings. I really feel that we have been cheated about it. (respondent from Utrecht)

By contrast, the housing association in The Hague succeeded in constructing two new apartment buildings during the relocation period in the same neighbourhood. The 'Erasmus' and 'Zuiderpark' buildings provided for 69 and 50 dwellings respectively, with rents below the market price. Movers who applied for these buildings were given priority over ordinary applicants for these apartments. In the end, 84 relocation movers used this possibility to move to a new high-quality dwelling within the same area (see Table 2). This has a major influence on satisfaction, as is pointed out later. It also made the actual relocation easier:

> You could take it easy, because the new house was within a stone's throw.

Perceived and Actual Freedom of Choice for Movers

Usually, urban renewal movers themselves are supposed to look for alternative accommodation in the social rented sector (see second section). With a certificate of urgency, they have priority over common, i.e. non-urgent applicants. Therefore, they are supposed to have ample opportunities to find an appropriate house that matches their aspirations. This implies a certain freedom of choice, despite the obligatory nature of the relocation. Many movers in the case studies succeeded in finding a suitable house in this way. They were aware of their opportunities and possibilities and were reasonably satisfied with their freedom of choice.

However, perceived and actual freedom of choice has been narrowed by several circumstances. The first and most important restricting factor is the housing allocation model used for restructuring. While movers can choose from the available supply of social housing, allocation criteria on household size, income and length of residence in the previous dwelling exclude several options. For example, married or unmarried couples without children usually are not entitled to a single-family dwelling in the social rented sector. A typical remark is:

> Either your income is too high or your household is one person too

small. It's difficult to find something for which you are eligible. (respondent from The Hague)

Moreover, the certificate of urgency is only valid for houses that are highly comparable to the type of dwelling they have to leave. These restrictions are established by the housing association in the 'options profile'. Thus, for many relocation movers it is virtually impossible to make a step upwards in their housing career, i.e. moving to a bigger, higher-quality dwelling. This raised much annoyance among many of them.

At the same time, moving upwards in the housing career was possible for a number of movers. Indeed, all movers could apply for other types of dwellings for which the certificate of urgency was not valid. In that case, they had to compete with ordinary housing applicants. In this situation, length of residence is the most important criterion determining the chances of success. Consequently, forced movers with a very long length of residence in their house were able to relocate into a type of dwelling that had not been accessible through the certificate of urgency. For example, a few households moved from an apartment to a single-family dwelling. This occurred both in Utrecht and The Hague.

The second important factor that narrowed the movers' freedom of choice is competition between movers from different housing restructuring projects in the city. Basically, the certificate of urgency gives forced movers a head start on common housing applicants in the social rented sector. This relative advantage is diminished when many other movers with certificates of urgency compete for the same relocation options at the same time. As a result, the available range of options for movers decreases. Particularly movers in the case study of The Hague reported this competition.

Third, many movers reported the heavy mental burden of finding a suitable house within the relocation period, which was initially established at one year in both Utrecht and The Hague. As mentioned in the previous section, the relocation period lasted considerably more than one year in both situations. Nevertheless, there was a wrongful belief among the movers that they had to relocate within a year in order to prevent eviction. Unfortunately, too many movers are not aware of the fact that housing associations can never evict their tenants within a certain period without offering a suitable alternative (see the section on relocation policy). Apart from actual restrictions on freedom of choice, this belief resulted in compromising on their housing needs and wishes. A few relocated movers believed that they have made a rash decision, leaving them with a house that did not match with their aspirations:

I would have preferred more time, so I could find a house where I could really settle myself, but it was not possible. I had to compromise.

Obviously, the movers who were most distressed by the forced relocation suffered most from the time pressure. However, several movers who perceived the relocation as an opportunity to move to a better house, also reported this kind of stress.

However, the picture for the 'movers to new housing estates' in The Hague is completely different. Here, 84 residents with a certificate of urgency have chosen relocation in the two newly constructed apartment buildings, Erasmus and Zuiderpark. The new housing development, situated within walking distance of their previous house, had a strong appeal to the movers to new housing estates

who moved into these apartments. Many of them abandoned or never started their search for a house outside the neighbourhood when this possibility was opened for them by the housing association:

> Why should I look around myself? They [the housing association] gave us the opportunity to choose this new dwelling before they would offer it to other people. All the other stuff they offer is old and worn-out. (respondent from The Hague)

The respondents who did not choose relocation in the new housing estates Erasmus and Zuiderpark had several reasons to opt for other alternatives. First, some of them wanted to leave the neighbourhood in order to settle down in a different area. This had to do with negatively perceived features of Morgen-stond-Oost, but also with pull factors of other areas, such as family already living there, good reputation, etc. Second, several respondents did not like the dwellings in the new housing estates because they were looking for 'less massive types of houses', such as single-family dwellings. This was especially applicable to households with children.

Perception of the New Housing Situation

Most of the participants in the research made a positive choice for their new dwelling. But this empirical finding does not yet answer the question whether forced relocation resulted in a degradation or improvement of the housing situation for these residents, or that it made any difference at all. The pre-relocation attitude has to be examined with the perception of the post-relocation housing situation compared to the pre-relocation situation. Table 3 presents the analytical framework in which all respondents are situated according to their position in both dimensions.

Two patterns stand out in the Table. First, almost all unsatisfied residents who were looking for an opportunity to improve their housing situation succeeded in their attempts. Second, residents who had initially felt obliged to move often improved their position as well, but almost exclusively in The Hague. For both categories, major improvements were due to the size and technical quality of their new dwelling (e.g. central heating, double-glazing), but also the quality of the immediate surroundings and the neighbourhood in terms of services, safety and green spaces.

Due to differences in local context and options for relocation, it is difficult to compare the results in Utrecht and The Hague. Nevertheless, an approximate comparison yields far more positive opinions in The Hague than in Utrecht. The movers to new housing estates cause this difference. While 23 of these respondents were initially unwilling to move, they were able to improve dramatically their housing situation. Not only the very good price-quality ratio of the new housing development, but also the opportunity to relocate within the same neighbourhood contributes to the positive evaluations of movers to new housing estates. Thus, the local housing association succeeded in offering attractive relocation options to many renters.

In order to check respondents' answers with regard to satisfaction with the new housing situation, residents had to answer a few additional questions, which were used as a proxy for housing satisfaction. These questions referred to the 'expected length of residence' (cf. Dantas, 1988; Hoogvliet, 1992) in the new

Table 3. Opinions of movers in Nieuw-Hoograven (Utrecht) and of movers and movers to new housing estates in Morgenstond (The Hague)

	Perception of new housing situation compared to former situation					
Attitudes towards forced relocation (before actual move)	Degradation		Limited difference with previous situation		Improvement	
	Utrecht	The Hague	Utrecht	The Hague	Utrecht	The Hague
Negative (obligatory)	5	2	6	0	2	23
Neutral (acceptance)	0	1	1	0	2	0
Positive (opportunity)	0	0	0	3	8	12
Σ per area	5	3	7	3	12	35

Source: Case study interviews.

dwelling, and the 'possible return outlook', i.e. the possibility to return to a new or upgraded house in the restructuring area. For example, a resident who had been satisfactorily relocated was likely to report a long expected length of residence in the new dwelling. On the other hand, an unsatisfied resident might consider a new move. The expected length of residence is, of course, not only influenced by satisfaction, but by household developments (childbirth), age and job career as well (e.g. Hoogvliet, 1992).

Generally, the answers on expected length of residence and possible return outlook underline the findings on improvement or degradation of the new housing situation. This pattern is only partly explained by the position of the respondents in the household cycle. Thus, elderly people who improved their housing situation intended to stay in their new house 'for the rest of my life'. On the other hand, movers who did not make any progress often planned a new move. The dissatisfaction mostly results from the quality of the neighbourhood they moved to. A few movers accepted 'a reasonable dwelling', but could not get along with the new neighbours, suffered from nuisance or felt that they did not 'fit into the area':

> It is not my neighbourhood, it's a strange kind of people here, I don't like it. (respondent from The Hague).

Respondents' answers to the questions on the possible return outlook seemed inversely related to the improvement in housing situation and the expected length of residence. Movers who were satisfactorily relocated expressed a long expected length of residence and did not strive for a return in a new or upgraded dwelling on the location of the housing blocks which had been demolished. For a few of these respondents, the high level of satisfaction with their new housing situation was not the only reason to express a long expected length of residence. In a telling remark, one Utrecht respondent said:

> No, I don't want to leave this place. I am fine here. And I do not feel like another house move with all the expenses and efforts.

Apart from the improved housing situation, a few respondents also excluded a

new move because of the trouble and discomfort it would give them. A respondent from The Hague observed:

> A house move is never pleasant, but now, I am extremely glad with my new house. Everything is brand new and clean, I like it very much and I am going to stay for ever.

Table 3 shows that forced relocation resulted in degradation of a number of residents' housing situations, especially in Utrecht. The movers involved complained of a disproportionate rent increase and an unfavourable price-quality ratio. One Utrecht respondent remarked:

> I can't save up money anymore, because I have to pay so much rent.

While the new house can be quite acceptable, the rise in rental costs may be too high to enjoy the new housing situation. For a number of movers, the rise in rental costs amounted to approximately €135 per month, which is substantial compared with maximum rent costs in the social rental sector (about €540 per month). As mentioned earlier, the rent levels in the demolished dwellings did not exceed €300 per month. Thus, a number of movers had to deal with a rise of approximately 20–45 per cent in rental costs.

   The crucial point here is that not every mover pays the full rise of rental costs. Due to the Dutch rent subsidy system, many low-income movers were receiving rent subsidies at the time of their relocation. In Utrecht, nine of the 24 movers received rent subsidies. In The Hague, this was 21 of the 41 respondents. In the instance of forced relocation, movers maintain their rights for rent subsidy, also if the rent of the relocation dwelling is higher than the previous rent. The increase of the rent subsidy compensates for the increase of the rent itself. As a result, many movers who move to more expensive rented houses pay only a little more rent in their current dwelling. Many movers to new housing estates in The Hague are a clear example of this mechanism.

   However, the system of rent subsidies has its drawbacks, especially for households just above the critical limit. Households whose income is slightly too high (but still low), are not entitled to rent subsidies. At the same time, many relocation options comparable to the pre-relocation dwelling have a higher rent price. Without the compensating effect of rent subsidy, any rent increase is a net increase of housing costs.

   Almost all movers who reported a degradation of their housing situation earned too much to be entitled to rent subsidies. This explains why the financial consequences were most substantial for them. A typical observation is:

> We can barely pay this higher rent. If my partner or I quit working, we have a major budget problem.

The final issue related to the perception of the new housing situation is the impact of forced relocation on social ties and networks with neighbours. The movers and movers to new housing estates were asked about changes in different kinds of social interaction with neighbours. Overall, the effects of forced relocation have been limited, which can be explained by two reasons. First, many movers considered social ties and networks with neighbours relatively unimportant in comparison with social ties with family and friends. Social interaction with neighbours is usually limited and of a practical nature. Respondents who reported improvement or degradation of social ties mostly referred to

the extent to which they could get along with their new neighbours and other neighbourhood residents. A few movers have been confronted with difficulties in this respect, which negatively influences their perception of the new housing situation.

The only exceptions to this general rule were a number of elderly respondents. A few of them showed signs of affliction, i.e. feelings of homesickness and an inclination to idealise the former situation (cf. Fried, 1963). They lost their sense of belonging and social contacts in their familiar neighbourhood and this caused a strong desire to return to their familiar environment. Two of these respondents dealt with this in a very practical way. They continued to do their shopping in their former neighbourhood stores in order to meet and talk to familiar people they had known for a long time.

The second reason for a limited social impact is the distance between the former and current location. The movers to new housing estates in The Hague moved within the same neighbourhood. They were able to maintain at least part of their neighbourhood ties without much difficulty.

Evaluation of the Relocation Process and Special Assistance

For many movers, especially the movers to new housing estates, the improvement in the housing situation outweighs the inconvenience of the forced relocation. Nevertheless, many movers consider the move and relocation process as unpleasant. Both in Utrecht and The Hague, participants reported more negatives than positive experiences and opinions, probably because they were more eager to tell about the issues which had troubled them. Naturally, this does not mean that all respondents only have negative experiences. In order to evaluate their opinions on the relocation process, several questions were asked related to three aspects:

- allowance for relocation expenses
- extra assistance (offered by counsellors of the housing association, e.g. in filling out forms, providing information, looking for another house and giving mental support)
- information during the process: letters, leaflets and information meetings.

First, there was much agreement on the allowance for relocation expenses, which amounted to €2270 in Utrecht and €3630 in The Hague. The allowance did not fully compensate for total relocation costs for anyone. However, there were two 'opinion groups' on the nature of the allowance. Many movers would have liked a (much) higher allowance, because of the obligatory relocation. In particular, movers in Utrecht took the position that the allowance was too low. However, others stressed the nature of concession of the allowance, while acknowledging that the allowance did not fully compensate the relocation expenses. The clear division between these opinions was particularly evident in the focus groups with movers to new housing estates in The Hague.

Second, the opinions on the special assistance by the local housing association show a different pattern. While it was formally offered both in Utrecht and The Hague, merely offering special assistance was not always perceived as such. Some movers complained about lack of assistance and seemed ignorant of the fact that it had been offered to them in a letter from the housing association. Apparently, they only perceived a first step and personal contact by a counsellor

as assistance. Furthermore, written arrangements with regard to relocation options, priority status and other rights and obligations could not prevent many misunderstandings among movers and movers to new housing estates. Thus, there is a need for individual assistance that is adjusted to individual needs. In the case studies, mainly elderly people needed special assistance, because they had more difficulty to cope with the forced move than younger people did (cf. Ekström, 1994).

Third, the respondents generally approved of the written information, such as letters and leaflets. But a much-discussed item in the focus groups was the use of information meetings for the 'general public'. Many respondents who had attended a meeting felt that they were not listened to and that the information was too superficial:

> They were just beating around the bush. You couldn't get a proper answer for your question or get some proper information.

Or, from another respondent:

> They really made a fool of you, they were just talking rubbish.

Other focus group participants reported that promises made at these public meetings were not kept afterwards. From the perspective of the housing association, it is tempting to organise a standard approach, just because people are different, react differently and want different things (see also Allen, 2000, p. 456). But public information meetings appear an unsuitable method to communicate with every single household, let alone providing it with an opportunity to exercise a certain level of control and involvement. Again, this underlines the necessity for individual assistance tailored to personal needs. This could mean that counsellors of the housing association offer help and information in a way that is most appropriate for each individual renter.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations for Relocation Policy

This paper has reported the results of empirical research into the experiences and satisfaction of movers who have been confronted with forced relocation. The empirical evidence suggests that relocation efforts of movers and housing associations in Utrecht and The Hague were quite successful, but they were different in the level of success.

In Utrecht, half of the respondents reported an improved housing situation, whereas this figure was much higher in The Hague. The main reason for reported improvements in housing situation can be accredited to higher quality of the post-relocation dwellings, either in the same area or in another neighbourhood.

In spite of the tight local housing markets, the certificate of urgency gives relocation movers a head start over regular house seekers. Within the limits of their options profile, many movers were able to take advantage of their priority status, which improved their chances and position in the local housing market. The certificate of urgency enabled them to send a reply coupon for a better, hence more popular dwelling in the available supply. Without the certificate, many movers would have to (unsuccessfully) compete with regular house seekers with higher chances of acquiring the popular dwellings due to a longer residency in their current dwelling.

While all movers can be considered as displacees, most respondents moved upwards in their housing career as a result of their improved housing situation. Constructing and offering attractive relocation options within the same neighbourhood is a successful strategy to enable housing career possibilities. The movers to new housing estates in The Hague made good use of the opportunity to relocate into a new apartment building. They benefited most from the restructuring project. This strategy seems particularly suitable and attractive for elderly people who prefer to stay in their familiar neighbourhood. On the contrary, the unfulfilled promise of new construction in the Utrecht case study caused much distress and complaints about the range of available relocation options. It is hard to say which of the cases is typical for the Netherlands, but the case of The Hague is more in line with current policy demands (MVROM, 2000).

Furthermore, it appears that the rent subsidy system is an important factor in determining the net housing costs after relocation. While there is a limit to the rent price for which rent subsidy is available, movers entitled to rent subsidies can relocate to a more expensive (social rented) house without paying a higher bill every month. This is a disadvantage for households *without* rent subsidies, who have to pay the net increase of their monthly rent. Consequently, they benefit less by restructuring. Further research is required to examine the amount of additional rent costs for different income categories.

The empirical results confirm several theoretical notions discussed earlier. Not only objective improvements and satisfaction with the former and current housing situation determine successful adjustment and adaptation of movers and movers to new housing estates. Additionally, the extent to which people have already been planning a move and the preparation for change heavily influence movers' opinions on the relocation process and changed housing situation (Fried, 1963, 1967; Teijmant, 1979). A calculating reaction to the forced relocation has turned out very well for most of the movers and movers to new housing estates. This confirms earlier findings emphasising the role of people's dispositions in their ways of relating their actions to difficult situations (Ekström, 1994; Greenberg, 1999; Lazarus, 1991; Scheier & Carver, 1987).

The negative effects of demolition and relocation on neighbourhood social ties were limited in the two case studies. Many respondents considered local social ties relatively unimportant, which is in line with the literature on the diminishing importance of intra-neighbourhood social interaction and social ties (e.g. Bridge, 2002; Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Guest & Wierzbicki, 1999; Wellman *et al.*, 1988). Moreover, the movers to the new housing estates in The Hague remained in the same neighbourhood. Consequently, they were able to maintain neighbourhood ties without much difficulty.

Nevertheless, the research uncovers the far-reaching effects of forced relocation on residents' personal lives, particularly because of the obligatory nature of their move. The fact that a top-down decision of urban renewal turns personal lives of residents upside down requires high-quality support, assistance and information from the local housing association (cf. Ekström, 1994). The factor of personal control and the ability to exercise control (Allen, 2000; Thompson & Spacapan, 1991) are crucial in coping with the distressing events resulting from forced relocation. The sheer under-estimation of the importance of individual assistance and feeling a sense of control demonstrates that many improvements are possible in this respect.

While the results show a generally favourable picture, a warning observation must be made. The increasing scale of Dutch restructuring policy efforts rapidly increases the number of residents in need of relocation. This may cause two problems. First, a growing number of movers with certificates of urgency will compete for relocation possibilities at the same time. While some evidence of this problem was found in The Hague, this is still a speculative conclusion. Further research is required to estimate the magnitude of this issue. But as a result of the competition, the available options in the social rented sector decrease. This development is simultaneously reinforced by the reduction of affordable social housing, as a result of the same restructuring policy which makes forced relocation necessary (van Kempen & Priemus, 2002, p. 247; VROM-Raad, 2002). Thus, successful relocation in the social rented sector will be increasingly difficult in the near future, which may negatively influence opportunities and perceptions of relocated residents.

The second problem arises out of the first. Despite competition problems, the certificate of urgency still provides relocation movers with a head start over ordinary housing applicants, for whom access to the tight social rented housing sector is becoming even more difficult. Movers from restructuring areas who have a priority status will occupy many available dwellings. The already increasing scale of restructuring efforts is likely to put a continuing pressure on the housing opportunities of ordinary housing applicants in the social rented sector (VROM-Raad, 2002). Again, this issue requires further research.

Finally, three recommendations for policy makers involved in restructuring and relocation policy are given. First, as the need for special assistance and counselling differs greatly for any individual, it makes sense to discover the needs of assistance for all households involved. If these differences are uncovered, counsellors from the housing association can tailor their assistance to these needs and not waste time on assistance for those who do not need and do not want it (cf. Allen, 2000).

Second, relocation movers confronted with a provable degradation of their housing situation and housing career opportunities could be offered help in finding a more suitable alternative. A possible arrangement is a formal restitution of their length of residence in their pre-relocation dwelling. As mentioned earlier, length of residence is the main criterion for allocation of social rented housing. This enables movers to start a new search in a position comparable to regular house seekers in the social rented sector. Without such an arrangement, moving options of displaced households are severely limited due to a very short length of residence in their relocation dwelling.

Third, housing associations should be aware of 'relocation nomadism', or, in other words, chain relocation. Because relocation movers are entitled to comparable dwellings, they run the risk of relocation in a house that will be restructured in a few years time (Kleinhans & Kruythoff, 2002). In that case, they will again have to move involuntarily. This had happened to three respondents in the case studies. In general, the risk of chain relocation is increasing steadily with the growing intensity of housing restructuring in Dutch post-war neighbourhoods. The housing association in The Hague has acknowledged this danger and has invented a clear solution. The housing association has developed a 'guarantee map', showing for several restructuring neighbourhoods the housing blocks that are to be demolished or upgraded before the year 2010. This map will be used

whenever social rented dwellings labelled for restructuring are allocated to housing applicants.

This paper has shown that the current restructuring policy faces the major challenge of providing housing quality and housing career opportunities for both low-income households and middle-class or high-income households. It is difficult, but not impossible to reconcile the needs of different groups, both within and outside the neighbourhood. It requires a strong housing and restructuring policy, with aims not only for new residents, but also explicitly enables relocation movers to reap the benefits of restructuring.

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