

**Restructuring large housing estates in Europe: Policies, practices, and perspectives**

# Lessons for Development

Alan Murie

Centre for Urban and Regional Studies

School of Public Policy,

University of Birmingham

UK



# Lessons for Development



- Problems of large post-war estates are key elements in urban policy debates throughout Europe
- ...partly because what was designed as a solution has often become part of the problem for cities.
- Underlying agenda for this Conference is transferability of experience between estates, cities and countries.

# Lessons for Development



## Learning from the research

- Starting Points
- Reflections on Policy
- Conclusions

# Lessons for Development: Starting Points



Two initial lessons:

- Similar Estates work differently
- Analyses of policy experience are usually qualified accounts of success and identify how policy could be improved

No simple transfer of experience

# Lessons for Development: Starting Points



- There are no single causal factors behind problems on estates.....or simple solutions.
- Policy interventions impact on dynamic situations: we need to understand
  - The direction and drivers of change for estates in a market context
  - The problems and opportunities associated with estates

# Resources and Problems



- Legal and other differences complicate policy transfer
- Financial and organisational capacity
- Additional complexities related to fragmented ownerships and the different interests and resources of owners



# Reflections on Policy

# Estates with Problems: Policy Responses



- Negative?
  - Denial
  - Shift the burden to residents or others
  - A problem of policing and control
  - Neglect – wait for abandonment ....
- Apocalyptic?
  - Wholesale demolition and start again
- Alternatives?



# A Starting Point for policy



Similar estates perform differently in different housing markets

Take Account of:

- Common origins and processes
- Life course of neighbourhood
- Failures of Management and Maintenance
- Privatisation: changes in ownership
- External factors
  - Changes in wider housing market
  - New competitor neighbourhoods
  - Economic restructuring and Locational advantage
  - Changing Aspirations and Social attitudes



# Alternative Forms and Levels of Policy Response

- Managing what's there better
- Revitalising what's there
- Redesigning the neighbourhood
- Reconnecting the community
- Problems
- Housing
- Other property
- Public space
- Services
- Opportunities

# 1. Managing what's there better

- Improve management and accountability
- Catch up repairs and maintenance
- Deliver landlord services efficiently
- Make existing services work
- Remedy existing failures
- Sensitive allocation policies
- Initiatives to increase social participation

Making the estate work as was originally intended!

# 1. Managing what's there better

This will be sufficient in some cases

But it may not grasp opportunities or deal with:

- Poor physical design
  - Small rooms and dominance of certain sizes of units
  - Poor estate layout and insecure design
  - Lack of open space, parking
  - Uniformity and scale
- Poor Location
- Poor market position
- Reputation?

Where these problems are important more is needed

## 2. Revitalising what's there

More than a management agenda

- More substantial refurbishment and capital investment
- More substantial social and economic programmes
- Selling rented housing
- No significant redesign of estate

## 2. Revitalising what's there

Will be sufficient in some cases

Will deal with some problems of physical design but without selective demolition there may be little scope to address other problems or grasp opportunities

It is unlikely to deal with

- Location
- Poor market position
- Reputation?

Where these problems exist more may be needed

### 3. Redesigning the estate

#### Changing housing market position

- Inserting variety of aspirational housing
- Introducing new commercial and other activities
- New high quality open space
- Breaking uniformity
- Reconfiguring the estate
- Creating opportunities through demolition and different uses of land

### 3. Redesigning the estate

Will be appropriate in some cases

With selective demolition there is scope to address problems of physical design and it may be possible to reposition the neighbourhood in the market and alter the perception and reputation of the area.

But

- There is a new set of issues associated with displacement and the process of change
- It is unlikely to deal with locational disadvantages



## 4. Reconnecting the estate

A more vigorous agenda related to

- Transport
- Schools
- Health
- Employment
- Skills
- Crime and Safety

But Must be sustained over time and address  
hard to reach groups

Success depends on other factors making the  
estate an attractive place to live in

# Conclusions



# Conclusions



- Applying lessons from elsewhere is complex and involves adaptation....
- The examples of what works in different places are qualified and context bound

# Conclusions



- Different types and levels of intervention for different estates
- Opportunity led as well as problem led
- Intervention sufficient for the intended outcome
- Long term interventions not quick fixes
- Monitor and adjust in view of wider impacts and unanticipated impacts

# Conclusions

## Preconditions for Success: Processes

- Resident support and participation
- Organisational and financial capacity
- Multi-disciplinary approaches
- Open partnerships
- Estate strategies as part of wider housing market, economic and social strategies
- A Learning Culture: Evaluation and review

# End of presentation

## A Learning Culture:

- Evaluation and review
- Reflect on and share experience