**W06 - Social Housing in Europe: Institutional and Organisational Transformations
Theme 2**

Close neighbours not distant friends

Neighbourhood focused housing associations: developments in England and the Netherlands.

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Abstract

Recent policy debates in England and the Netherlands stress the need for mixed and vibrant neighourhoods that can meet the needs of all residents including the aspirations of upwardly mobile residents. Housing associations are often considered to be ideally placed to facilitate such change and have a business interest in doing so. However, the position of housing associations between state and market requires on the one hand the establishment of legitimacy and trust, and on the other the ability to respond to and influence local housing markets, an interesting challenge in the recent credit crunch and recession. This can lead to competing logics for example between efficiency on the one hand and transparency and local anchorage on the other. These organisational challenges are rarely explored in research on social housing which tends to focus more on policy matters. In this paper we describe the prelimany results of on ongoing action research project following eight housing associations (four in England and four in The Netherlands) in their quest to balance organisational strength with community anchorage to increase their neighbourhood focus. A central theme of the paper is the initial assesment made by these organisations of the changes needed in organisational design, governance and local accountability structures and asset management if they are to be truly 'close neighbours and not distant friends'.

Key words: housing associations; neighbourhoods, governance, organisations, asset management.

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1. Introduction

Recent policy debates in England and the Netherlands stress the need for mixed and vibrant neighourhoods that can meet the needs of all residents including the aspirations of upwardly mobile residents. The Dutch Housing Council [VROM-raad], an advisory board to the government,) emphasized in her "Urban living and upward mobility" [*Stad en Stijging*] report (VROM-raad, 2007) the need to shift the urban renewal perspective from investments in bricks to investments in people. According to their advice government agencies and housing associations should focus more on "social climbing" and making the ambitions of residents the focal point of housing and urban policy. Residents should be enabled and supported to fulfil their ambitions for better housing and higher quality of life while remaining in their neighbourhood to form a positive example and facilitator to others. This perspective is very similar to that adopted in "failing housing market areas" in England where the key to renewal is seen to be in shifting the local housing mix to include more "aspirational housing" to retain upwardly mobile people within the area and thereby reverse long term decline (Hills, 2007).

In the Netherlands the traditional "bricks and mortar" approach to neighbourhood renewal -focusing on improving the housing stock and improving the quality of public spaces- is gradually giving way to a new perspective focusing more on the social cohesion between residents and the quality of live in neighbourhoods. The Dutch Housing Council argues that both approaches fail to address the need for social advancement of residents. This notion is also strongly present in the 40-neighbourhood regeneration program of the Dutch Ministry of Housing (VROM, 2007).

The Dutch Housing Council contends that the focus on social cohesion is no longer sufficient given the heterogenic character of our society. Instead multiple types of households and groups need to feel at home in their neighbourhood and bridges have to be build between communities. The Council argues that „distance between households and groups is sometimes more important for attractive neighbourhoods than proximity or social cohesion. In this vision bricks-and-mortar investments are still important put should support social and economic goals. Social climbing should be focused on positive developments in four distinct fields: education, employment, housing and leisure time.

The expectation that housing associations will consult with and engage local communities and stakeholders in their decision making and service delivery has also been a common theme in the two countries as the emphasis of regeneration policy has shifted towards social goals. However, as the Close Neighbours self-assessment surveys indicate (see below) English HAs appear to have greater ambitions to include communities in decision making, and this may be a consequence of stringer policy expectations in this regard and stronger regulatory pressures in general. In both England and the Netherlands housing associations are seen as natural actors in this process. They can make the difference because of their investments in and sustained commitment to neighbourhoods (NHF, 2008; Wadhams, 2006). Many social landlords are already taking initiatives in this field, but little has been done to develop an organizational design for housing associations taking the "social climbing" perspective as their guiding principle. In both countries we can see some steps in this direction. First the Housing Associations Charitable Trust imported the Dutch notion of *anchorage* [*verankering*] to suggest that housing associations should develop their organizations into *community anchors* tying themselves to local people and forming supportive partnerships with other smaller third sector organizations (Wadhams, 2006). Then the Young Foundation began to explore some of the different models for neighbourhood engagement by housing associations such as *networker*, *exemplar*, *leader* and *influencer* (Bacon *et al.* 2007); more on these models later in the paper.

Housing associations are often considered to be ideally placed to facilitate such change and have a business interest in doing so. However, the position of housing associations between state and market requires on the one hand the establishment of legitimacy and trust, and on the other the ability to respond to and influence local housing markets, an interesting challenge in the recent credit crunch and recession. This can lead to competing logics for example between efficiency on the one hand and transparency and local anchorage on the other.

In section 2 of this paper we will explore the organisational challenges faces by housing associations who want to become more focused on neighbourhoods. We continue in section 3 with discrbing the research design and research methods. In section 4 we present the preliminary results of the self assessment questionairs on the current and desired neighbourhood focus of participating housing associations. A profile of these housing associations can be found in section 5, together with an overview of the strategies and activities used by these organisations to increase their neighbourhood focus. This section also addresses the barriers and problems encoutered during implementation and possible solutions and breakthroughs found. We conclude this paper with a prelimany overview of lessons learned and a first attempt to formulate answers to our research questions.

2. Exploring the organisational challenges of neighbourhood focused housing associations

In order to become more neighbourhood focused housing associations need to adopt logics that embrace the need for a strong focus on the qualities of neighbourhoods and their residents combined with more responsiveness, flexibility and accountability. This may involve challenging competing logics that involve buying big, and increasing scale to increase competitive advantage (Mullins, 2006). These proposals are not new but until now they largely remained in the domain of rhetoric and intentions. These organisational challenges are rarely explored in research on social housing which tends to focus more on policy matters.

This paper presents preliminary result of an ongoing action research project following eight housing associations (four in Engeland and four in The Netherlands) exploring the actions housing associations take, the problems and dilemma's they face in combining logics of scale and neighbourhood focus and the solutions they find to overcome these difficulties. The research is longitudinal and spans a period of 1,5 years.

A central theme of the paper is the initial assesment made by these organisations of the changes needed in organisational design, governance and local accountability structures and asset management if they are to be truly 'close neighbours and not distant friends'. The project focuses on three elements key elements influencing the ability for housing associations to develop a strong neighbourhood focus: 1) organisational design, 2) governance and 3) asset management.

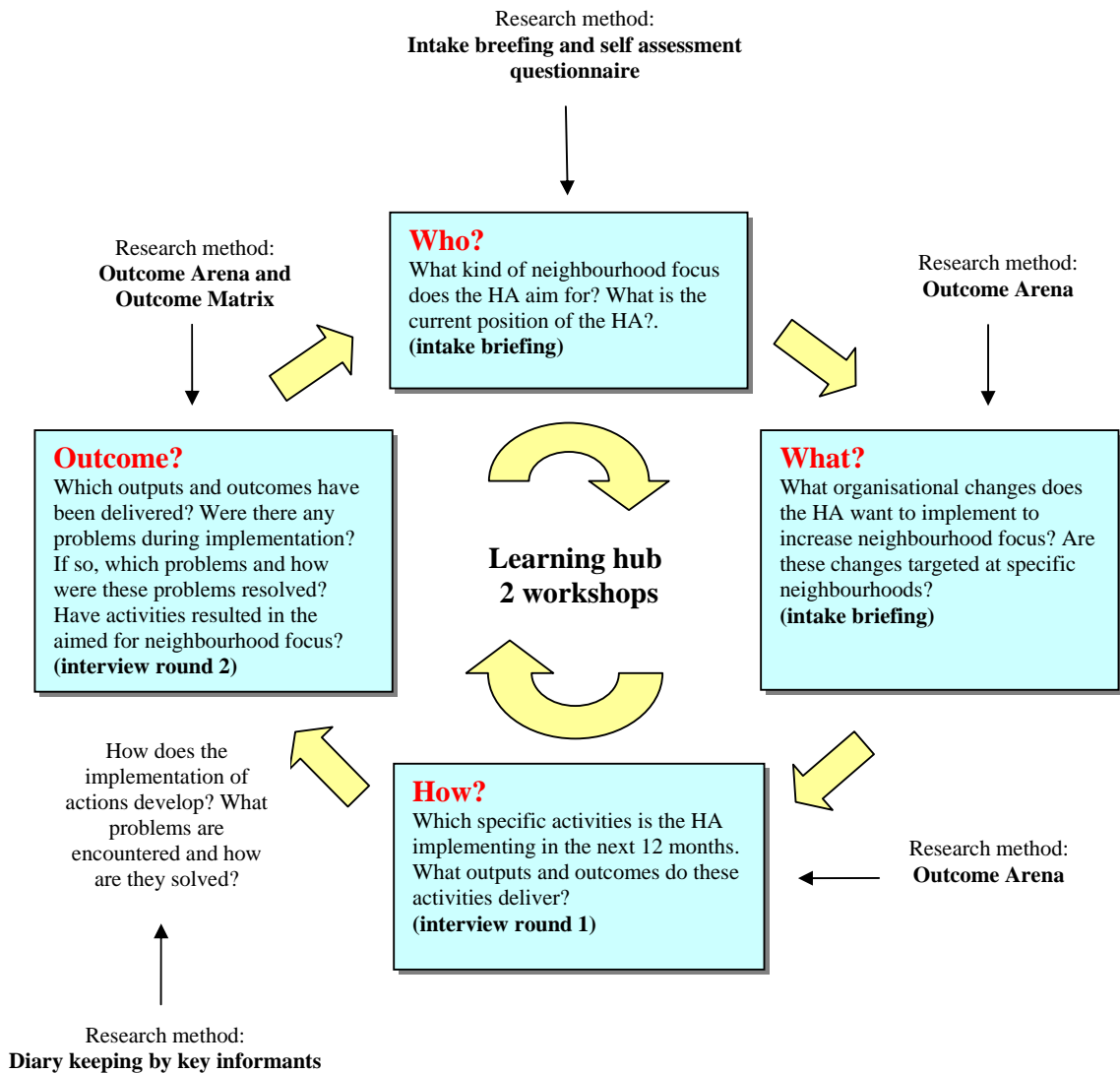The central research questions of this project are:

1. How do housing associations (HAs) organise for a neighbourhood focussed approach?

2. What kind of barriers and difficulties do these HAs encounter during the implementation of organisational changes to combine scale with a neighbourhood focus? What helps them overcome these barriers and problems?

3. What are the outcomes of organisational activities undertaken by HAs to enhance their neighbourhood focus?

4. What cross-national differences and similarities can be distinguished between HAs in England and The Netherlands regarding organising neighbourhood focus?

3. Research approach and methods

The research project is of a qualitative and explorative nature. Interviews, document analysis and diary keeping are used as main data collection methods. Distribution of HA's learning experiences is also an important aim. Workshops are organised and a group website was developed to facilitate housing associations in reflecting on their own learning experiences and those of other participating HAs. The workshops at the beginning and at the end of this research are important instruments in this respect.

And we will be interested to evaluate the impact of cross-national learning on the design and implementation process (see figure 1).

Figure 1, Conceptual research framework

Research method:
Intake breefing and self assessment questionnaire

Research method:
Outcome Arena and Outcome Matrix

Research method:
Outcome Arena

Who?
What kind of neighbourhood focus does the HA aim for? What is the current position of the HA?.
(intake briefing)

Outcome?
Which outputs and outcomes have been delivered? Were there any problems during implementation? If so, which problems and how were these problems resolved? Have activities resulted in the aimed for neighbourhood focus?
(interview round 2)

Learning hub 2 workshops

What?
What organisational changes does the HA want to implement to increase neighbourhood focus? Are these changes targeted at specific neighbourhoods?
(intake briefing)

How does the implementation of actions develop? What problems are encountered and how are they solved?

How?
Which specific activities is the HA implementing in the next 12 months. What outputs and outcomes do these activities deliver?
(interview round 1)

Research method:
Outcome Arena

Research method:
Diary keeping by key informants

We will briefly discuss the following research instruments used in this project:

a. Self assessment questionnaire
b. Interviews
c. Workshops
d. Outcome matrix / Outcome arena
e. Diary keeping
f. Interactive Linkedin group website

a) Self assessment questionnaire
Wadhams (2006) has argued that housing associations are in a good position to be 'community anchors' developing supportive links to local communities and other third sector organisations.In order to capture these ambitions we have developed a self-assessment questionnaire based on the

"Good Neighbours" publication of the Young Foundation (Bacon et al. 2007). We used the questionnaire to create a sharper picture of the way the housing associations currently position themselves in neighbourhoods and in what direction the organisation wants to move in the future.

Following earlier work by Wadhams (2006) who also developed a 'LIFE' model suggesting that associations should undertake a strategic assessments of their role in each neighbourhood and decide whether to 'lead', ;influence', ;follow' or 'exit', Bacon et al. (2007) suggest four different ways in which housing associations could adapt their organisational models to increase involvement in neighbourhood governance:

1. Leaders will use their high density housing portfolios in a neighbourhood to become a self-sufficient neighbourhood operator. In England this is seen as requiring strong connections with local government through 'Local Strategic Partnerships' (LSPs).
2. Influencers will recognise their lower stock levels in a neighbourhood by becoming a consortium and partnership player. They will use collective structures with these partners to engage with the LSP and may outsource neighbourhood services to social enterprises or joint ventures with larger players.
3. Networkers will respond to pressing neighbourhood needs (such as housing market decline) by making alliances with other key players to draw in the necessary resources and develop networks to arrest decline.
4. Exemplars will seek to use neighbourhood working to develop tangible products such as investments in capital assets such as youth centres. This approach works best when residents and local partners are involved in planning these activities – avoiding the scenario of a 'distant friend' bringing gifts that won't be needed or used.

These models provide some strategic options for housing associations and support our conclusion that there cannot be a single organizational model, but rather a common principle of local focus and responsiveness. Bacon et al. (2007) identify the following variables that -in combination- influence the housing association's strategic role in the neighbourhood and the organisational design necessary to support this role:

a. the degree of influence given to residents and other stakeholders (ranging from informing to actively involving all stakeholders including those difficult to reach)
b. the nature and breath of the actions taken by the housing associations (ranging from actions only focused on rental properties to social and economic empowerment of residents)
c. the conceptualisation of the neighbourhood (ranging form only the tenants of the HA to all neighbourhood users and the wider context of the neighbourhood)
d. level of partnership working (ranging from no partnerships to a wide range of formal and informal partnerships)

We used these characteristics in the self-assessment questionnaire to sharpen our interview questions and to analyse possible links between the nature of the neighbourhood focus and the actions undertaken by the housing association[1]. The results of the self-assessment questionnaires are presented in section 5.2.

b) Interviews
The research includes two interview rounds. The first round was conducted in the autumn of 2008, the second round will take place in late autumn 2009. Interviews are semi-structured and conducted with management and staff members of housing associations and with neighbourhood representatives (e.g. active residents/tenants). The interviews with management are intended to specify the organisational

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[1] Each element in the self-assessment questionnaire contained four statements that could be answered on a scale ranging from 0 to 3. HAs were asked to assess the current and the desired situations. Answers were coded, ranging from 3 points for a high neighbourhood focus to 0 for a low neighbourhood focus. Answers for each statement where summed for each section making the maximum achievable score 12 and the minimum score 0.

activities the housing association is implementing to improve its neighbourhood focus in the near future; e.g. in the fields of governance, real estate management, organisational design or external partnerships (like capacity building of social enterprises or community organisations in the neighbourhood). Interviews also focus on the outcomes the HA intends to achieve through its planned activities. What is the chain of arguments (theory of change) linking the activities with outcomes (also see Outcome Arena) and how will the HAs assess or measure the outcomes? Which barriers, problems and/or dilemma's does the HA expect to encounter during the implementation of organisational change? How does the HA plan to manage and overcome these barriers, problems and dilemmas?

The interviews with HA staff clarify whether the neighbourhood approach - HA management is aiming at - is recognised by staff members and to hear their opinion on the sufficiency of the planned activities to realise this neighbourhood approach. Based on interviews with local residents and community organisations we want to create a picture of the current approach of the HA in neighbourhood activities and to compare this with the neighbourhood approach the HA wants to pursue. We also want to learn more about resident's and community organisations' opinions on the contribution of HA's activities to the pursued neighbourhood approach, in other words: is the theory of change used by the HA recognised and validated by external parties.

c) Workshops
A Central aim of the research was to create a learning hub, where participating housing associations were supported to learn from their own activities and those of their peers. To facilitate learning, we organised a joint workshop for a all participating housing associations, hosted by Clapham Park Homes in November 2008, with a second event planned for 2009/2010. In addition we organised two separate reflective workshops for the English and Dutch participants to introduce the Outcome Arena tool and undertake collective mapping of the four projects in each country using the Outcome Arena tool (see below)

d) Outcome Matrix / Outcome Arena
An explicit goal of this research is to explore the impact of the activities of housing associations participating in this research project. Impacts not only on individuals and communities but also the organisation itself. Based on the price-wining essay that led to this research project (Van Bortel et al., 2007) we used the following key outcomes that -we contend- are necessary for neighbourhood focused housing associations:

- **Dependable**: here for the long term, consistently responding to neighbourhood problems and needs;
- **"One of us":** working to the neighbourhood agenda through lived experience of what can make life better for residents and what threatens communities;
- **Aware of what's going on** in neighbourhood and able to make connections between problems, actors and solutions;
- **Accessible** – The HA can be easily found and is one of the few local services people can contact regularly and informally;
- **Accountable**. The HA involves residents and other stakeholders in decisions affecting neighbourhoods and keeps people involved and informed as plans are implemented and changed;
- **Responsive.** HAs actions can be influenced but is not a push-over for any one interest group but tries to balance interests;
- **Capable to deliver**. HAs is able to deliver results;
- **Connected to wider society.** HAs must recognise that the problems of the neighbourhood cannot all be solved within the neighbourhood but needs strategies to influence wider regional economic and social policies and ensure that her residents are connected to these changes;
- **Open to new ideas** – HAs needs to overcome any local insularity and bring new ideas in into discussions with stakeholders.

To support housing associations in linking their interventions to outcomes for individuals, neighbourhoods and their own organisations, we use the Outcome Arena, an instrument developed with support of SEV, the Dutch Social housing experimental body [Deuten and De Kam (2008).

The SEV launched an innovation program in 2006 on the social return of housing association activities. One striking experience emerging from this program was the unclear perspective executives, managers and professionals had on the desired and expected outcomes of their interventions. Then there was the further question of whether outcomes were accurately defined, shared or discussed. Existing instruments were insufficiently helpful in tackling this problem. This observation inspired the development of a new tool: the Outcome Arena (Deuten and De Kam, 2008). The main purpose of the Outcome Arena is to instigate a thorough dialogue about outcomes and the causal relations concerning these outcomes. It is based on two well known ways of describing outcomes:

- the impact map / outcome matrix as used in for example Social Return on Investment, where inputs-outputs-outcomes are arranged in a simple scheme[2] ;
- the theory of change-approach in which outputs and outcomes are causally linked, as presented by –amongst others the Aspen Institute (also see Fulbright-Anderson, 2006).

Elements of both approaches are combined in the Outcome Arena and presented in an visually attractive manner. On a large sheet of paper four ingredients of every intervention can be described and mutually linked:

- the activities, and outputs per activity;
- the investors that are needed to undertake these activities;
- the outcomes triggered by the activities;
- the beneficiaries of these outcomes.

This latter ingredient is an addition to known instruments and is added to quickly assess the return ratio of an intervention: who is investing and who is benefiting? See figure 2 for a simplified example (intervention: energy improvement scheme).

Figure 2 Outcome Arena Example
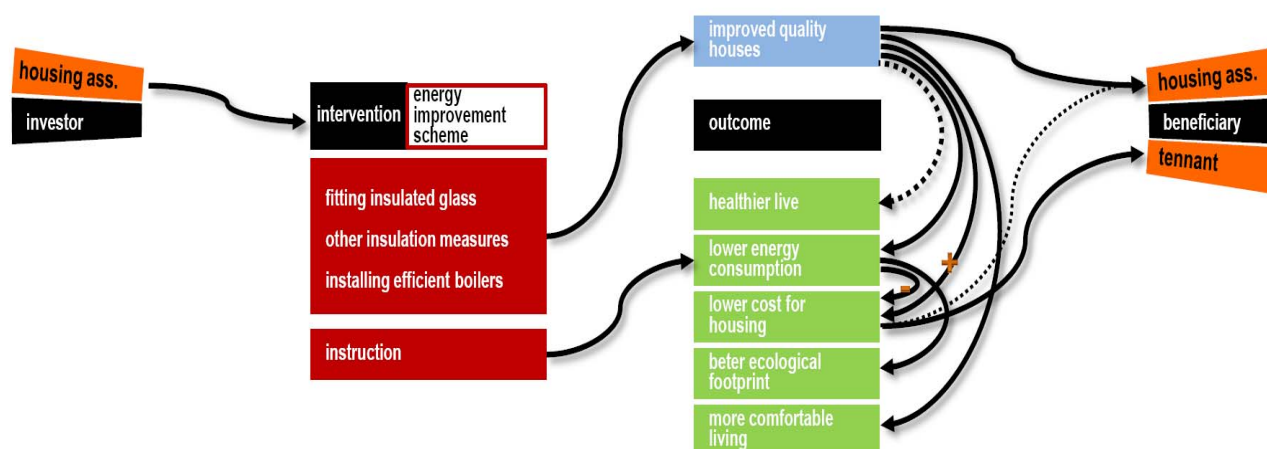
In an interactive setting a small group of people can draw out a first draft in a couple of hours. Later descriptions and causal chains can be examined and tested. Since its launch in November 2008 the Outcome Arena has been used in approximately 40 workshops. Some characteristics are appreciated by users:

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[2] see for example the New Economics Foundation: http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/newways_socialreturn.aspx or United Way (1996).

- It gives a profound and comprehensive view on the (expected) workings of an intervention. Especially the line of argument underpinning an intervention is well expressed.
- Usage is easy and inspiring; it is designed as a 'DIY-tool', and will be even more accessible when plans to develop it as a web-based application are effected
- It is a useful and efficient first step for employing more advanced tools for determining and investigating social returns [e.g. Social Return on Investment, cost benefit analysis or outcomes measurement].
- By determining beneficiaries it can give a business wise and inter-organisational (whole system) perspective on social interventions: the usual focus on costs is balanced by the definition of benefits;
- Being suitable for a vast range of interventions, it provides a standard formal without being too rigid: therefore interventions become more comparable.
- A filled out Outcome Arena gives a footprint of a particular intervention. It can be used as the reference point for implementation, communication, monitoring and evaluation.
- It is able to bridge the classic divide between to paper reality of policymakers and management and the everyday experience of 'frontline' practitioners. By providing a common graphical language in which assumptions can be set out and challenged.

In the near future it is intended to review the use of the Outcome Arena, and to develop a digital web-based application to increase accessibility and ease of use.

Two English examples of Outcome Arenas filled out during on of the workshops are included in appendix A.

e) Diary keeping

To keep track of developments between interview rounds and workshop session key informants in each case are asked to keep a monthly diary of activities to increase neighbourhood focus or how neighbourhood focused outcomes are pursued. So the headings of the diaries are either activities or outcomes. Participants where provided with a diary format and a guidelines for use (again we used Dutch and English language versions of the diary format and guidelines. The diaries will create very useful reference points for the evaluation interviews that will be undertaken in Autumn 2009 to review progress. The diaries focus on recording key events only. Dairy are expected the following events like incidents holding back progress (typically these may be people, systems or resource barriers, but other barriers may be equally important). Barriers may include deadlocks (situations where multiple factors make it difficult to see a way to achieve aims). We also asked participants to record incidents on the other side of the spectrum, notably enablers that helped overcome barriers to progress the project aims (examples might include partners, people, systems, resources) and breakthroughs when seemingly impossible deadlocks are overcome. Participants are also asked to record other significant events that will help partners in the project to learn from their experience.

f) Interactive Linkedin Group Website
As the diary keeping, the Linkedin Group website is designed to keep participants in touch with the research team and each other. The website has a section for discussion and news dedicated to each participant. Also general news concerning neighbourhood focused housing associations is frequently posted on the website. Although representatives of almost all participating housing associations have become member of the group website, the number of post on the site by others than the researchers is limited

4. Preliminary findings based on the self-assessments

Some questionnaires where filled out by the internal project champion, other housing associations discusses the questions within their management team and some HAs asked several officers to fill-out the questionnaire. In the latter case the average result is presented. Because the current and desired neighbourhood focus can differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, housing associations where asked to specify the neighbourhood they had in mind while filling-out the questionnaire. The answers are used to link the activities of individual housing associations with their initial self-assessment at the end of this 1,5 year longitudinal research project.

In this section we present some aggregated results and compare the answers given by Dutch and English HAs (we used questionnaires in Dutch and English but with identical questions. These answers cannot be generalised because the data set is very small (only 4 cases for each country) and respondents have not been selected at random. In table 1 we compare the outcomes of the self-assessment questionnaire for both countries.

Table 1, Comparing results of Dutch (NL) and English (ENG) housing associations
(min score = 0, max score 12, n = 8)

		Current situation		Desired situation		Gap	
		ENG	NL	ENG	NL	ENG	NL
A	Degree of influence	6,4	6,8	11,6	9,5	5,2	2,8
B	Breadth of actions	5,2	6,3	9,2	9,3	4,0	3,0
C	Neighbourhood conceptualisation	4,8	5,0	9,8	8,0	5,0	3,0
D	Partnership working	5,8	7,5	10,4	9,5	4,6	2,0

Based on the results some preliminary observations can be made. Dutch HA give more positive answers on the statements in the questionnaire assessing the current situation. This is especially the case for the elements "breath of actions" and "partnership working". Across the board English HAs show considerably more ambition when they describe the desired situation. For example: English HA want to give stakeholders more influence on decision making than their Dutch colleagues. This result could have been influenced by the inception of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), the new regulator for social landlords in England. In the period before the start of the TSA on December 1st 2008, leading TSA officer Peter Marsh placed a strong emphasis on empowering residents and once established the TSA launched a 'national conversation' to determine residents priorities for a new system of social housing regulation, results of the 18 regional events, 24,000 questionnaire and 1,800 on-line responses from residents were published in June 2009 (Tenant Services Authority, 2009)

Table 2 and 3 present the top priorities for English and Dutch housing associations respectively.

Table 2, Top 5 priorities English housing associations
Based on gap between current and desired situation

Rank	Statement	Difference between current and desired situation *Scale from 0 to 3*	
		ENG	**NL**
1	Our HA's actions focus on empowerment and social and economic development of our tenants.	2,0	1,3
2	We have long-term formal area level partnerships with neighbourhood stakeholders.	2,0	0,8
3	Our HA uses non-traditional, innovative and informal ways to actively involve residents and other stakeholders	1,8	1,0
4	We both have formalized project level and long-term area level partnerships.	1,8	1,0
5	At our HA residents and stakeholders are actively involved in decision-making effecting their neighbourhood.	1,6	0,5

Table 3, Top 5 priorities Dutch housing associations
Based on gap between current and desired situation

Rank	Statement	Difference between current and desired situation *Scale from 0 to 3*	
		NL	**ENG**
1	Our HA's actions focus on empowerment and social and economic development of our tenants.	1,3	2,0
2	At our HA we consult residents and stakeholders on decisions effecting their neighbourhood.	1,0	1,2
3	Our HA's actions focus on community building.	1,0	1,0
4	When we speak of neighbourhoods we mean all residents in the neighbourhood.	1,0	1,2
5	We both have formalized project level and long-term area level partnerships.	1,0	1,8

The participating housing associations in both countries give the highest priority to the empowerment and the social and economic development of tenants. However, the gap between the current and desired situation on this point is higher in England, indication a higher level of ambition. Housing associations in the Netherlands and in England also want to involve tenants and other neighbourhood stakeholders more in decision-making. This said, the Dutch housing associations appear to focus more on *consultation* while the English want to raise the level of tenant involvement to a higher level. Partnership working is an item for HAs in both countries. However, Dutch HAs already assess their performance on this field as rather positive without a high ambition for improvements. English HAs formulate a strong ambition to improve their partnership workings and to develop long-term partnership area-level partnerships.

5. The cases

5.1 Introduction

For this research we have selected four Dutch and four English housing associations (see table 4). These associations had responded to an invitation to take part in the project because they were

interested in following a 'close neighbours' agenda, and developing practical responses to some of the issues set out in our essay (van Bortel et al, 2007). While they represent a range of organisation types, sizes and locations they do not comprise a representative sample of the two sectors. For example the Dutch cases are skewed towards the larger sized associations (both Stadgenoot and Woonbron have over 30,000 dwellings each, while three of the four English case studies are stock transfer organisations managing former local authority housing (the exception being Yorkshire Housing, which also has some stock transfer areas, but not within the case study).

Participating organisations were asked to identify some specific new initiatives that they wished to take over the two years of the project to improve their organisations neighbourhood focus and to identify a small number of neighbourhoods in which the impact of these initiatives could be explored. Each partner identified a lead contact to link with a named individual within the research team. Contact was maintained in a variety of ways as set out in the methodology section above.

Table 4, Overview of participating housing associations

The Netherlands		England	
A	Casade, Waalwijk	a	Clapham Park Homes, London
B	Lefier, Emmen,	b	Maidstone Housing Trust, Maidstone
C	Stadgenoot, Amsterdam	c	Trafford Housing Trust, Trafford
D	Woonbron, Rotterdam	d	Yorkshire Housing Group York

In the following section we will present each housing association. We start with a short description of the HA and continue with the strategies and activities the housing associations use to become more neighbourhood focused. Each case description is concluded with the progress made in enhancing neighbourhood focused working, the barriers and problems encountered and the solutions found to overcome these problems.

5.2 The Netherlands

a. Casade, Waalwijk

Profile
Casade is a housing association with more than 8.000 properties in the South of the Netherlands (Loon op Zand and Waalwijk). Casade wants to do more than letting of dwellings alone. The housing association also takes care and welfare into account. The central aim is that this should lead to a more pleasant social climate. Casade works together with many others working in this field to achieve this aim.

Strategy and activities
A strong neighbourhood focus combining housing with care and social services is an important element of Casade's strategy. One of the strategic initiatives of Casade is the development of multifunctional neighbourhood hubs combining housing with schools, libraries, childcare and social services providers. Casade wants to use neighbourhood hubs to facilitate collaboration between residents and organisations active in the field of education, care, social support and employment. Casade wants to organise the management of the facilities in the neighbourhood hubs to maximise the social return on investment while at the same time securing a financially viable management of the neighbourhood hubs.

To embed the neighbourhood focus within the organization of Casade a number of actions is taken. A business plan for the neighbourhood hubs has been developed. In addition, Casade deals with its service concept. The neighbourhood hubs could support Casade in making its service concept more neighbourhood focussed. There is also running a project on skills of employees so that they become more neighbourhood focussed. Finally, human resource policies have been set up to change from a real estate housing association to a neighbourhood focused organisation and to make Casade an

attractive employer for people with the needed qualifications. This year (2009) is devoted to become more focused in actions that are taken by Casade. At this moment Casade is still in the exploratory phase.

Progress made, barriers/problems met and solutions found
Casade has already delivered one neighbourhood hub in 2006 and will deliver two more this year. Managing neighbourhood hubs is a new challenge for Casade. So far in 2009, a number of results have been achieved. With regard to the BaLaDe neighbourhood hub, there has been reached an agreement with the parties involved on the facilities management package for this hub. Due to the large number of parties involved, this was a lengthy process. This is taken as a learning point for neighbourhood hubs that are still to be developed. In the future Casade will prepare the facilities management package together with the municipality, while the other actors can have a say on this from time to time.

With regard to the activities in the neighbourhoods a new research project was started about the themes that are important to the people living in the neighbourhoods. Also, from a newly awarded grant some activities emerged. The most important problem met by Casade is that partners of Casade do not want or are unable to contribute to the programs financially.

b. Lefier, Emmen

Profile
Lefier is a young housing association in the North-East of The Netherlands. It is a result of a merger of three housing associations on January 1st 2009. Lefier manages approximately 33.000 units. This description deals with Lefier ZuidoostDrenthe (formerly known as Wooncom), managing around 16.500 properties.

Strategy and activities
Lefier ZuidoostDrenthe has been developing its neighbourhood approach ('Emmen Revisited') since 1998. This neighbourhood approach was limited to three districts. Lefier ZuidoostDrenthe wants to expand this approach to all areas where its housing stock is located. Also Lefier ZuidoostDrenthe wants to change the approach from project-driven to process-driven and from incidental to structural. Every district must have a comprehensive district program containing physical, economical and social measures. 25 Neighbourhood officers have to effectuate this approach.

Lefier ZuidoostDrenthe wants to change its organisation to accommodate the neighbourhood approach: "From an ivory tower to decentralised neighbourhood office". People with vision, budget and mandate must work in neighbourhoods and do what is best for neighbourhoods. This approach must eventually lead to residents of neighbourhoods who are more actively involved in and take responsibility for their own living circumstances.

To achieve this long-term goal some steps have to be made. Through the neighbourhood focus people should regain trust in Lefier ZuidoostDrenthe. A concrete result must be that for every neighbourhood there will be a comprehensive district programme including physical, economical and social measures supported by the local residents. Also Lefier ZuidoostDrenthe expects to increase its participation in networks and its collaboration with partners.

The neighbourhood officers are currently working in two departments; one is concerned with current tenants and has a customer focus, the other with future area developments and has a community focus. The interviewed officers have argued that this has to change; there is need for a special neighbourhood department, because they need to fully concentrate on their neighbourhood tasks without hindering of non-neighbourhood activities. As a tangible result of the new approach 2 or 3 extra neighbourhood locations are expected to be functioning at the end of the year.

The current systems are mainly concerned with *control*. Future systems that have to do with the neighbourhood approach will rely more on *accountability*. Control will remain important in for example regular letting processes. Managers will become a coach, consultant and sounding board for the neighbourhood officers. The neighbourhood officers will have to take the initiative and need to have to a greater degree of autonomy and will have to collaborate more with stakeholders. They must be able to make decisions, must be able to bare the responsibility and must posses a considerable degree of analytical skills.

Progress made, barriers/problems met and solutions found
The budget to increase the 'liveability' of the neighbourhood has recently been raised. This contributes to the quick response to neighbourhood problems. The problem is that residents often do not know about this budget and do not contact the housing association with their ideas to increase liveability. The existence of this budget will be promoted to increase usage.

The function of caretaker has been upgraded to that of a neighbourhood manager. This increases neighbourhood focus. The problem is that tenants still pay for a caretaker and thus expect him to be in their building and not strolling around the neighbourhood.

Different new organizational models have been developed, but due to a change of managers -partly related to the merger- there is less willingness to change the organisational structure. A compromise proposal to change the organisation was rejected by the executive board. Now the reported barriers have to be overcome within the existing structure. Because of the increased neighbourhood focus there is more contact between the different departments.

c. Stadgenoot, Amsterdam

Profile
Stadgenoot is the result of a merger in 2008 between housing associations Het Oosten en AWV. Stadgenoot manages 32.000 dwellings in Amsterdam. Increasing neighbourhood focus was one of the most important motives for the merger. Stadgenoot wants to be accountable and involve stakeholders on both group level and neighbourhood level of the organization. Stadgenoot is still looking for the most effective organizational and governance structure to do this and combine the advantages of scale with local anchorage.

Strategy and activities
Stadgenoot divided Amsterdam in 72 areas. These areas are classified as A-, B-, or C-areas, based on market share. There are eight A-neighbourhoods, where Stadgenoot has 'critical mass' to make a difference, to create added value. This case study is focused on Osdorp which consist of one A-area and one B-area.

Stadgenoot wants to develop new methods for developing neighbourhood plans. There will be area visions, formulated by the strategy department, area plans formulated by the area developers, and area management plans formulated by the area directors. Stadgenoot wants to involve residents and other stakeholder more closely in policy development. Reason is to formulate policies that better reflect the problems and demands of the neighbourhoods and that have more support. Stadgenoot wants to flesh out methods to link local neighbourhood agendas with group-level strategies. This must result in an organization where thinking of and planning for the future in collaboration with stakeholders of neighbourhoods is "business as usual".

This year an area vision must be formulated for Osdorp. On an organizational level Stadgenoot introduced 'area teams'. These teams consist of people of different departments who work in the same area and are chaired by the area directors. More specifically, Stadgenoot will develop 'Neighbourhood Entrances' (BuurtEntrees) to improve neighbourhood focus. Neighbourhood Entrances are facilities

that accommodate a range of different activities such as meetings of neighbourhood organizations. It will also be the office of the caretaker.

Progress made, possible barriers/problems met and solutions found
An area vision has been formulated for Osdorp after desk-research and consultations with staff members and stakeholders. The lack of a common strategic framework turned out to be a barrier to developing plans for the area. The merger resulted in an internal process focus with little notion to strategic issues. There is no business plan and asset management plan yet. There are no organisation-wide goals concerning for example housing quality and housing production. Therefore, the planning is rather bottom-up. In practice there is a common sense approach; more differentiation in dwelling types (bigger dwellings, mixed sale/rent tenures).

In consultation events residents were mainly complaining about maintenance arrears instead of giving their views on the future of the neighbourhood. Although not the main goal, residents felt that they were taken seriously and residents supported the draft area vision.

The intensive consultation of tenant committees and homeowners associations is very time consuming for the Stadgenoot employees. Stadgenoot fears an overdose of stakeholder participation and involvement. Due to the fact that Osdorp is a government assigned priority neighbourhood, many participation structureshave been set up the local authorities and third sector organisations. Stadgenoot wants to deal with these problems by a using a more targeted and effective method to involve stakeholders. Also within the organisation of Stadgenoot there is a debate on the level of participation of stakeholders; do stakeholders have an advisory role or are they co-decision-makers? Although participation was one of the major issues in the merger process, Stadgenoot appears to shift towards seeing participation only as giving advice.

The first Neighbourhood Entrance opened March 30th 2009. Being a top-down initiative, the general aim is to strengthen the presence in and involvement with the neighbourhood. The specific objectives of the Neighbourhood Entrance are not clear yet. There is no common opinion on the activities that will take place in the Neighbourhood Entrance.

Area teams have been set up to discuss area related issues. At the moment these teams are occupied with very operational issues, like fixing broken doorbells and to do have the opportunity to focuses on more strategic neighbourhood issues. Also the area teams are conceived by some to consisting of too many staff members. One of the measures taken is to divide the area team into an primary (inner ring) and an secondary (outer ring) team members.

d.   Woonbron, Rotterdam

Profile
Woonbron manages 50.000 properties in the western part of the Netherlands, located in Rotterdam, Delft, Dordrecht and Spijkenisse. The mission of Woonbron is to serve as co-producer to a broad group of clients to provide them a home and the freedom to choose different options for living in a vibrant city, with different attractive neighbourhoods. Woonbron wants to be in constant consultation with stakeholders in order to determine its goals.

Woonbron is a housing association with rather autonomous and strong local business units. This is a deliberate choice, based on the idea that responsibilities belong at the level of the neighbourhood. This is the level were customers are, and the partner organisations Woonbron wants to work with.

Strategy and activities
Woonbron wants to further develop neighbourhood visions in a bottom-up way, involving residents and other stakeholders in local policy development. Woonbron is experimenting with new methods to do this. One of these methods is the Neighbourhood Workshop (Wijkatelier) being developed and

tested in the Woonbron IJsselmonde business unit. The Neighbourhood Workshop is intended to support a bottom-up, interactive and inclusive mode of decision-making and policy development.

Next to that, in the neighbourhood 'Heindijk' an action programme directly targeting at the residents has been launched. In Heindijk there was a situation in which only people that had no choice were moving into the neighbourhood. Here are the measures now focussing on resilience, the creation of a more mixed population, greater security and ensuring that people can be proud of their environment.

Progress made, possible barriers/problems met and solutions found
Within the organisation of Woonbron IJsselmonde there are four neighbourhood-focused groups of employees. The neighbourhood managers are the informal leaders of the neighbourhood workshops. They are the ones who connect the internal and external parties involved. Other employees contribute to the neighbourhood-focused groups from their own discipline. Within the four groups, the internal cooperation and coordination of different tasks is central. So far the groups have been busy gathering data about their neighbourhoods. Based on this data they neighbourhood stories have been written. In addition, more specific points that relate to the daily work of Woonbron in the neighbourhoods have been discussed.

The Heindijk area is a frontrunner with regard to the neighbourhood-focused approach,. Woonbron previously already discussed concrete measures with residents here. So far, projects related to waste management, security, pest control, vandalism and intensive approach to anti social behaviour have been implemented. With some very practical measures - such as dealing with cockroaches – employees are able to go inside the houses, making it possible to reveal the structural problems households have to cope with. In Heindijk, Woonbron cooperates with schools, social welfare organisations, and the like. There has been agreed an action program with the borough. At this moment it is somewhat problematic that the situation in the Heindijk neighbourhood is improving leading to priorities of other parties such as local politicians tending to shift to other areas.

5.3 England

a. <u>Clapham Park Homes</u>

Profile
Clapham Park Homes (CPH) is a community-based housing association operating within the London Borough of Lambeth and is part of the Metropolitan Housing Partnership. It was established in April 2006 to take transfer of 2000 Borough Council properties within the Clapham Park Estate which is located within the Clapham Park New Deal for Communities (NDC) [3]area.

Strategy and activities
The organisation's principal service is housing management and the regeneration of the estate. CPH also strives to incorporate the provision of non-traditional services that are generally outside the purview of housing management, such as employment and training programmes, into their community strategy. As a new organisation, CPH is at the start of the regeneration and housing management processes. They are continuing to monitor governance and organisational structures to ensure effective resident involvement and accountability are maintained throughout the regeneration programme and beyond.

Four programmes have been identified to strengthen the Association's neighbourhood focus over the coming year. CPH is in the process of creating a Block Champions programme throughout the estate. Resident volunteers will be chosen to represent the interests and concerns of tenants residing within

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[3] NDC area is an area based regeneration programme initiated by the incoming Labour Government in the late 1990s. The programme placed a strong emphasis on community led regeneration and residents setting local priorties. In the case of Clapham Park this led residents to develop plans to transfer their housing from locala authority ownership to benefit from the opportunity to increase investment. The transfer vehicle Clapham Park Homes was established as a locally based subsidiary of a large housing association, Metropolitan Housing Partnership.

each housing block on the estate. Resident champions will act as a point of contact between tenants and the housing association increasing communication between the groups and providing a means for direct tenant involvement in the regeneration process.

The housing association's accountability to the community will further increase through implementation of a new Client Management System (CMS) within the organisation. The CMS is a new housing management system designed to pool all resident information, from across the organisation, into one place. It allows community workers to provide a more informed service as a range of resident issues may be identified at once. The system will cut down on duplication of effort and miscommunication between departments and improve service delivery, as well as tenant confidence in CPH.

The estate's resident involvement structures are also under review. Currently, several mechanisms are in place to ensure resident involvement. The Clapham Park Residents Panel (CPRP) is the key consultative forum through which CPH engages with its residents. Panel membership comprises tenants and leaseholders, as well as members able to represent special interests within the diverse population of Clapham Park. In addition to the CPRP, a number of Tenant and Resident Associations operate across the estate and CPH regularly consults with the local community through a variety of other means such as leaseholder holder meetings, project steering groups and community forums. CPH is dedicated to building capacity within each group and strengthening the effectiveness of existing resident involvement structures.

CPH also hopes to increase its neighbourhood focus through the provision of employment and training programmes. Employability has been identified as a key issue on the estate. This is a new area of service delivery for housing estates and may require a learning curve for CPH staff. Partnerships will be formed with local organisations and some organisational changes may need to occur; however, successful implementation of employment and training programmes could have a significant impact for local residents and the entire community.

Progress made, possible barriers/problems met and solutions found
Since the start of the Close Neighbours project, CPH has gained accreditation for resident involvement under the Tenant Participation Advisory Service programme which cited the Block Champions programme as a Best Practice initiative. CPH has gained the support of residents and the NDC for the Block Champions programme and funding for the initiative has been applied for. However, while support for the programme is strong, the number of residents expressing interest in taking up the Block Champion positions has been low. A resident involvement incentive programme to encourage participation in the programme is under development.

b. Maidstone Housing Trust

Profile
Maidstone Housing Trust (MHT) is a housing association in south-east England that formed as a result of a transfer of the entire housing stock of Maidstone Borough Council in February 2004. At transfer, MHT made commitments to substantial investment in the entire stock of approximately 6,300 rented and 400 leasehold homes, as well as to undertake extensive regeneration activities in two areas: the Parkwood and Coombe Farm housing estates.

The Parkwood Estate is a mid-1960s estate on the southern outskirts of Maidstone. The estate is tenure diversified with flatted rental accommodation and owner-occupied units purchased under the Right-to-Buy programme. Coombe Farm is an older estate with a more central location near the town centre. Built in the 1930s, Coombe Farm is more open containing mainly smaller, terraced houses with individual plots. Both areas have suffered poor reputations based on perceptions of poverty, anti-social behaviour, and poor housing.

Strategy and activities

Since 2004, MHT has been carrying out major regeneration programmes on both estates with substantial physical and environmental improvements being made in each area. Work carried out in each community includes a mixture of demolition, new build and rehabilitation of existing homes incorporating greater diversification of tenure. Investments in the areas surrounding the estates are also being made in an attempt to raise the profile and perceptions of each community and give greater pride in the locality for local people.

Despite these improvements, several issues remain to be addressed. Both communities are characterised by a poverty of aspiration, which may limit social and economic advancement on the estates. Primary health care issues are also a concern with the Parkwood estate exhibiting very high levels of teenage pregnancies. Additionally, the relationship between MHT and local residents is not as strong as it could be, with many residents still wary of the Trust's intentions. While the Trust has been good at the delivering the promises made at the time of the stock transfer, MHT recognises the need to transition to a more positive and active role within each community to further the social aspects of regeneration. They have identified four actions which will help the Trust develop a more neighbourhood focused approach in their work:

- Engaging young people through focussed programmes as a means of combating alienation and low motivation. The development of new community centres is planned for each estate that will offering programmes designed specifically for young people. Programmes offered by the new centres will include activities related to music, dance and sport--three themes identified by local young people as of particular interest to them—to encourage participation, raise levels of self-esteem and increase motivation;

- Partnerships for learning to address disadvantage and low morale through training and education initiatives;

- Partnerships for health to encourage and support healthy living among local residents; and

- Developing more effective resident involvement through intensive 'on the ground' estate management.

Progress made, possible barriers/problems met and solutions found

MHT is in the process of strengthening existing and creating new partnerships with several organisations to carry their initiatives forward. The Maidstone YMCA has a long history of involvement on the Coombe Farm estate providing a range of youth programmes and community support services related to education and healthy lifestyles. The organisation has a strong relationship with MHT and is actively supporting the Trust's efforts to develop a local community centre and related youth programmes. MHT is also looking to develop a relationship with the Kent Music School, which is seeking ways to connect with a wider audience possibly through the development of a music programme, including music lessons, as a means to engage local youth. A partnership with the local Primary Care Trust is also under development for the continued support and development of community healthy living centres. Finally, to strengthen its relationship with each estate, MHT is building upon its 'Walkabout Wednesdays' initiative which encourages all Trust staff to get out of the office and interact with residents within the communities themselves. The Trust has recently created a community development department to address social regeneration and is strengthening tenant involvement through the newly developed Customer Panel, a network of resident volunteers acting as a sounding board and evaluator of the Trust's policies and actions.

c. Trafford Housing Trust

Profile

The borough of Trafford, with a population of 220,000, packs considerable diversity into a small area south-west of Manchester's city centre. In areas surrounding the iconic Old Trafford football ground, and the world's first industrial estate, are high concentrations of social housing. Further south, Trafford is characterised by the leafy and prosperous commuter suburbs of Sale and Altrincham.

Fearing defeat in a forthcoming local election, in 2004 the controlling left-of-centre Labour party transferred 9,600 homes and their housing staff to Trafford Housing Trust, a newly established non-profit housing association. The move was intended, in the words of a Trust executive, to create a 'council housing department in exile'. However, the management of the Trust, who took control in March 2005, made a clean break with the council and of the staff who transferred in 2005, only 62 per cent were still employed by the Trust in late 2008.

Strategy and activities
The stock transfer unlocked public funding and bank borrowing of £138.8 million (€157 million) to enable the Trust to meet the English government's Decent Homes standards by 2010 (Social Housing, 2005). Property improvements were management's main focus in the initial period, with the proportion of homes designated 'decent' rising from 47 per cent of stock at transfer to 83 per cent in March 2008 (Trafford Housing Trust, 2008). Next, service standards were improved. The Audit Commission (2002) had ranked the council's housing department as one of the worst in the country for carrying out urgent repairs. By 2007, the Commission considered the Trust 'has significantly improved customer services with clear customer benefits since the organisation was formed', with 99 per cent of urgent repairs completed on time (Audit Commission, 2007).

The third priority of the Trust's management team has been to re-engineer the business by moving away from the hierarchical structure inherited from the council. A strategic review, completed in September 2008, proposed a total organisational re-design to fit their new mission of being 'at the heart of creating neighbourhoods in Trafford that are safe, clean, with strong communities'.

Progress made, possible barriers/problems met and solutions found
Implementation of changes to premises and processes, and developing the skills and behaviours of staff to improve the way they engage with, and support, the communities in which they operate will be complete by early 2010. Residents (not just tenants) are being encouraged to prepare neighbourhood plans in partnership with the Trust's management and other local support agencies. A pilot project has started in Sale Moor, an area built as a single-tenure public housing estate. Tenants are also helping to improve the delivery of the Trust's housing services through a quality monitoring project in Central Stretford. Finally, a 'community hub' is being developed to allow residents to challenge the way the Trust works and to create ideas and solutions that improve neighbourhoods and build community capacity. The effectiveness of this project is being monitored in Tamworth, a troubled neighbourhood in Old Trafford dominated by high-rise apartments.

d. Yorkshire Housing Trust

Profile
Yorkshire Housing (YH) started from a family of housing organisations with different origins, including stock transfer and 'traditional' housing associations that came together to form the Yorkshire Housing Group providing 16,300 homes. In 2008, the Group amalgamated all the organisations into one charitable organisation – Yorkshire Housing. Affordable rented homes are their core business but YH also has low cost ownership schemes as well as market rented homes. It provides support to homeowners who are elderly, disabled or vulnerable to remain independent and provides care and support services to people with learning disabilities.

Strategy and activities
Yorkshire Housing grapples with the tension around achieving local accountability and working across a wide geographical area with structures that evolved from being organized as a group of housing associations. We especially focus on developments in the South Yorkshire area. YH wants to monitor the effectiveness of bringing the organization closer to neighbourhoods with the multi-functional generic area teams based on geography. This framework was developed in Yorkshire Metropolitan Housing and has been transposed to other housing management teams within YH. This arrangement also recognises the different local authorities engaged with.

YH has resolved that 'All of our services will be shaped by our customers and will focus on things that matter to them – Recruit local authority representatives to Operational Committees'. YH has recently developed Operational Committees within their governance structure. These committees replace the former intermediate Housing Association Boards to maintain local accountability. YH wants to monitor the effectiveness of these committees. The Operational Committees follow the same geographical pattern of the area teams and have responsibility for developing local area strategies. YH wants to explore how local stakeholders including local government can be more effectively engaged in the development of Local Area Strategies.

Progress made, possible barriers/problems met and solutions found
In February 2009 the Yorkshire Housing Board made a decision to review the current governance structure, its tenant/customer engagement model and shareholder framework. Key reasons for a review were:
- Yorkshire Housing's recent amalgamation;
- Changes to the management structure;
- Changes to the regulation for housing associations and the new regulator's challenge to put the Board in control of delivering excellent performance to customers.

As a result there was a halt to recruitment to Operational Committees pending the outcome of this review. Members of these committees have also suggested that further consideration needs to be given to how local authority representatives are recruited to committees and this will be influenced by the organisation's corporate priorities.

An external consultant has now been appointed to work with the Governance team and Directors and to report directly to the Board to ensure that an independent view is taken and that the proposals are objective, and focus on achieving Tenants Services Authority expectations

The timetable for the review indicates that the YHG Board will consider the recommendations of the review by December 2009 with implementation completed by April 2010.

6. Conclusions and Discussion

The Close Neighbours Project is seeking greater understanding of the following questions:

1. How do housing associations (HAs) organise for a neighbourhood focussed approach?

2. What kind of barriers and difficulties do these HAs encounter during the implementation of organisational changes to combine scale with a neighbourhood focus? What helps them overcome these barriers and problems?

3. What are the outcomes of organisational activities undertaken by HAs to enhance their neighbourhood focus?

4. What cross-national differences and similarities can be distinguished between HAs in England and The Netherlands regarding organising neighbourhood focus?

This paper is concerned mainly with the setting up and objective setting phase of the project and therefore our conclusions cannot fully address these objectives yet. We have focused mainly on the first and second questions, and deal only briefly with the fourth. It is too early to consider the third question concerning outcomes. It is important to recognise that the project has provided an unusual opportunity for horizontal learning between a group of organisations that are also committed to learning from and with their local stakeholders. This has opened a rich seam of possibilities in understanding, implementing and learning from organisational change. We will now discuss the findings for research questions 1, 2 and 4 in more detail.

Question 1: How do housing associations (HAs) organise for a neighbourhood focussed approach?

Becoming a good neighbour can take a number of directions and includes three main types of activities shown in Table 5; changes to organisational design, to governance and to asset management.

Table 5 Overview of activities to increase neighbourhood focus

	Organisational Design	Governance	Asset Management
The Netherlands			
1. Casade, Waalwijk	Adapt the organisation to manage the use of neighbourhood hubs	Involving residents and other stakeholders in the activities of the neighbourhood hubs	Development multifunctional neighbourhood hubs with schools,
2. Lefier, Emmen	Transform neighbourhood working form a project-driven to a process-driven approach. Possibly by changing the organisational design.	Develop comprehensive neighbourhood programs containing physical, economical and social measures supported by residents	Disseminate neighbourhood working developed in a limited area to all neighbourhoods
3. Stadgenoot, Amsterdam	Develop cross departmental neighbourhood teams and methods to link neighbourhood plans to group-level strategies	Increase involvement of residents and other stakeholders in decision-making	Develop neighbourhood hubs (Neighbourhood Entrées)
4. Woonbron, Rotterdam	Developing neighbourhood-focused groups within the organisation	Increase capacity to develop neighbourhood plans with strong, resident involvement in Neighbourhood Workshops.	Supplement traditional landlords services with initiatives to increase neighbourhood liveability, like tackling anti social behaviour, vandalisms, improving waste management and pest control.

	Organisational Design	Governance	Asset Management
England			
1. Clapham Park Homes, London	Implementation of a Client Management System (CMS)	Create block champions as liaisons between tenants and the housing association. Strengthen the effectiveness of existing resident involvement structures.	Supplement regeneration of the housing stock with employment and training programs.
2. Maidstone Housing Trust, Maidstone	New community development department	Increase tenant involvement through Community Panels	Supplement regeneration of the housing stock with programmes youth, education and health
3. Trafford Housing Trust, Trafford	Total re-design of old council housing structure into an organisation that is 'in the heart of creating neighbourhoods'.	Tenant involvement in the development of neighbourhood plans and project to monitor service quality	Development of neighbourhood hubs
4. Yorkshire Housing, York	Develop generic area teams	Increase accountability through local operational committees. Increase involvement of stakeholders in local area strategies	By implication asset management strategies to reflect local operational committee decisions

A number of participating housing associations want to supplement their investments in the improvement of the housing stock and service delivery with social investments focusing on health, education and training and increased tenant involvement. This is requiring these organisations to become involved in new partnerships with other actors and to negotiate joint forms of service delivery with them (e.g. 'community hubs'). Plans to involve residents take a number of forms, but there is a common interest among a number of the projects in community involvement in area base planning and in some cases in exploring the co-production of services. This in part reflects recognition of the failure of previous methods of planning and the need to win back the trust of residents. There are also plans to change organisational structures in several cases, in general this involves a move away from centralised functional departments towards more locally integrated teams, but also includes new functional team to manage community engagement and improvement of corporate information systems to improve local responsiveness.

<u>Question 2: Learning Points: Barriers, Deadlocks and Breakthroughs</u>

Table 6 summarises the key learning points emerging from the eight projects at mid-year review stage.

It can be seen that the types of points raised by the participants relate to the specific types of change that that have been focusing on in their projects. However, some common themes are beginning to emerge which could form the basis for further discussion and mutual support at the next workshop in late Autumn 2009.

Table 6 Review of Learning Points from Mid-Year Diaries

	Key Objectives	Main Learning Points
The Netherlands		
Casade, Waalwijk	- Neighbourhood hubs–neighbourhood focus, multi services, social return, - HA as property developer and coordinator (sees this as shift in focus from real estate to neighbourhoods) - Exploratory phase	- Time taken to reach agreements with partners on facilities management of hubs - Research on community expectations and wishes - Partners do not contribute financially
Lefier, Emmen	- Expand neighbourhood focused approach form three areas to all areas of operation - Building trust through decentralising decisions and resources to neighbourhood units - 'liveability budget' for resident led projects - Integrating the Customer focused tenant team and the community focused development team Shift from central control to local accountability	- Liveabilty budget under-used because residents do not know about it - Caretakers role enhanced to neighbourhood manager, but resident expectations unchanged - Resistence to further organisational change following a merger, but there is now more contact between departments dealing with the same neighbourhood
Stadgenoot, Amsterdam	- To be accountable and involve stakeholders on both group level and neighbourhood level of the organization - Area mapping (to determine level of influence) - Neighbourhood Planning involving residents	- Merger diverted attention onto internal issues - Bottom up approach has enabled residents to be heard but a strategic plan is needed too - Resident involvement very time consuming - Organisation unsure about aim of involvement – consultation or decision making?
Woonbron, Rotterdam	- Build on existing decentralisation to neighbourhoods - Develop neighbourhood visions in a bottom-up way, involving residents and other stakeholders in local policy development - Co-production of services with residents - Developing neighbourhood resilience in Heindijk area where few people chose to live	- Neighbourhood managers are the informal leaders - Neighbourhood stories have been written - Heindijk area is a frontrunner - Cooperates with schools, social welfare organisations, - Neighbourhood recovery leads political attention to move on elsewhere

	Key Objectives	Main Learning Points
England		

Clapham Park Homes, London	- Strengthen the Association's neighbourhood focus by creating a:
	  - 'Block Champions' programme to improve communication & increase resident involvement
	  - Client Management System (CMS) within the organisation. The CMS is a new housing management system designed to pool all resident information
	  - Strengthening the effectiveness of existing resident involvement structures. employment and training programmes
		- Gained accreditation for resident involvement under the Tenant Participation Advisory Service
		- Block Champions programme started and funding for the initiative has been applied for, but low take up and more incentives being developed

Maidstone Housing Trust, Maidstone	- After physical regeneration plan to tackle social issues:
	  - Engaging young people
	  - Partnerships for learning to tackle poverty of aspiration, social and economic advancement
	  - Partnerships for health Primary health care issues
	  - Increase residents' trust in landlord though effective resident involvement
		- Strengthening existing and creating new partnerships e.g. with Kent Music School Primary Care Trust
		- Walkabout Wednesdays'
		- Community development department
		- Customer panel

Trafford Housing Trust, Trafford	- Re-engineer the business by moving away from the hierarchical structure inherited from the council. - 'at the heart of creating neighbourhoods in Trafford that are safe, clean, with strong communities'.	- Developing the skills and behaviours of staff - Residents (not just tenants) are being encouraged to prepare neighbourhood plans in partnership with the Trust's management - Quality monitoring project - 'Community hub' is being developed to allow residents to challenge the way the Trust works
Yorkshire Housing, York	- All of our services will be shaped by our customers and will focus on things that matter to them - Operational Committees to follow the same geographical pattern of the area teams and have responsibility for developing local area strategies - Recruit residents and LA members to enhance local accountability - Review how front line services are delivered within local neighbourhoods in relation to generic or specialist roles	- Changes to the regulation system for housing associations, recent amalgamation, new CEO appointment and internal management changes have resulted in YH drive to achieve excellence in service delivery. - Halt to recruitment to Operational Committees pending the outcome of internal and external reviews into how to best deliver neighbourhood focesed services.

The table indicates the positive progress made by the projects on a variety of fronts in the first few months of their interventions. At this stage the most interesting learning has derived from reflection on some of the barriers and deadlocks that have become apparent as the move towards becoming closer neighbours has begun. Three key learning points in relation to barriers to change are discussed below:

1. **Organisational and Structural Issues can present significant barriers to change**

The first learning point that features across several of the cases is the impact of bigger structural changes in these organisations on the ability to progress neighbourhood focused reforms. In particular mergers seem to have played a role both in generating the need for a fresh look at neighbourhood responsiveness and in placing some constraints on the practical achievement of this goal. Mergers can use up energy and divert resources from neighbourhood work, and lead to 'restructuring fatigue' leading to an unwillingness to make further structural changes to progress neighbourhood focus. Organisation level reviews are complex and take time and can delay the

implementation of local initiatives. On the other hand 'bottom up' initiative taken within individual neighbourhoods require a corporate support framework if they are to survive and spread to other parts of the organisation.

2. Resident and Community engagement is a two way process: it is not enough to simply provide the opportunities to engage, it is also important to consider the incentives to participate and the level at which the organisation is prepared to engage

A second key learning point from several of the case studies was limited take up of participation opportunities by residents in new initiatives (e.g. block champions and local liveability budgets). This should cause the organisations to focus more on understanding the motives and incentives that might encourage different segments of the residents to participate. Another learning point that came through strongly in one case and which probably has wider relevance is that it is important to deliver a good quality basic landlord service in order to engage in thinking about wider neighbourhood issues. Finally another case indicated a lack of clarity about the limits the organisation was setting to engagement, this could lead to conflicting expectations by residents and generate further lack of trust.

3. Partnership involvement takes time and external partners may not have the same expectations nor willingness to contribute financially to your goals

Issues of aligning expectations applied equally to working with external partners such as schools, health funders and providers and local government. Projects were recognising that developing new partnership arrangements takes time, not just in relation to general agreement of goals and building of trust but also on more specific agreements (e.g. on facility management arrangements in community hubs or on cost sharing for joint initiatives). In one case it was believed that success too had its price, when local government attention appeared to move on to other arenas once there were signs of progress in the neighbourhood targeted for special intervention. The 'Outcome Arena' tool which was introduced to the Close Neighbours projects some way into the project could provide a useful instrument for addressing some of these goal alignment issues, and it will be interesting to see whether the projects use the tool with their local partners and whether this helps to achieve any breakthroughs in goal alignment.

Question 4: What cross-national differences and similarities can be distinguished between HAs in England and The Netherlands regarding organising neighbourhood focus?

Finally, does the project highlight any key similarities or differences between 'the Dutch and the English way' when it comes to neighbourhood focused housing associations? Our main conclusion on this point is that while there are important differences in the financial and regulatory context and in some of the terminology employed, there are underlying commonalities of task and approach that make horizontal learning of the type attempted by Close Neighbours a valuable addition to the toolkit of managers.

The greater aspirations of English associations in relation to community engagement may partly relate to the regulatory context as discussed earlier, but may also relate to the stock transfer origins of the of the four English cases giving them a legacy of a strong geographical focus and a common commitment to community regeneration as well as asset upgrading.

The differences in language and approach, (e.g. the greater reference to social and financial returns and familiarity with SROI methods) in the Dutch case studies may reflect the more independent financial status of these organisations but may also indicate the prior engagement of the case study organisations with SEV who have been promoting the use of performance tools in the Dutch sector for a number of years.

The next phase of the project will provide opportunities for further horizontal discussion between the eight partner projects should further inform our understanding of the similarities and differences in what it takes to become a close neighbour housing association in the Netherlands and England.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix A: Examples of Outcome Arenas