Urban renewal as a lever for action in urban policy to make social housing districts more attractive
1

THE OBJECTIVES OF URBAN RENEWAL IN FRANCE

Improving the inhabitants’ living environment & making attractive

Large housing areas in question

1955 -1973
They are associated with town planning including green spaces, social housing and architectural modernity, opposing residential leprosy.

March 1973
The construction of large housing areas was then definitively abandoned.

2003 -2013
The "urban renewal" initiated at the end of 2003 with respect to the Framework Act for Town Planning and Urban Renewal, dated 1 August 2003 (called the “Borloo law”) was a change in perspective in making towns.
The renewed districts as pools of architectural and urban innovation

Architectural ambitions and innovations

The integration of sustainability issues to new operations

The attraction of individual housing
FIRST ASSESSMENTS OF URBAN POLICY

IS URBAN RENEWAL EFFECTIVE ENOUGH TO MAKE SOCIAL HOUSING DISTRICTS ATTRACTIVE?

- First assessments of the urban policy between 2003 and 2013

The urban policy from 2003 has striven to bring a solution to the social problems in large housing areas through an exemplary physical intervention.

There is a noticeable change in the inhabitants’ living environment.

However, the urban approach is sometimes very “formal”.
The projects seem to provide architectural responses which do not take into account the specific characteristics of the districts, and without actually consulting the inhabitants.
Social representation as a tool to assess how attractive renewed districts are.

Social representations are the subject of observations and reflections, to understand the link between people and their districts, and to act in the urban project through them.
Two large housing districts located in Grenoble and Echirolles in Rhône-Alpes region in France are currently the subject of studies about social representations in connection with the urban renewal project carried out between 2003 and 2013.
TEISSEIRE – GRENOBLE

Dangerous districts?
In the Teisseire estate in Grenoble, the main tool for the diversification policy in the district has consisted in creating an expansion welcoming new housing transactions, i.e., 460 units, 80% of which offer social home or free ownership. The profile of the area has evolved from 100% to 75% of social housing.
Before urban renewal

Le quartier Teisseire après le programme de rénovation urbaine

ZAC TEISSEIRE 460 housing
250 new housing into the district
The social home ownership housing stock is quite attractive to newcomers.
VILLAGE 2 - ECHIROLLES
175 new housing into the district
50 housing (social home ownership)
- Taking into account the social representations of districts in urban projects
It seems appropriate to collect the representations of the district from this distinctive category of people because it is agreed that the "old" inhabitants’ living environment has improved, even if social issues remain.

Interviewing and filling in questionnaires with newcomers make typical representations come out -- this is completed by the data collection from the district barometers, other surveys about the district population or assessments.

The first step is meant to develop a terminology suitable to each studied area.

Identifying the representations used by the locals leads to checking whether there is a mechanistic relationship between urban forms and social representations. These representations can help to develop a target urban project, in tune with the inhabitants’ expectations.
Most acknowledge that the urban policy has truly changed the inhabitants’ “material” living conditions, and has often succeeded in making such districts commonplace, so that they appear attractive.

Have these changes been however actually accompanied by new representations?
This work can only be done in close cooperation with the inhabitants and must be based on the speech emerging from districts.

That is why the new urban policy, which started in 2014, has indeed been taking into consideration the need to integrate the citizens in the urban project, in order to guarantee its success and a lasting future. It has put in place consultation tools such as citizen councils, the project house, participatory workshops, but the issue of translating social representations or the inhabitants’ speech within the urban project is still sensitive.