

5 STEP METHODOLOGY NEIGHBORHOOD RENEWAL *towards a resilient future*



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And then, one day, the moment arises when the neighborhood calls for a thorough renewal. Not just replacing a few streetlights, appointing a new community center manager, or launching a new housing project. What's needed is a comprehensive future plan that combines physical, economic, and/or social interventions.

You're about to make significant investments. How can the neighborhood be renewed in a future-proof way? How do you build resilience within the neighborhood? How do you work towards a happy neighborhood? Let me take you on a journey through the strategizing process, touching upon:

- >Systemic perspective on the neighborhood,
- >Deep dive analysis method,
- >Impact of societal transitions,
- >Clear view on resilience,
- >Transdisciplinary work, and
- >Working from a position of empathy and wonder, for the neighborhood and the people.

This long read offers you a methodology, grown from experience, intuition, study, and the necessary dose of practical reality.

I have been a transition maker for 30 years, working in neighborhood transitions for 15 years now. I love it! First and foremost because it's all about the people—for whom the neighborhood is their living environment, where everything comes together: from the sewage system to a sense of belonging. That why it is crystal clear to me that a renewal is integral and all-encompassing.

Furthermore, I love it because an existing neighborhood demands that you dive deep into all stakeholders and their interests, into all characteristics of the neighborhood in every corner, into all ongoing projects—and then still manage to see a clear thread running through it all... In short, renewing an existing neighborhood is complex and messy. And in this area, there is surprisingly little guidance from the academic world.

From this perspective, I have developed this methodology that does not simplify this complexity but embraces it.

My goal is clear: more dialogue about the neighborhood transitions. Not to be bogged down by theoretical discussions, but to simply make us more aware of the choices we make while working in the neighborhoods. This long read is therefore not an endpoint, but an invitation to constructive dialogue.

All-in-one approach

A future plan for a neighborhood does not emerge overnight; it grows slowly during a strategic process. In the methodology I propose here, five steps together lead to an integrated vision. This integration is not a luxury but a reality. It reflects how residents experience their neighborhood: as a whole, not as a sum of separate projects. At the same time, the five steps make choices visible, so that others can understand, question, and enrich them—and that leads to a strategy with more substance and support.

I propose this methodology because I see in practice that we struggle with old neighborhoods. Renewing something that already exists is generally not our strongest suit. Compare it to a loose thread and a hole in a wool sweater. We tend to gravitate toward three types of solutions. Out of fear of unraveling the entire sweater, we leave the hole as it is: we discuss and come up with ideas, but we don't implement them. We buy a new sweater: we build new neighborhoods. We put a sticker on the hole: we apply a quick fix to the neighborhood with a separate project.

I advocate for more breadth, more depth, and more integration in the planning process. Breadth through good and smart collaboration with all stakeholders in the neighborhood—and that includes residents, who should not have a supporting role in separate resident participation, but who have a full place, just like any other stakeholder. Depth to genuinely get to know what is happening in and around the neighborhood, so that you can work with existing qualities and within the context. Integration to truly weigh up the insights from different disciplines and weave them into a single coherent story.

This long read focuses on the methodology for creating a substantively sound plan for the future and, above all, concretizes my plea for more depth.

The route is as follows:

1. Analyze the neighborhood—thoroughly, with an eye for details, layers, and patterns.
2. Investigate the impact of social transitions on the neighborhood—which external forces are currently at work in the neighborhood, and which will continue to be so in the future?
3. Explicit values—which personal, professional, and social values form the compass?
4. Increase the resilience of the neighborhood—what makes the neighborhood optimally future-proof regardless of circumstances?
5. Integrate, synthesize, and create—forge all insights into a guiding and inspiring plan for the future.

In this article all five chapters will be covered, one by one.

In addition, the final paragraphs no longer deal with the content of the strategy but briefly discuss the process of developing the strategy and its implementation, as both are at least as important for the final result as the content of the future plan.



The content table of a future plan, based on these five steps, would then contain the following chapters, of which points 1 to 4 are in fact the four pillars on which the strategy in step 5 is built:

1. Analysis of the neighborhood
2. Impact of societal transitions on the neighborhood
3. Values for the neighborhood
4. Opportunities to raise the resilience level of the neighborhood
5. Strategy for the neighborhood: our current view on the neighborhood, our vision for the future and the leading principles moving forward.

Viewing the neighborhood as a system

A neighborhood is where residents live their lives, in all its facets. Professionals, on the other hand, focus on a single facet: the public works specialist looks at the sewer system, the area manager of the housing association looks at the homes, the employment and income service looks at residents without work, the bus company looks at the choice of bus stops, etc. A moment of neighborhood renewal is also the moment when the interaction between all these facets no longer produces the desired outcome.

The invitation is therefore to get to know the neighborhood as a whole. Not by simplifying it into manageable puzzle pieces, but by looking at the complex system in all its layers.

From the history of cities (from classics such as the work of Lewis Mumford (1961) and Ben Wilson (2021)), I recognize—from the first settlements to the city of Uruk, and from Barcelona to Mumbai—six elements or domains that together form the system of the neighborhood. And that way of looking at things helps in developing the strategy.



- Neighbors
- Real estate
- Basic needs
- Public space
- Facilities
- The neighborhood surroundings

Whether a neighborhood is fantastic or its residents live in misery, these elements are a constant. Their form may vary, but their function remains the same. Their interplay determines the character of a neighborhood.

Let's briefly go over them one by one.

Co-habitants

A Dutch poet, Jules Deelder, wrote: the environment of the human is the other human. There is no city and no neighborhood if there are no other people. There are people of different ages and backgrounds. Strongly connected in a social network or loosely connected only by recognizing each other's faces in the streets. Active in the neighborhood or just there to sleep and eat. The connotation of neighborhood is most certainly that people live there. If a part of the city holds mostly shops, offices and public space, it is more often referred to as a quarter. So, a neighborhood is first and above all a home to people.

Housing and real estate

People need a safe place for weather conditions and some privacy, whether it is high rise buildings or only ground-level houses. Also, people create places to meet: churches, restaurants, workplace etc. (What struck me in the research is that innumerable centuries ago revisited places to perform rituals for the dead preceded the first settlements. So, the first real estate was not a place for a safe bed, nor place for trade, but a ritual place.)

Basic needs

Thirdly, an infrastructure for energy, water, garbage and sewage will arise. Whether it is gas bottles in Mexico or solar energy in Denmark, all households need some sort of energy. The same goes for water: running tap water, bottles or a well. Since it is our key need as people, some water system will be in place. And then, even in ancient Mesopotamia, which is considered to have held the first city of the world, a garbage and sewage system existed. All of these are a critical part of a neighborhood, and in many modern cities the piping underground is one of the first things to consider when there is a wish to build in the so-called brown fields (this is existing city ground as opposed to green fields which is open, non-occupied ground).

Public space

This is the non-private or opened-up space in which people move between the private spaces. It is filled with nature, with roads and other mobilities to connect people, with parked cars, with cultural sites, with squares and playgrounds etc. This space has a large influence on the neighborhood. If the space is too empty and large, it makes us feel uncomfortable. But if it is too crowded with parked cars it has the same effect. Sennett (2018) has a beautiful way of writing about this. In Hong Kong the public space has layers: highways on ground level and pedestrian paths with trees on the first level. How does this affect our way of meeting? Because this is where people meet, the public theatre.

Facilities and economy

People get together. To pray, to play, to trade, to buy food in shops and markets, and to eat and drink in restaurants and to work etc. These are crucial for the experience of a neighborhood. It's no surprise that the idea of a 15-minute city sparks so much conversation.

Surroundings

A neighborhood never stands on its own: it is part of a city, of a region, of a country. When working in a neighborhood, this should be considered. In present-day Marrakech government and private enterprises have made significant investments in the tourist industry, which is affecting life in the neighborhood. As a result, locals are relocating to newer parts of the city, streets in the medina become cleaner, but rental prices for small shops are forcing out local businesses, which are increasingly being replaced by international brands. All because of something that is happening 'elsewhere'.

This perspective helps to structure the approach, but cannot replace the complexity of the dynamics, the interdependencies and the many layers of what is happening. It is clear that working in a neighborhood requires a transdisciplinary approach in the strategy process.

Kaleidoscopic analysis, Step I

No neighborhood is the same, and the first step is to get to know the place in-depth. When renewing a neighborhood, there certainly is no blank canvas. And in my perspective that is exactly what makes it compelling. What is the unique essence that sets this place apart from anywhere else? Presumably there was a time when the neighborhood worked just fine as originally designed. Did it? Or were there inherent flaws in the initial design? Did things simply change? Did external factors push the neighborhood into transition?

I use a multi-faceted or kaleidoscopic research method to gain a comprehensive understanding of the neighborhood. This method offers a view at the neighborhood from different perspectives, to experience the different layers of its reality and to avoid paradigms or tunnel views. The method entails that the analysis is never done by one person only. Rather the collective intelligence of many people involved, and most certainly the inhabitants, should be tapped into. And it is crucial to use available research data to complete the picture. The method I use can be summarized as: Be, Observe, Use, Talk, Read and Explore data.



Be in the neighborhood: immerse yourself in the area. Walk, drive or bike on a Sunday, on a Monday during rush hour, in the evening... **Observe** the neighborhood: notice where it feels inviting and where it doesn't. **Observe** how people behave, how the traffic flows and what the overall atmosphere is. You could set up a constellation of the neighborhood and observe how elements interact and how maybe the environment has a large influence. **Use** the neighborhood: do your groceries there, visit the church, participate in a workshop and dine at a restaurant. **Talk** to people, both professionals and inhabitants and ask them both how they feel and what they know about the neighborhood and get informed about its history. **Read** plans: old urban plans, recent policy

plans and regional plans to better understand the character, the history of the neighborhood and the views upon it. And finally, explore a lot of research **data**: dive into data analysis (perform extra research if needed) and compare data with the data of similar neighborhoods and of other periods in time to notice the typical characteristics and understand the underlying movements that led to the actual facts.

Above all the approach of the neighborhood requires a genuine attitude of wonder and attentiveness, with a dot of critical eye towards potential paradigms. Additionally, it necessitates an appreciative attitude. The latter may seem obvious. But to activate stakeholders to invest in a renewal you need urgency. So, the risk is to focus on everything that looks dramatically bad in the neighborhood. Firstly, that would be a straight-on insult to the inhabitants. Also, this perspective easily evolves into a fixing mentality. A neighborhood is not something that can be fixed. I rather think of it as a system that is out of balance. Every neighborhood already has its own characteristic values and potential. By revealing those, appreciating them and moving towards enlarging them, a strategy walks a more constructive and respectful road. And this may include taking leave of parts that are at the end of their life cycle.

With the important disclaimer in mind that there is not one all-covering list, let's delve into potentially relevant questions to ask oneself in the analysis phase of the neighborhood renewal. You find a list below. In this question phase the previously introduced domains create the structure.

There is no right order, rather the process is iterative, moving from being in the neighborhood to data and back.

Co-habitants

- How many people live in the neighborhood (or visit the neighborhood), for how long have they lived there and what is the size of the households?
- What is their age, education level, general happiness, health, work and financial situation (income distribution and wealth distribution indicators can be insightful)?
- Where do children go to school, where do adults work, where is leisure time spent?
- Where do people meet others, do they know many others in the neighborhood, what do they share, are they organized, and what do they contribute to the neighborhood?
- What do they feel and know about the neighborhood, now and in the past?
- How do habitants value the domains below?

- How does population growth look and what is the forecast?

Housing and other real estate

- How many houses and other real estate does the neighborhood contain and what type: ownership, price range, surface, appearance, quality, energy label, health score?
- How is the occupancy, the mutation rate, and is there a waiting list? Is there a match between supply and demand?
- What can be said about the structure of the built environment (use the Floor Space Index here or in the public space sector), the architecture and atmosphere that emanates from it?
- How many owners does the neighborhood count and are they organized?
- What has changed over the years and can be expected in the future?

Basic needs

- How is the water supply in terms of availability, price and quality and what can be expected in the future?
- How is the energy infrastructure in terms of proper functioning and price of the energy and what can be expected in the future?
- What is the status of sustainable energy?
- How is the drainage and sewage system (also related to climate change)?
- Is a map available with locations of piping for all basic needs?
- Which larger public works are scheduled?

Public space

- What is the history of the land and the original natural environment as well as the cultural environment?
- How does the public space contribute to the character of the neighborhood?
- Is there a lot of public space, and is it mostly gray or mostly green?
- How do art objects, furniture, lighting and buildings influence the public space?
- How is the status of nature: biodiversity, green, water etc.?
- How is public space valued by people (maybe use the Public Space Index)? And what is the observable quality?
- What is the (expected) traffic intensity and which locations are considered unsafe?
- What to think of the parking policy, the outcome and the fluctuations?
- What is the air and noise quality like?
- Which events take place in the public space?

Facilities

- Which facilities can be found in the neighborhood for: work, education, sports, culture, shops, religion, healthcare?
- Are kindergarten, school and work available in the neighborhood and used by habitants.
- Is there any specific knowledge and/or capacity available in the neighborhood?
- Are facilities focused on the neighborhood or a larger service area, and are they used by the inhabitants of the neighborhood or do inhabitants go elsewhere and why?
- Which are the facilities that are felt to contribute to the neighborhood's character?
- What is the appearance of the facilities and how economically healthy are they?
- Are the shop owners organized? Is there any organization between other facilities in the neighborhood? And what is their influence?

Environment

- How is the overall score of the neighborhood compared to its environment?
- What is the function of the neighborhood in its environment?
- What is the character of the environment and how does it interfere with the neighborhood?
- What are major changes happening and what is on the public agenda in the environment?

Once gathered the challenge is to interpret all this information carefully, applying the art of distilling the common thread, yet not be too coarse meshed. Obviously, the analysis leads to a vast number of facts, opinions and data, which can often be contradictory and ambiguous. The ambiguity can be within the data itself or lie in the different perspectives: an owner might say that real estate is 'technically sufficient' and there is no need for renovation, but if habitants and visitors judge otherwise and it contributes to a feeling of unsafety, the conclusion might be to rate the real estate as 'up for renewal'.

Also note, this analysis is just one pillar for the strategy. Once it interferes with findings from the other three pillars, some information may prove more relevant than it initially appeared when viewed solely from the analysis perspective. For instance: a lack of meeting places in a neighborhood isn't always problematic. However, when combined with a growing trend of individualization in society (to be discussed in the next pillar), this absence can quickly become a significant problem.

My advice is: maintain an extensive version of a document with all the information and interpretations. Later in the process, in the creative fifth step when you build a storyline, this part can be condensed.

Impact of societal transitions on the neighborhood, step 2

No neighborhood exists in isolation from the world around it. Major social shifts have an impact on living rooms, streets, and squares. Think of the collapse of the automotive industry in Detroit (USA) neighborhoods or the disappearance of mining in Limburg neighborhoods (The Netherlands).

Incorporating social transitions into strategy development is challenging. It requires professionals who understand the transitions, discover their impact on the neighborhood, and can contribute a vision of the neighborhood's future to an integrated narrative.

Below, I am only providing a helicopter view of how these social transitions can be incorporated into the overall picture. This forms the second pillar of strategy development.

Having said this, let me start with an example of how a societal transition has a direct impact on the neighborhood and requires smart future choices. In The Netherlands the affordability of the public (health)care system has been under pressure for years now and successive administrations have cut costs. Consequently, accessibility and availability of (health) care is unobtrusively (by use of deviant wording) diminishing. This is linked to the transition from neo-liberalism to a new order, on which I will elaborate below: the free market was supposed to make care cheaper and create a wide range of options, but it turns out that this is not working optimally, so neighbors and family are needed again. This transition has a direct impact on the neighborhoods. People who need only a little help (not the seriously ill ones who are in facilities) remain in their neighborhood and they'll have to figure it out themselves. Yet, the structure to offer just this little help is insufficient or even absent. A demand for care rumbles into the neighborhoods, and the neighborhoods are not prepared for it. Social networks are not strong enough for neighbors to easily lend each other a hand and family members can't easily move to live together, because the housing market is locked-in and available houses aren't oriented on any form of group living. Awareness of this leads to specific future choices for real estate development and for investments in social networks.

With this example I want to underscore the relevance of societal transitions on the neighborhood. So, I will investigate the impact on the neighborhood of major transitions in society. I distinguish, based on studying various transition

studies, four transitions. And as you will read below, these transitions are interconnected.

1. New Order,
2. Globalization,
3. Digital transition and
4. Sustainability.

Obviously, this distinction is context sensitive. I have tried to diminish a bias, but my personal Northern European-based perspective influences what I will share. Also, a transition will have a different impact from country to country. Within an actual strategizing process, the creators working on a plan, need to use their own sources to formulate the key transitions that impact the neighborhood.

I. New order, moving from capitalism and neoliberalism

I think that worldwide over centuries, and in the past century at increased speed, we have fallen and are still falling under the spell of capitalism and liberalism (and neo-liberalism since the last two decades of the 20th century). This is a spell that is not limited to a singular perspective on the functioning of the market or economics. But capitalism and (neo-) liberalism include a paradigm on other crucial parts of society, like: the behavior of people (calculating individuals), the role of the government (should be small) and of corporations (free market is ideal, also regarding to commons like energy, internet, healthcare etc.), ownership of land (land is always owned by someone and can therefore be traded), the use of raw materials and food the earth has to offer (these supplies are considered to be infinite and propagate if they are properly worked), and the way products (and this includes food) can be industrially produced in an efficient way. Among others, the work of Kate Raworth (2017) perfectly dissects the paradigms and places an alternative next to them.

However, I argue this paradigm is in its twilight years. I see cracks in the system's surface. Examples? Growing polarization in politics combined with more demonstrations, the climate change as an overall bankruptcy of the system, the growth of armed conflicts on the globe, the financial crisis of 2008, a growing gap between poor and rich, the awareness that civilization still allows blatant abuses to exist, the way the internet has evolved from a common playground to being dominated and defined by a handful of companies.. And on the maybe more constructive side I notice: a cry for a more inclusive democracy (e.g. citizens assemblies), a growth of cooperative organizations (e.g. for energy, housing and care), an increasing interest in consciousness growth, a growing correction of the injustice effects of colonialism, revaluation of indigenous wisdom, growing awareness on the downside of consumption

behavior and so on. All this does not form a coherent whole, but I do see it as a search for an alternative.

The spell consists of a dream that moving towards a mix of capitalism and democracy with a dot of neoliberalism would go hand in hand with personal freedom and welfare for all mankind. And yes, it did work to some extent -and will probably continue to do so- but at the same time, it didn't work out as well as hoped, and certainly not for everyone. The system is out of balance and the wait is for it to tip over into something new.

When I refer to a new order, this is -at this point in time- no coherent new vision on society and economy. Being raised in an era of isms: communism, liberalism, fascism, socialism, it took me a while to understand that we lack a replacement for one of these grand theories. So, we are really talking about a transition into a future that is emerging, without clear contours.



I refer to it as 'New Order', because I feel that we are reinventing the order between institutions (such as the government), companies, the planet and citizens. Sometimes the government may take a firmer position as guardian of the general interest at the expense of the market, sometimes more space is needed for citizens at the expense of the government, in any case more space is needed for the planet and although entrepreneurship is fun, not everything in the neighborhoods can be captured in a commercial framework. It is good to consciously think about this New Order during the strategy creation and to offer space for this reordering.

What does this transition do in the neighborhood? Not all neighborhood elements are equally affected, so I will highlight the most relevant ones.

- Other residents

What I generally sense in neighborhoods is a simmering unease: a mix of dissatisfaction and distrust. In my view, this stems from the fact that the

neoliberal promise of freedom and prosperity has not been fulfilled as preached or expected. This unease can easily be triggered by events into polarizing protest. But what's also clearly visible is a lot of self-initiative from residents, which leads to a constructive energy within neighborhoods. That energy is extremely valuable and full of potential. The model of the citizen being a consumer and of a government taking care of everything and a market offering everything, proves to be incomplete. The citizen as co-creator is urgently needed in the New Order. To enable this, the government and other institutional organizations such as housing corporations, care institutions, etc., must adopt and strengthen a facilitating role.

It then becomes apparent that residents are not merely individuals making decisions based on self-interest, as the neoliberal paradigm suggests. Rather, this aligns with the ancient wisdom that people are social beings, who like to do things with and for one another. It marks a new consciousness about the possibilities of taking control and engaging in cooperative enterprise close to home.

People in the neighborhood always surprise me in a positive way: if you push the right button, they participate in activities for the neighborhood and contribute to the community. So, it is about giving responsibility to inhabitants for certain aspects of neighborhood life. There is a transition going on in this area and with the right facilitating approach from institutional organizations this energy has a lot of potential.

And no, dear municipality, this new order, in which residents have a more prominent seat at the table, won't happen on its own. Residents also need to get used to this shift. After all, we are only at the very beginning of this transition.

- Real estate

The failure of capitalism and neoliberalism when it comes to housing is: the housing crisis. Cities lack the right homes, affordable homes, and enough homes. And at the same time, many homes stand vacant. This crisis is far from over. Hope for the New Order lies in initiatives like housing cooperatives and community land trusts that take land 'out of the grip of the market'.

When it comes to commercial real estate, ownership on one hand, and use and care on the other, have become disconnected. Holding real estate of a certain value in a portfolio remains attractive (as an international property company), even if a building stands vacant for a long time. Meanwhile, it is the neighborhood that feels unsafe due to a dilapidated and/or empty building.

At present, it is mainly the municipality that can take a stronger stance here. Some tools at its disposal include: imposing (visual) quality requirements, strategic purchasing and selling of municipal real estate for neighborhood development, and land pricing policies. There are more levers available to

steer neighborhood development than are currently being used.

- Public space

Virtually all common services in the public space - energy, public transport, green maintenance, and waste processing- have been privatized or are governed by key performance indicators (KPIs). The effect in neighborhoods is that there's a gap between residents and the companies/KPIs. Market thinking has gone overboard.

In nearly every neighborhood in need of renewal, waste and litter on the streets are a recurring complaint. These are the results of our excessive consumer behavior and the idea that waste is someone else's responsibility. A KPI might state that a trash can needs to be emptied once a week, but the bench next to it is very popular. Local residents know that. A KPI does not.

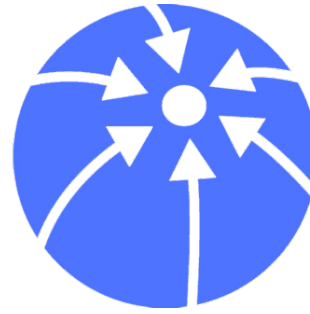
In a neighborhood renewal process that encourages the New Order, there is certainly room for more resident responsibility and for roles like a "neighborhood concierge." Or, in other words: space for initiatives between the consumer resident and market parties. This could take the form of tenant's self-management of social housing, residents maintaining green areas, an energy cooperative, etc.

- Facilities

In the neighborhood economy, the impact of global mergers (aimed at achieving higher profits through scale) is tangible, and a typical expression of capitalism and liberalism. As a result, the local shop is often no longer truly local, the health center is part of a chain, and even the social welfare organization is caught up in KPI thinking.

Facilities are regularly disappearing, and with the closure of the local bank or post office, a social meeting place and a bit of social control also vanish. And when neighborhood renewal is necessary, the involvement of these non-local players is generally low.

Here too, the New Order can create space for what residents initiate themselves. Many neighborhoods would benefit if more room was made for a small-scale economy by easing enforcement of regulations (so: less government presence): a bike repair shop out of a garage box, BBQ chicken sold from the lawn between apartment buildings, haircuts on weekends in a vacant storefront, a playground that sells pancakes, neighborhood fix-it help, etc.



2.Globalization

Whereas the transition to a New Order is still in its infancy stage, the globalization transition is thriving. Of course, one could debate about when globalization started. The Silk Route? The start of the colonization wave from Europa across the world? I'd like to argue that specifically the acceleration of globalization in the last decades left an imprint on the world. I find the container example particularly striking. Because over the centuries goods have been transported from one continent to another, but in the 1950's Malcom McLean invented the standard container to make transport more efficient. This principle of stackable, standardized "boxes" caught on rapidly, resulting in no less than around 25 million containers being in use worldwide by the early 2020s. And that is a good indication for the scale of this transition.

From containers back to the neighborhood.

Trade wars and internationally operating corporations certainly impact the daily lives of neighborhood residents. Let's go through the different elements of the neighborhood where this is relevant.

- Other residents

In general, the speed of trade, the fact that production processes are invisible, and labels indicating that a product was made on the other side of the world create a sense of alienation. In the neighborhood, it is difficult to imagine where food and products come from or how something on the other side of the world affects your environment. The neighborhood can offer a certain antidote to this alienation by explicitly providing space and visibility for local initiatives related to food and product manufacturing.

When we look at people, there's another important aspect of globalization. It also means an increasing global flow of people, which leads to growing cultural diversity, clearly visible in neighborhoods. Where once the influence was mainly from the USA and Europe towards other parts of the globe, I feel we have left that phase behind and are looking at a growing blend of African, Asian, Indian, Russian, American, South American, Arabian and European cultures. This blend gives a rise to innovation and resilience.

Two flows of travelers could be described. Let's start with the flow of the fun travelers. In some areas the effect of tourism has completely altered the neighborhood. Once tourism (sometimes combined with a growing number of expats and/or international students) and AirBNB and hotels are successful and overall real estate prices start to go up, the neighborhood is mostly lost from being a living area to becoming a local version of Disney world. Local shops are replaced by chain shops and most of them sell snacks and cheap products for tourists. The bookstore, the local coffee shop, the bakery and the grocery store will get lost. And the daily care for the neighborhood is diminishing, because the visitors have no attachments to the neighborhood. It seems wise that a municipality intervenes to safeguard a city's livability and not be swayed too much by "the market." Because when livability breaks down, everyone ultimately looks to the municipality for solutions.

Another flow of people consists of migrants, who are not travelling for fun, but travel due to lack of perspective in any form (life, basic happiness, making a living) in their own country. The rise of migrants over the past decades is staggering. The World Bank stated in 2023 that 184 million people are living outside their country of origin of which 37 million qualify as refugees due to severe circumstances at home. So, to anticipate a constant flow of newcomers in a neighborhood seems logical.

- Real estate

In discussing the effects of capitalism and liberalism on real estate, we already touched on this: the globalization of property. One more example: who hasn't heard the stories of London neighborhoods with massive vacancy while the owners live on another continent? Residents are left with few options and sometimes resort to illegal interventions to improve their neighborhood. Here too, it's desirable for local governments to rein in the excesses of market forces.

- Facilities

When it comes to facilities and services, globalization heavily influences work. The availability—or absence—of employment has significant impact on a neighborhood. Large international corporations can easily move their production to regions where labor is cheap and/or taxes are low. This leads to job losses and the disappearance of stable employment contracts in less favorable regions, which creates income insecurity in many neighborhoods.

Neighborhoods often come onto the radar for comprehensive renewal because many people with the lowest incomes live there. While capitalism promises that hard work will bring individual wealth, globalization—through the lack of work and stable

income—exposes the marginalization of large groups of people in these areas. The house of cards made up of temporary contracts, welfare benefits, childcare subsidies, etc., is often too fragile. Many professionals believe that the multiple, disconnected 'counters' mostly serve to maintain the system, rather than offering real help to residents, but are unable to make the necessary change.

While the negative aspects of globalization can't be undone at the neighborhood level, the high dependency on global dynamics can be met with local responses.



3.Digital transition

It is hard to keep track of the speed of the digital transition. Let me elaborate with a list of facts. Personal computers have only been around since the Kenbak 1 of 1971. It was not long thereafter that the public internet was born. The number of websites grew to around 1.74 billion websites in 2023. Mobile phones: first commercially available Motorola in 1983 and now smart phones are almost an extension of our hand. Financial institutions are transforming into tech companies. And the forecast is that block chain will diminish or even eliminate the role of these institutions. The Rotterdam harbor has a digital twin. And I could go on for a while.

The digitalization transition is peaking and seems to be only held back by the shortcomings of people, not by the possibilities of tech. I think the emerging future of this transition holds a few opportunities: an extension of the application of robotics, an increasing overall integration of systems, and a blend of an extension of the application of computing power and AI with human sensemaking.

What is the impact in the neighborhoods?

Digital transition is, first and foremost, an accelerator of globalization and capitalism. Several of the issues mentioned earlier become even more pronounced due to digital technologies.

Think, for example, of the alienation: online shops and delivery apps further enhance the sense that everything is within reach, without any understanding of the origin or production process. And taking that

even further: the widespread lack of knowledge about how the tech world operates leads us to believe that we know the world through our screens, while in fact, we only see a programmed, AI-curated fraction of it.

Another example is the digitalization of administrative processes, which, as a result of poor programming, can result in inhumane outcomes, as a huge child benefits scandal in the Netherlands has demonstrated. I explicitly emphasize the human (programming) contribution to the effects of digitization, because there is nothing inherently wrong with technology. It is a fantastic addition to our lives. But the questions remain: what purpose does it serve, and who decides that?

A very concrete local consequence of the digital transition is the rapid growth of online shopping and delivery services. As a result, many local shops have been forced to close, leading to vacant storefronts that cause a sense of insecurity among residents and diminish the neighborhood's appeal. In addition, the rise of the delivery economy has led to an increase in scooters and small delivery vans, which often annoy residents. Ironically, these changes are a direct result of the consumption habits of the residents themselves. Therefore, they can also be addressed and reversed by that same community—provided there is awareness of cause and effect.

Digitization can increase alienation, but in neighborhoods in particular, it can also be used to reduce the distance between people and technology itself, as well as between people and processes on the world stage. I'm thinking of something as simple as letting local residents program a sensor to monitor whether the trash can is full. Or another simple example: working with neighbors to trace the origin of certain products online. We often still think too much in terms of either/or when it comes to the online and offline worlds, but the future will definitely consist of the best of both worlds.

4.Sustainability

Moving to this fourth transition, let me start by stating that it is interconnected to the former transitions: this is in a way the answer to the negative effects of neo-liberalism and capitalism and how these are accelerated by globalization and digitalization.

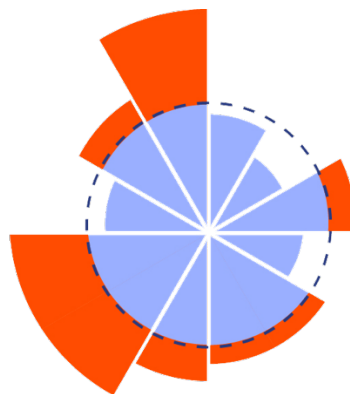
Sustainability is not an easily discussable transition. Firstly, it is highly politicized: it is almost a non-issue in some countries, part of fierce debates in others and a lively societal movement in some regions. A perspective that partially led to the politicization is that humans (and in specific some countries or regions) are to be blamed for what is happening.

This approach often goes hand-in-hand with lists of to-do's and to-avoid's. I would like to stay away from this, because I feel this restrictive and blaming perspective is not helpful and is too simple. People are rarely guilty; they are however often too unaware.

I believe that the real path to a sustainable transition lies in a growth of awareness. By awareness, I don't mean an understanding of right or wrong in relation to sustainability, but a deep integration of lost wisdom so that we can apply it again in contemporary neighborhoods. I am referring to an awareness that we as humans must also abide by universal laws, no matter how technologically advanced we are. This wisdom, which has been best preserved and passed down by indigenous peoples, is increasingly coming to the fore. The question now is: how do we use this wisdom to create a new, more balanced narrative?

As we raise our consciousness, we realize that the current system in which we survive is not respectful of life itself, whether it concerns the earth, animals, nature, or people. And the fact that our consciousness, however fragile, is actually growing is closely linked to the aforementioned New Order. We are simply moving into a new era because it is inevitable. In our neighborhood, too, we have to answer difficult questions about how we can let go of incongruent parts of our lives while still living in the world we have created for ourselves.

By raising awareness, I mean having an open and informed attitude toward the situation we find ourselves in, becoming aware of the fact that we have lost our way in many areas, and engaging in conversation about this before immediately resorting to quick fixes. The way you discuss these issues is extremely important. If the conversation veers toward greenwashing or orthodox checklists, it misses the mark.



There are a few specific themes that you will want to include in a neighborhood plan if you want to make a tangible contribution to the sustainability transition:

>Consumption behavior,
What we buy as a household and where it comes from.
>Waste (processing),
What we throw away and what we can recycle and how.
>Food,
What we actually eat and where it comes from.
>Energy,
How we can make optimal use of available energy.
>Transport
How we can move from A to B in the best possible way and what we need to do so.
>Water consumption
How we can use water sensibly.

These themes are listed here almost casually, as if it requires little effort to develop meaningful innovations in these areas. But real change has a profound impact on our behavior in our neighborhoods, and that is where the difficulty lies. At the same time, it is inevitable and necessary.

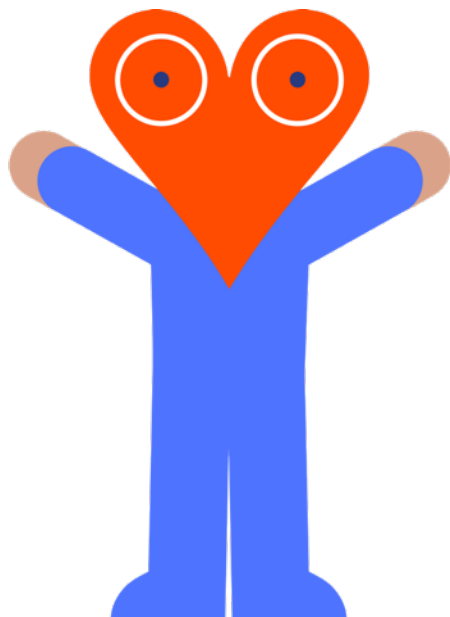
Sometimes it seems as if the conversation about sustainability is being replaced by a conversation about climate adaptation. And yes, when creating a vision for the future, it makes sense to take climate change into account. But it is very strange not to consider the themes mentioned above and yet take measures to combat heat stress and flooding.

After all, it is precisely because the neighborhood is a tangible living environment that you can make choices and consequences visible there: clean streets, edible trees in the neighborhood, an infrastructure for leftover food (a good example of digitization for a meaningful purpose is the *togoodtogo* app, which offers leftover food at low prices), sewing workshops for old clothes, shared solar panels, reuse of materials from demolished houses, shared transport — to name just a few examples.

Transparency about values, Step 3

When we work on a city, we always bring three perspectives to the table: the social, the organizational, and the personal. There is nothing wrong with that, on the contrary. But it helps enormously to make those perspectives explicit when developing a strategy. Because ideas about how a city 'should be' are always influenced by the issues of the moment.

Just look at the past: at the beginning of the 20th century, health played an enormous role and strongly influenced urban planning. Later, for a while, the prevailing value was that living and working should be strictly separated. This led to residential neighborhoods without amenities and city centers and industrial estates without housing. Today, housing shortages and the dynamics of the real estate market seem to determine how our neighborhoods look—sometimes more than whether they are actually pleasant and livable.



I'd like to invite to discuss underlying values by questioning each other and finding out which value can hold another century, and which one might be a too contemporary answer to a current problem. Also, I believe it is crucial to articulate the values, recognizing that there isn't a singular stance on the matter. My intention with articulating the values is to foster greater awareness and dialogue among both professionals and residents. I see making the lens from which we work explicit as an invitation for others to contribute their perspectives, which will enrich plans and avoid tunnel vision. As I did earlier in this article, I'll try to have enough consciousness

about my own values to put them into words. Again, not to impose them on anyone, but to show how to work with them in this process.

That is precisely why it is important to question each other: which values will still be relevant for generations to come, and which are perhaps mainly a response to a current problem? For me, it is essential to make those values explicit—not because there is one truth, but precisely because there is no single point of view. Identifying the lens through which we view things is an invitation to others to add their perspective. This prevents tunnel vision and enriches the plans.

That is why I am sharing my own values below, which I take with me 'to the drawing board'. As an example of how you can work with them in this process.

- First and foremost, use neighborhood renewal to facilitate and smoothen the rebalance that society is searching for with a growth of: meaningful life, self-esteem, connection and awareness. Most of the values mentioned below are intended to support just this.
- Ensure that basic services run smoothly – this creates peace of mind, dignity, and self-esteem. For example, by involving residents in city management, landscaping, and waste disposal to determine who can do what and when.
- Use technological advances for the collective good – investigate how technology can help strengthen mutual care in a neighborhood with a large elderly population.
- Support residents' initiatives – for example, with a substantial annual fund that residents themselves decide how, on what, and to whom it is spent.
- Celebrate diversity – appreciate the different forms of care and value that people bring to their neighborhood, for example through a story bank.
- Facilitate connection as a counterweight to individualism.
- Make help accessible – while recognizing and actively respecting the power of self-organization. Let go of the assumption that people abuse help; it happens, but it should never be the starting point for how you build a system. In the analysis phase, be

alert to existing mutual support structures and see how you can strengthen them.

- Make room for openness, learning, and inspiration—if residents want a library room, for example, help make it happen. Make a structural budget available for serious neighborhood activities and support plans, but never take them over.
- Make natural processes visible—plant fruit trees, compost, reuse materials from the neighborhood. Give this a central place, not somewhere out of sight on the edge.
- Bring beauty, tranquility, and nature – as an invitation to live beyond mere survival. During the analysis (Step 1), I look at which places in the neighborhood already offer this, and in the transition, I look for ways to strengthen them or add new places.

Enhance resilience to prepare for the future, step 4

We don't have a crystal ball to predict the future. Unfortunately. Not even after the thorough work of the previous steps. At the same time, neighborhood renewal is something that may only happen once every 50+ years. So, the question is: how do you equip a neighborhood for a future you cannot foresee? For this, the concept of resilience is highly appropriate.

A current common use of the concept of resilience is focusing on disturbances, disasters and risks (e.g. climate adaptation). It is too narrow to focus on threats that demand for urgent safety measures to survive. You don't want habitants of a neighborhood merely to survive; you want them to live. There is more to this statement than what might appear at first sight. The starting point when you look at surviving compared to when you look at living is quite different. Surviving energy is tight, urgency driven, assuming danger and demanding quick reaction. Living energy is open, constructive, assuming possibilities for a future proof response.

So, a good starting point is to strip down resilience to its essence: the capacity of a system to adapt to transitions while maintaining its core functions, in whatever form they take. And in the case of the neighborhood those core functions have been described in the first paragraph: co-habitants, houses and real estate, basic needs, public space, facilities and economy. This essence offers us a handle to develop interventions in a neighborhood without knowing exactly what the future holds. It enhances the intrinsic capability of the neighborhood to deal with any kind of future.



Resilience boils down to a five-features list of characteristics of a system that consists of: robustness, redundancy, diversity, connectivity and innovativity.

When this list sinks in, it seems rather intuitive that this is the core of resilience. Because, yes, of course:

A neighborhood is more resilient when its starting position is strong (*robustness*);

The functions of a neighborhood maintain working if you have 'a spare part' (*redundancy*) or when you can rely on a different 'parts' for the same function (*diversity*);

A neighborhood can handle more when it can get in touch with other neighborhoods (*connectivity*); and

A neighborhood needs learning capacity or flexibility to adjust (*innovativity*).

As easy as this list may look, the application is not that easy. You can look at the different elements of the neighborhood and score them on the features. Let me take the housing stock as an example. When the available houses are of basic good quality -in other words: robust- that would lead to a good score. Is the quantity and the variety good, that leads to another good score. If the housing markets of various neighborhoods are connected, that will offer larger choices and lead to a good score. And when houses show some flexibility in their use that also leads to a good score. This would be the very structural way to move forward.

However, it turns out the scoring is highly subjective (there is no standard scoring). As in the example: when is the quantity enough, not too much, not too little? And scores intervene. The construction of a house can be robust, but the energy system can be weak, and this might lead to an overall low score. Also, each element has many sub elements, which makes the work incredibly extensive and is not necessarily shedding more light on the neighborhood.

Even so, in my opinion resilience still has value as one of the pillars for a future strategy, as I will show in the next paragraph.

The creative part of strategizing, Step 5

Recapitulating, I have moved through different pillars to look at the neighborhood using the system perspective:

1. analysis following the kaleidoscopic method
2. appreciation of the impact of the societal transitions
3. articulation of values
4. resilience lens of the neighborhood

Now we get to the fifth step and the most creative part of the strategy. The question is: how to interpret and meaningful combine the different aspects?

What is the end result of this step? Let's take a look at a storyline of an exemplary neighborhood to see at a very small scale how all the previous steps lead to a synthesis.

The story of neighborhood X, today

Neighborhood X has around 4,000 residents, of whom around 1,500 have lived there for a long time. The others have lived there for a shorter period and often leave again quickly. There are considerable differences in income, but around 60% of households are on low incomes. Some of them have multiple problems, which appear to be entirely related to the fragile house of cards of temporary employment contracts mentioned earlier. Long-term neighborhood research shows that a large proportion of residents are unhappy with the neighborhood.

The neighborhood consists of different neighborhoods with very different characters, with little connection between them. A busy, stony thoroughfare literally cuts the neighborhood in half and separates the central park from the shopping street. On paper, the neighborhood has a lot of green space, but in practice, the quality is often mediocre and therefore hardly noticeable. Some neighborhoods have outdated, often problematic homes with a gloomy appearance. And there are parked cars everywhere.

There are many family homes, while the number of single- and two-person households is increasing. Both in the neighborhood and in the surrounding areas, there is a dire shortage of affordable housing. There is virtually no room in the neighborhood for newcomers and people who need some care.

The neighborhood functions primarily as a place to live: most people work elsewhere. There are the necessary shops, but apart from that there is little to encourage socializing or meeting people. This is particularly noticeable for young people: there is little

to do on the streets. There are, however, some good sports facilities. There are also several churches, which have managed to build a strong bond with local residents.

The social transitions described above are clearly noticeable in neighborhood X and represent a current challenge.

The story of neighborhood X, later on

More and more diverse people are staying in the neighborhood longer, indicating their appreciation for it. This is the result of coherent measures: a better urban design, a more diverse housing supply, and more room for personal initiative, all aimed at reducing alienation and increasing connectedness.

The main road has been transformed into a green boulevard and car mobility has been reduced by creating parking hubs on the outskirts instead of parking in the streets. Neighborhoods with many monotonous, unattractive homes have been renovated with attention to the use of materials and variety in appearance. Separate green spaces have been connected to form a green route that runs through the entire neighborhood; this is used by sports facilities and individual residents for sports and walking.

The park and shopping street together form the bustling heart of the neighborhood, as the shopkeepers work together in an organization to organize regular events. The park also has an affordable coffee stand with activities, run by a residents' cooperative that involves schools, churches, and a retirement home in its programming. The cooperative also plays an active role in maintaining the green spaces in the neighborhood.

The housing stock has been renewed: renovation, the addition of new homes, and a few demolition/new construction projects have led to the preservation of the number of social housing units, but also to more affordable, smaller homes for single-person households. Two locations for cooperative living have been realized, which also organize activities for the neighborhood.

With government support, young people have set up a youth hub with a lively social media account that they manage and program entirely themselves. They have set up a neighborhood business that offers odd jobs in the neighborhood at an affordable rate, both for repairs and for assistance with digital questions.

Every week, a mobile coffee stand drives through the neighborhood, staffed by social workers who provide comprehensive support on a range of issues, from

healthcare and taxes to employment, digital skills, and just a friendly chat.

Some **guiding principles** for the implementation of the renewal of neighborhood X

>Meeting people is central to all housing and public space projects, alongside ensuring privacy.

>The municipality actively facilitates residents and entrepreneurs: it makes money available (and encourages its use) for various initiatives in the neighborhood and also supports these if regulations get in the way. There is a conscious effort to encourage young people to develop something themselves, to get residents involved in setting up activities in the park, and to get shopkeepers to work together. Neither the municipality nor any welfare organization ever takes over any of these initiatives.

>Assistance for people who need it is provided in a neutral, accessible manner (people do not have to go to a service desk), and social workers have the mandate to arrange everything for residents.

>Demolition/new construction is only carried out in carefully considered locations in order to add more small homes.

>The visual quality of homes to be renovated must meet certain requirements (not just the interior), and the municipality monitors this.

>Sustainability is an integral part of the renewal agenda and is explicitly included in the implementation choices for all projects.

>Green spaces will be given greater recreational value – every intervention in public spaces will include a little extra to improve the quality and attractiveness of the green spaces.

In this example, you can see how the analysis leads to a strengths/weaknesses assessment of the neighborhood in the context of its surroundings and broader societal developments. You see a response that anticipates the New Order, where personal values are made visible to foster more beauty in the environment, where conscious care is taken to promote diversity in the population, and where a surplus of housing is created based on resilience principles. The future narrative provides a vision, while the guiding principles offer real direction in projects.

To arrive at such a narrative and set of guiding principles, I strongly advocate for a combination of methods — both those that require linear thinking and clear cause-effect logic, and those that are more

intuitive and creative. I always consciously utilize the collective intelligence of all involved stakeholders. After all, a strategy is never the work of one person alone; rather, there is someone — or a small core team — who integrates all input into a coherent and compelling whole.

1. An Excel Overview

Create an Excel sheet with the elements of the systems approach: residents, real estate, basic needs, public space, etc., and link all relevant insights from the subsequent steps to each of them. What does the analysis say about these elements? How do societal transitions impact them? Where do personal values have significant influence? And how can resilience be translated for each element?

This will result in a massive spreadsheet — but one that can quickly become too detailed and give the false impression that the ultimate, well-supported answer lies within it. Nevertheless, I see it as a valuable tool to avoid losing information and to detect win/win opportunities. However, I don't use it as the foundation of the strategy.

2. Creative Thinking Techniques

Use, for example:

>The 'what if' method (e.g., "What if we had an unlimited budget?" or "What if we had a very small budget?"),

>Mood boards and sketch designs,

>Scenario games,

>Budgeting games,

>Brainstorm sessions.

You can apply these techniques per element or to the overall picture — and even twice during the process: once with little information, and again with all available input.

Specifically, I find Design Thinking very valuable as a methodology because it inherently combines various perspectives in an iterative process.

3. Using Intuition

As a team becomes more experienced, it can better 'listen' to the neighborhood. A neighborhood is a living system with its own dynamics. By tuning into it and allowing the qualities, opportunities, and pain points to speak, you gain insights from a different perspective. One way to do this is by setting up a system constellation with components in or around the neighborhood.

4. Leveraging Collective Knowledge

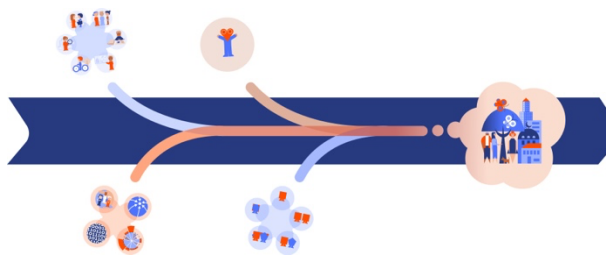
Make sure that many people can engage with the essential choices (in an appealing and digestible way), and use their collective knowledge to strengthen or nuance certain elements. At the same time, a small core team must remain in control, integrate the

input, and write the final version of the narrative.

*I wonder how long it will take before we can use AI as a source of collective knowledge as co-intelligence in this process by feeding it data and asking it for interpretation and direction (or concrete designs).

5. An Iterative and Structured Process

Work in this phase with an iterative and cyclical process, constantly returning to earlier layers to refine the narrative that truly provides direction. Use the linear Excel method to support (or reject) the more creative and intuitive approaches.



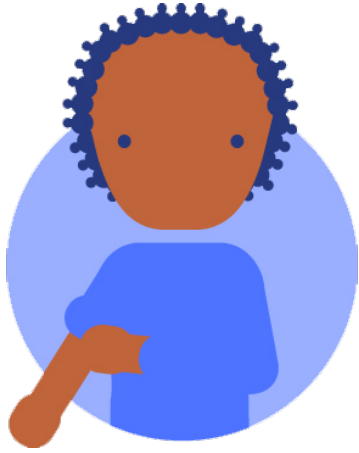
The final strategy is integrating outcome of the former steps and input from various disciplines. This final story must meet several conditions:

- It doesn't contain 'everything' and isn't applicable to 20 other neighborhoods as well,
- It has a clear direction 'and' room to adapt to new insights,
- It provides guidance for concrete projects,
- It forms the basis for quantitative goals,
- It aligns with budget expectations, even if a solid business case is not yet available,
- It offers an overarching objective, often value-based,
- It includes clear boundaries: what is and isn't part of the renewal effort,
- It contains a future vision that energizes those involved, and
- It offers a set of principles that can later guide project plans.

I see this as the creative part of strategy development, because here you integrate, emphasize, create an engaging narrative, and choose interventions that serve multiple purposes.

The execution chapter of the strategy

At a certain point, the strategy seems to be finished. At that moment, it is no more and no less than a well-thought-out story. An implementation chapter should be added to complete the strategy.



Below are the key components of this chapter outlined very briefly.

- **List of concrete projects**
A strategy should also provide direction for the interventions you are planning. Which key projects do you select? Which guidelines must each project adhere to? What is the goal of the project? Who takes the lead, and where does the budget come from?
It is specifically within projects that the integration of disciplines in a systemic neighborhood approach comes to life. A strategy might set goals such as a) more housing is needed and b) the social network should be supported—but in a project like 'Building 1,000 Homes' it is essential to add that these homes must promote interaction among residents and create a diversity. I emphasize this because there is always a tendency for individual projects to lose the integration that was present in the strategy.
Also note, not all projects need to be 'fixed' in a top-down manner. They need a clear course, yes, but while working in the existing neighborhood there can also be room for development along the way. You might want to start with some placemaking for a certain project and along the way it might turn out that a local entrepreneur has a great idea that perfectly fits into the course, but wasn't planned for.
- **Planning**
Although a strategy does not contain a detailed schedule, decisions about how planning will be approached are part of the strategy. The impact of prioritizing one project over another can be significant. If you need to build confidence amongst all stakeholders, you might choose a project with high visibility and big impact in the neighborhood. And that choice is part of strategy.
- **Monitoring of results**
Monitoring is crucial as a feedback mechanism for the organization, to satisfy funders, and to keep all stakeholders motivated. It's important to quantify goals in a way that reflects actual outcomes—or the lack thereof. The art is in quantifying (project) goals in a way that allows for meaningful monitoring. For example: visitor appreciation of a neighborhood can be measured through an annual survey and quantified by a rising satisfaction percentage. But appreciation could also be gauged from annual retail turnover monitoring—and the latter often resonates more.
- **Organization and governance**
Earlier, we mentioned the importance of a small coordinating team to steer the neighborhood transition and maintain strategic focus. This team should partly consist of independent individuals. However, it can be strengthened with some employees from existing stakeholder organizations to ensure continuity and shared responsibility.
A governance structure must be established in which key stakeholders have a seat. Depending on the anticipated financial flows, this could even take the form of a formalized partnership. The municipality is, in any case, an unavoidable stakeholder that rises above the others because it carries the public responsibility for the neighborhood. Since the municipality is publicly accountable through the executive board and city council, any governance structure must clearly relate to them.
- **Budget and business case**
It makes no sense to delay the renewal until the full budget is secured. However, the first five years must be funded to give the renewal a strong start. In those five years, projects will become more concrete, and a more detailed budget can be drawn up.
Once plans are sufficiently developed, a business case should be created to gain insight into additional financing needs. Subsidies will be required. Fundraising is a core task of the coordinating team. Also, all stakeholders wanting a seat at the table should contribute financially to confirm their engagement and responsibility.
- **Communication**
Communication is essential throughout the process. A narrative must be created about the

why behind the neighborhood's transition. Words should be chosen carefully: you want to create a sense of urgency, but without portraying the neighborhood as a lost cause or denying its existing strengths.

Additionally, during the strategic development process, communication plays a key role in repeating milestone timelines like a mantra to keep everyone aligned. It's also important to be transparent about the input received and how it has influenced the strategy in order to build trust.

Lastly, communication is crucial to energize all stakeholders and generate enthusiasm for the work ahead in the neighborhood.

The other 50% of the success

The content of a strategy is important. But I know from experience that the process is at least half the battle. It's all about people and how they work together.

Two types of people stand out:

1. The specialists – A neighborhood strategy is a transdisciplinary task. Everything comes together in a neighborhood, and integration is inevitable. A store may be there, but if it's not the right one, car use will increase. A park may be beautiful, but if it feels unsafe, it will remain unused. A sports facility may be nearby, but if it's difficult to reach by public transportation, it won't be used. Depending on the challenges and qualities of the neighborhood, you put together a team with, for example, an urban planner, local economy specialist, social worker, healthcare specialist, civil engineer, culture specialist, planning economist, educational housing specialist, landscape architect, real estate developer, and housing market specialist.

Specialists who can work in such a team must meet two conditions: they must be able to think strategically (which is different from being good at their daily work) and be willing to work outside the comfort zone of their own discipline. Their input is rarely adopted one-to-one; it must be integrated into a transdisciplinary process. This requires a flexibility that not everyone finds comfortable.

2. The stakeholders – A neighborhood transition is never the work of one party. There are always many stakeholders with diverse interests and degrees of organization. Forming a supportive coalition is therefore a delicate process. The primary members are parties with a substantial interest in the well-being of the neighborhood, or who will be seriously affected if the neighborhood declines. The municipality and the residents are indispensable primary stakeholders. Other parties can join with specific knowledge, funding, or influence. Such a coalition benefits from an independent steering team that streamlines cooperation, monitors focus, and maintains energy throughout the strategy and implementation process.

Finally, the design of the collaboration process contributes significantly to its success: the process architecture. The architecture of the process must be crystal clear about:

- milestones;
- who is involved and when;
- who has a say in what;
- how and when decisions are made;
- who integrates;
- when phases are completed.

So, many people are involved, and for many of them, neighborhood renewal is not the highest priority. Nevertheless, it is crucial that they contribute at the right time, make choices, acknowledge the choices made, and translate these into their own plans. The process architecture must ensure that focus and momentum.

And: it must be established in advance that the most important stakeholders, especially the decision-makers, are committed.

In my experience, an independent steering team is best suited to lead this process, because such a team is not driven by a single interest, but can instead safeguard the overall interest.

In closing

The renewal of a neighborhood is the collective story of everyone who lives, works, and invests in and around that neighborhood. And the best part is: if we do it right, we're not just building bricks, welfare, streets, and green spaces, we're building a solid foundation for the lives of all residents. That's what makes this work so worthwhile to me.

Looking back, this long read has taken you through a five-step methodology and presented you with a lot of points to consider and think about along the way. As I said, existing neighborhoods are messy. You start out not knowing much, you set out on a journey, and you don't know how far you can go. My motto is: embrace the complexity and grow with it. Because neighborhoods deserve our professional love.

Obviously, I built on the work of others while forming my view on things and I acknowledge that gratefully. Firstly, I want to thank the many co-workers and fellow students that I have worked with over the years, without whom I would never have molded this 5 step methodology.

The elements that together form the neighborhood system, those I haven't seen anywhere else. But authors that helped me go down this road, were:

Lewis Mumford (1961)

Richard Sennet (2018)

Ben Wilson (2020)

Jane Jacobs (1961)

For the analysis of the societal transitions I have been inspired by many authors. For over two years now I read anything from school books to in depth views on these transitions. And all the information developed to some knowledge, but I am still learning on a daily basis and I am still deepening this knowledge.

One thing I must say: the translation of these transitions to the impact in the neighborhood is a rather unexplored territory. And in the light of our neighborhood work I think we could use more understanding.

Kate Raworth (2017)

Jan Rotmans en Mischa Verheijden (2021)

Johan Rockstrom (Stockholm Resilience Centre, various)
Resilience Earth collective work

Tine de Moor (2023)

Yuval Noah Harari (2018)

Floris Alkemade (2020)

Greta Thunberg ed. (2022)

Elinor Ostrom (1990)

Noam Chomsky (various)

David van Reybrouck (various)

Otto Scharmer (2009)

Alan Seale (2008)

Saskia Sassen (2007)

There is a separate article on resilience on this website, that also shows how I got to the characteristics of resilience.

My personal values have developed over years. I feel rooted in the seven universal laws, well described in the work of the Dutch author Marja de Vries (2014).

To approach the strategy creation process in 5 steps originates from my own thinking. That also goes for the kaleidoscopic analysis. And the approach to the execution chapter as well as the notes on the process come from experience.

I haven't seen these anywhere else in this form, although I have no illusion that I will not be the first to think in this direction.

And, last but not least, illustrations are by Leendert Masselink and Fred Sophie.