

Poster for the PATH Conference, 4-7 June, Edinburgh, Scotland

## **Urban renovation and the challenges for public participation**

*Authors:*

Frans van der Woerd, Marleen van de Kerkhof, Matthijs Hisschemöller and Tjeerd Stam

*Corresponding author:*

Dr. Frans van der Woerd  
Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM)  
De Boelelaan 1087  
1081 HV Amsterdam  
the Netherlands  
T +31 20 598 9533 / 89555  
F +31 20 598 9553  
E [frans.van.der.woerd@ivm.falw.vu.nl](mailto:frans.van.der.woerd@ivm.falw.vu.nl)

### **Abstract**

Urban renovation projects provide a good opportunity to be combined with the implementation of options to save energy and/or reduce the emissions of carbon dioxide. This is also the case in the *Amsterdam New West* area, an area that was built in the 1950s and that houses 128.000 citizens in 60.000 dwellings. In 2002, local politics pronounced a 50% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction target in the period up to 2015. An important contribution to reaching this target will come from district heating based on residual heat of an existing waste incinerator. Contracts have been signed to install heat infrastructure in the year 2008.

As a part of the EU *Ecostiler* project, a Participatory Integrated Assessment (PIA) has been initiated to explore what are possible options for sustainable energy in Amsterdam New West. Major stakeholder groups to be involved are citizen's organizations, housing corporations and urban district councils. In the preparation phase of the project, an interview round has been conducted with the major stakeholder groups. These interviews have revealed that the stakeholders have different positions on how to achieve 50% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction. The authorities have a strong drive towards district heating, citizen groups see several disadvantages of this option and consider a new heat monopolist with distrust, and the housing corporations are divided. All parties agree that, up to now, local citizens have hardly been involved in decision processes.

On the basis of the outcomes of the interviews, this paper will discuss a number of challenges with regard to the design and implementation of the dialogue process in the Amsterdam area. These challenges concern: the openness of the dialogue process, the lack of information on energy options, lack of trust among the public, competence of residents to participate meaningfully in the assessment, and the management of expectations.

## Synopsis

Urban renovation projects provide a good opportunity to be combined with the implementation of options to save energy and/or reduce the emissions of carbon dioxide. Implementing sustainable energy options in an already built-up area is more complicated than planning from scratch. Complications may even multiply when this built-up area is a renovation area from the 1950s inhabited in majority by non-native residents. The project we describe in this paper is part of the EU *Ecostiler* project.

The *Ecostiler* project (Energy efficient Community Stimulation by use and Integration of Local Energy Resources) is funded from the EU *Concerto Program*, a research program focused on practical implementation of renewable energy sources. *Ecostiler* is all about a coordinated approach in achieving energy efficient communities. The common and main element is the use of biogas and district heating systems, successful tools in reduction of primary fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> reduction. *Ecostiler* started September 2005 and will last four years. *KEMA* in *Arnhem*, the Netherlands, is leader of the research consortium.

*Ecostiler* includes three subprojects, which are complementary in the size of the community, ranging from large to small. *London Southwark Borough* plans to renew the district-heating grid and to integrate district heating with biogas fuelled combined-heat- power (CHP). Innovative insulation and complementary wind turbines must result in 25% lower energy demand. The community of *Mabjerg*, Denmark plans a sustainable energy supply based on local biogas from farm residuals and waste. Biogas-based CHP production, supplemented by wind and insulation, must substantially reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. *Amsterdam New West* is the third subproject in *Ecostiler*. In this subproject, the Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM) of the *Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, initiates a participatory approach on future energy sourcing. The New West area was built between 1945 and 1965 and houses 128.000 citizens in 60.000 dwellings. A majority of present residents has a non-native origin.

In 2002, the renovation program of New West started that will include 15.000 new dwellings. Planners face immense technical, spatial, social and economic challenges. A dedicated *Parkstad* Bureau, funded by Amsterdam municipality and local district councils, got the task to find integrative solutions. As part of the 2002 *Parkstad* program, local politics pronounced a 50% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction target in the period up to 2015.

How to reach the 50% CO<sub>2</sub> target? Evidently, a broad set of measures is necessary, which will influence daily life of present and future residents. Preliminary plans include demand-side reduction (increased insulation standards), Photo Voltaics (PV) and innovative urban-bound wind energy systems. A new aspect is the construction of district heating, fueled by biogas coming from sewage treatment into the existing waste-to-energy plant. By integration of the two, energy efficiency of the biogas is increased from 50% to 90%. Contracts have been signed to install heat infrastructure in the year 2008.

IVM has initiated a Participative Integrated Assessment (PIA) to explore together with stakeholders what are possible options for sustainable energy in Amsterdam New West. A dialogue process will be set up in which citizen's organizations, housing corporations and urban district councils will be involved. In order to get insight into

the stakeholders' views and expectations of such a dialogue process, in early 2006 the project team conducted an interview round with representatives of the major stakeholder groups. The interviews have revealed that the stakeholders have different positions on how to achieve 50% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction. The authorities have a strong drive towards district heating based on residual heat of an existing waste incinerator. Contracts have been signed. The operator of the future district heating is a joint-venture between the municipally-owned waste incinerator and a Dutch electricity provider. Citizen groups, however, see several disadvantages of this option and consider a new heat monopolist with distrust. The housing corporations are divided. All parties agree that, up to now, local citizens have hardly been involved in decision processes.

On the basis of the outcomes of the interviews, this paper presents a number of challenges with regard to the design and implementation of the dialogue process in the Amsterdam area, and suggests ways of meeting with these challenges. The first challenge concerns the openness of the dialogue process about CO<sub>2</sub> reduction options. Since the choice for district heating has already been made (contracts have been signed), this should be regarded as a given. At the same time, the interviews have revealed that several stakeholders have doubts about this specific option, so it will not be possible to exclude this option from the discussion. As a result, the researcher team needs to carefully identify the 'space' for an open dialogue. This issue relates to another challenge for the dialogue process: the management of expectations. Since the decision for district heating has already been made, the dialogue process should not raise the expectation that it can lead to a cancellation of the district heating plans. This puts requirements on the communication towards the dialogue participants about the goals and impact of the dialogue outcomes. A third challenge is the lack of trust. Since the residents distrust the implementation of district heating, it may be difficult to get them involved in the dialogue process and to encourage them to openly discuss the variety of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction options. In this connection will it be important for the researchers who design and organize the dialogue process to not advocate a predisposed position with regard to district heating or any other energy technology. A fourth challenge concerns the competence of residents to participate in the assessment process. This relates to the last challenge that is mentioned here, which is the lack of information on the options. This concerns not only information on the 'facts' and 'figures' on district heating, but also information on the reduction potential of other options, the consequences of these options for the daily lives of the residents, the legal framework that is needed to implement options, et cetera. This puts serious requirements on the dialogue process in terms of information support and supply. A major challenge for the researcher team will be to fill the existing information vacuum in a balanced way, without favoring specific interest or arousing unfulfillable expectations.