

Improving Tarwewijk

On urban renewal and urban regeneration in an impoverishing neighbourhood
between 1982 and 1999.

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Introduction

‘This neighbourhood is going backwards sir. I have lived here for 48 years, but it’s going backwards. More and more foreigners and look at all those homes that are for sale.’¹ As stated by a somewhat older resident of the Millinxbuurt in the beginning of 1981. The interviewed lady would be right, at least in her first statement. The Tarwewijk, a Dutch neighbourhood in municipality Charlois of Rotterdam, and especially the inlaid Millinxbuurt, which is made up of seven larger streets, would pauperize increasingly over the years. Slumlords, drugs trafficking and unemployment characterized the Tarwewijk in the 1990’s.² The situation became so unsafe that the police found it necessary to do a preventive search in 1999. The Millinxbuurt was sealed off. All passers-by, going in or out, were searched for weapons. The police confiscated five fire arms and twelve melee or stabbing weapons.³

In the 1980’s plans were made to improve the situation in the Tarwewijk, mostly in the form of urban renewal. However, the urban renewal protocol wasn’t fit for the problems of Tarwewijk. The neglected neighbourhood did not improve and counterwise kept impoverishing over the years, only around the year 2000, a tipping point was reached. The preventive search of 1999 was followed up by other police actions and more police surveillance in general. An ‘intervention team’ was created, to systematically observe residencies in the Millinxbuurt. For example, in suspicion of illegal rental, such as over occupation, the authorities investigated the sites. If violations of rent law were registered, the landlords were given two months to fix the illegal activities. If not done satisfactorily, a steel door would be placed at the buildings entry for a year, cutting the landlord off from his income.⁴ It seems that the neighbourhood had finally started to receive proper attention from the city government. In the following years, interventions like these would help to improve the neighbourhood. This is visible in the Rotterdam safety index. The Tarwewijk is, according to the Rotterdam safety index, still a problematic city area as of 2020.⁵ Nonetheless, the neighbourhood has improved a lot. In 2001 it scored a 3.6 out of 10 on overall safety, over the years the score rose to 5.5 in 2011.⁶

The problems of the Millinxbuurt, and the Tarwewijk, had become widely known by the 1990’s. The neighbourhood often received negatively publicity, and the preventive search in 1999,

¹ ‘Millinxbuurt krijgt extra aandacht deelgemeente’ in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 22-1-1981), 1. Translation of: ‘Deze buurt gaat achteruit meneer. Ik woon hier 48 jaar, maar het gaat achteruit. Steeds meer buitenlanders en kijk eens naar al die huizen die te koop staan.’

² B. Litjens, M. Rouw, R. Hammenga, I. Pröpper, *Rotterdam Tarwewijk a resilient neighbourhood* (2010) 3.

³ K. Woltering, *Preventief fouilleren: De onbeschermdde onschuldige* (doctoral thesis)(Amsterdam 2004) 11-12. ‘Razzia’ in de rechtsstaat’, in *NRC Handelsblad* (Rotterdam 1-12-1999).

⁴ G. Engbersen, E. Snel, A. Weltevrede, *Sociale herovering in Amsterdam en Rotterdam, één verhaal over twee wijken* (Amsterdam 2005) 95-96.

⁵ Since 2001 the city of Rotterdam yearly publishes reports on the safety per municipality. The scores are based primarily on surveys, but also make use of reports from the police, city surveillance, fire brigade and others. In 2014, the city of Rotterdam changed the nature of the safety index (grades given are now relative to the average of Rotterdam as a whole in 2014).

⁶ The scores are found, respectively, in: *Veiligheidsindex 2004, meting van de veiligheid in Rotterdam* (Rotterdam 2004) 176. *Veiligheidsindex 2012, meting van de veiligheid Rotterdam* (Rotterdam 2012) 14. These years were chosen because they made use of the same calculations.

also because of its uniqueness, was hot topic in the media.⁷ Over the past 20 years, a small number of studies have been published on the impoverishment and improvement of the Tarwewijk. The main works comprise three books and three articles, all following a different approach.

The most prominent work is titled *Sociale herovering in Amsterdam en Rotterdam* [social reconquering in Amsterdam and Rotterdam]. In this research the ‘social recapturing’ of the Tarwewijk is compared to that of an Amsterdam neighbourhood, Overtoomse Veld. The book examines the many causes and consequences of the impoverishment of the Tarwewijk, as it deals with crime, drugs, slumlords, redlining, education, community initiatives, police and politics. The book subsequently analyses how the liveability and safety were improved. The research is mostly based on interviews, which are backed up by figures.⁸ The second book, *Een drugsscene op Zuid* [A drugs scene in the south], investigates the usage and traffic of drugs in the Millinxbuurt. The book aims to explain how and why the Millinxbuurt could transform into a site for drugs sellers and users. For this research more than 100 drugs users were interviewed that regularly visited the Millinxbuurt.⁹ *Verslaafd aan de Millinxbuurt* [addicted to the Millinxbuurt] deals with the regeneration projects from 1997 until 2002. The book consists almost entirely of interviews with people who worked in the projects, telling the story from their perspective.¹⁰

M.B. Aalbers shows how redlining contributed to the impoverishment of the Tarwewijk. In the 1990’s a number of banks stopped providing mortgages for applicants from certain districts of Rotterdam. This practise became increasingly problematic from 1998, as whole neighbourhoods were excluded from mortgages. Until 2001 it was nearly impossible to buy or sell a house in Tarwewijk. Aalbers has not been able to assess if redlining was the cause or consequence of the neighbourhood’s decline. In any case, it certainly did not help to improve it.¹¹ B. Litjens et al focus on the subsequent improvement of the neighbourhood and its community. They focus on the effectiveness of Rotterdam’s improvement projects from 2002 until 2010. It is also argued why government interventions did not succeed completely. The article is mostly based on interviews with residents and city officials.¹² G. Rendón has researched to what extend marginalised groups were able to participate and influence the regeneration projects in Tarwewijk, for roughly the same period as the previous title. The study explains how area-based policies and approaches fostering citizens’ voice were

⁷ E.J. van der Torre, M.H.M. Hulshof, *Een drugsscene op Zuid (de Millinxbuurt), een model voor strategische analyse van drugsscenes* (The Hague 2000) 12.

⁸ Engbersen, *Sociale herovering in Amsterdam en Rotterdam*.

⁹ Torre, Hulshof, *Een drugsscene op Zuid*.

¹⁰ D. de Bruijn and H. Riemersma, *Verslaafd aan de Millinxbuurt, kroniek van een verbeterd aanpak* (Rotterdam 2003).

¹¹ M.B. Aalbers, ‘Who’s afraid of red, yellow and green?: Redlining in Rotterdam’, *Geoforum* 36 (2005).

¹² Litjens, *Rotterdam Tarwewijk a resilient neighbourhood*.

implemented simultaneously with public-private partnerships for housing renewal fostering ‘choice’ through gentrification and sometimes displacement.¹³

The previously mentioned studies all focus on different aspects of the neighbourhood’s history. Nevertheless, together they portray a very coherent story. This story is also to be found in other literature, in which the problems of the Tarwewijk play a minor role. In *Proeftuin Rotterdam* [testing ground Rotterdam] and *Preventief fouilleren* [pre-emptive searches], a similar story is told.¹⁴ The causes of the impoverishment are found in the large proportion of private residences in the Tarwewijk. After the withdrawal of middle-class families from the neighbourhood, the residence owners are held to have started behaving like slumlords. Simultaneously, a lot of residences became unoccupied. This and the low rent average of the neighbourhood attracted the underprivileged, drug addicts and distressed/illegal immigrants. In addition, the high ratio of private, vacant property caused renovation plans to become long overdue. After all, many owners had to agree on the plans. In 2003, 28.7 percent of the residents in Tarwewijk moved within a year.¹⁵ Due to the short stay of many people, a high percentage of the residents in the neighbourhood did not, and sometimes still do not, feel the need to improve it. They are planning to leave anyway.

Especially Antilleans, fleeing the economic situation in their land of origin, used the cheap Tarwewijk (and especially the Millinxbuurt) as starting point to improve their lives.¹⁶ However, many Antilleans came to the Netherlands with a debt (by borrowing money for the flight ticket for instance).¹⁷ The underprivileged immigrants, having none or few legal opportunities, found an income in the illegal businesses in the Tarwewijk (e.g. drugs dealing and theft). The older residents quickly struck a link between the decline of the neighbourhood and the rise of the number of immigrants. Hence, in this paper, some discriminatory statements from residents have been stated. The eventual improvements are credited to strong governmental action. This includes the establishment of new government agents, such as the city marine (‘stadsmarinier’) and avenue manager (‘laanmanager’). These officials worked closely with the residents and the police. They would become vital in making the Tarwewijk more transparent. Uncovering all the illegal businesses would be the first step in combating them.

The studies focus on the improvements of the Tarwewijk/Millinxbuurt after 1997, leading to little research being dedicated to explain the decline of the neighbourhood between 1970 and 2000. No more than a couple of paragraphs are dedicated to explain that a renovation project was postponed in

¹³ G. Rendón, ‘Politics, practices and constraints of socio-spatial restructuring through citizens’ active engagement’, in L. Qu and E. Hasselaar, *Making room for people, choice, voice and liveability in residential places* (Amsterdam 2011).

¹⁴ H. G. Schmidt, *Proeftuin Rotterdam, bestuurlijke maakbaarheid tussen 1975 en 2005* (Rotterdam 2010) 133. Woltering, *Preventief fouilleren: De onbeschermden onschuldige*.

¹⁵ Engbersen, *Sociale herovering in Amsterdam en Rotterdam*, 67.

¹⁶ During the period of this study the Antilles were part of the Netherlands. For practical reasons ‘immigrants’ will also refer to Antilleans, and ‘Dutch’ will not refer to those born on the Antilles.

¹⁷ Torre, Hulshof, *Een drugscene op Zuid*, 53-54.

the end of the 1980's. This made a lot of home owners move out, as they did not feel like waiting a couple of years. Consequently, slumlords and speculators moved in.¹⁸ As this paper will show, the story of the decline of the Millinxbuurt is a lot more complicated than previously described in the existing literature. The lack of information or nuance in these aforementioned studies is of course due to the focus on later years. The authors did not find it necessary to go into detail and based their short introductions on interviews. Consequently the historiography of the decline of Tarwewijk/Millinxbuurt is lacking, while the historiography on its improvements is relatively rich. With this paper an attempt is made to close this gap.

From the 1970's the Dutch government made nationwide efforts to renew complete areas of housing to fit the current requirements. Especially pre-war neighbourhoods were targeted, like the Tarwewijk which was built between 1920 and 1935.¹⁹ The program succeeded in general, bringing the share of poor housing down from 20% to 1% of the Dutch housing stock between the mid 1980's till 2012.²⁰ According to the aforementioned literature the inlaid Millinxbuurt failed to receive this urban renewal, consequently turning in to a bad area. In this research the link between the impoverishment of the neighbourhood and urban renewal will be explored further. As this paper will show, there were many factors that led the Millinxbuurt to impoverish for such a long time, and many efforts were made trying to reverse this trend. Especially in the 1990's, urban renewal was practised in a broader context of government initiatives designed to improve the safety, economic and social situation of the neighbourhood (urban regeneration). The history of the neighbourhood is not one of just neglect, but rather one of failure, bad timing and resistance as well. The main question is: why did urban renewal and regeneration fail to stop the impoverishment of the Tarwewijk and especially the Millinxbuurt between 1982 and 1999? Not only will this research give insight in the history of the Tarwewijk, but also in the practise of urban regeneration itself.

The history and success of urban regeneration has been researched extensively. The term has been defined as the task to improve the quality of life, employment and the attractiveness of economic investment in decaying neighbourhoods. The precise definition is constantly changing though, as it refers to a progress, not a project.²¹ In this paper the terms will be used as defined by P. Stouten:

¹⁸ Engbersen, *Sociale herovering in Amsterdam en Rotterdam*, 65. Torre, Hulshof, *Een drugsscene op Zuid*, 53-54. Bruijn, Riemersma, *Verlaafd aan de Millinxbuurt*, 17.

¹⁹ dS+V-Consult: Adviesgroep bouwen en wonen, *'De Millinxbuurt, een vergeten driehoek?'* (Rotterdam December 1992) 19. In Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 639.

²⁰ P. Stouten, 'Urban design and the changing context of urban regeneration in the Netherlands' in *European spatial research and policy*, volume 23, number 1 (2016) 111-112.

²¹ According to some researchers urban renewal and urban regeneration have different implications. See for instance: J. Clark and V. Wright, 'Urban regeneration in Glasgow: Looking tot he past to build the future? The case of the 'New Gorbals' in J. Clark and N. Wise, *Urban Renewal community and Participation, theory, policy and practise* (Zürich 2018) 45-46. The description used for urban regeneration in the text is derived from the definition used in: B. van Boxmeer and E. van Beckhoven, 'Public-private partnership in Urban regeneration: A comparison of Dutch and spanish PPPs, in *European journal of housing policy*, volume 5, number 1 (2005) 15. For a history of the terminology see: P. Stouten, *Changing contexts of urban regeneration, 30 years of modernisation in Rotterdam* (Amsterdam 2010) 26.

'Urban renewal ... is considered both the forerunner of urban regeneration and subsequently one of the components of urban regeneration, which terms covers a much wider range of urban and regional issues than primarily modernisation of housing in deteriorated areas.'²² To identify what constitutes successful regeneration, researchers have formulated extensive lists of principles.²³ Most importantly for this study: urban regeneration needs to respond to changing contexts, economic and population wise. Sometimes this process leads to situations in conflict with the living conditions of certain groups trapped in economic difficulties.²⁴

J. Clark and V. Wright have tried to identify what constitutes successful regeneration for the local community of a disadvantaged urban area by studying urban regeneration in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, Scotland. In their research the importance of contextual evidence that both supports and limits the status of the case study as a successful regeneration is stressed, the same applies in this research. Clark and Wright use two sets of analyses, the first one being a historical approach, to consider the condition of the area over time and track changing policy ambitions. This set of analyses thus primarily focusses on policy and programme efficacy. The second set draws from human geography. As the urban space changes, so does its population, presenting a challenge to evaluating the success of regeneration for the local community. People who have benefitted from projects may move out, while simultaneously people with other needs may move in.²⁵ Both approaches will be necessary in evaluating the progress of urban regeneration in Tarwewijk, as policy and population changed continuously.

The research is split up in three parts, all with their own chapter. The first chapter deals with the start of urban renewal in Tarwewijk until a crisis team had to be called in because the progress was going so slow, 1982 till 1986. The second chapter deals with the period after the crisis team intervention until the end of project group based urban renewal, 1986 till 1992. The third chapter deals with urban regeneration projects in the Millinxbuurt from 1992 till the preventive search of 1999. Hereafter the conclusion follows. In all chapters an effort is made to give an indication of the problems in the neighbourhood for the time period.

This research will be based primarily on the city archives. Especially the archive of the Tarwewijk renewal commission will be used for the first two chapters, as they contain the renovation plans, evaluations and transcripts of meetings. Unfortunately the archives seem to lack information when it comes to the opinion of involved individuals. The urban renewal in Tarwewijk happened in cooperation between a lot of different institutions and groups (to name a few: the Tarwewijk

²² P. Stouten, *Changing contexts of urban regeneration, 30 years of modernisation in Rotterdam* (Amsterdam 2011) 11.

²³ For instance see: P. Roberts, H. Sykes and R. Granger, *Urban Regeneration* (London 2016).

²⁴ P. Stouten, *Changing contexts of urban regeneration, 30 years of modernisation in Rotterdam* (Amsterdam 2011) 12.

²⁵ J. Clark and V. Wright, 'Urban regeneration in Glasgow: Looking to the past to build the future? The case of the 'New Gorbals' in J. Clark and N. Wise, *Urban Renewal community and Participation, theory, policy and practise* (Zürich 2018) 49-50.

regeneration commission, the municipality, the residents' organisation). Often frictions would rise between these groups. As will become clear in chapter 1, involved officials were not eager to share their whole opinion on the matter in an official document. The opposite could be said about the members of residents' organisation. Some of their opinions were so strong, it's often hard to evaluate the credibility of their statements. This makes it hard to get an accurate picture of what went wrong. To deal with this problem, this paper will simply give a view of all different takes on the matter, and evaluate them accordingly.

For the third chapter the archives of the municipality of Charlois will be used. These contain the regeneration plans and evaluations between 1992 and 1998. In comparison with the renewal commission, these archives are often less detailed, because they included more dimensions (socially and economically) and more organisations and institutions. In all chapters the condition of the neighbourhood will often have to be derived from unprecise or anecdotal information. For example: in 2006 it was estimated that 25 to 30 percent of the population of Tarwewijk consisted of undocumented immigrants. No numbers or estimates exist for previous years. Likewise, information on demography, income and education is sporadic. These and similar topics, are measured more frequently after 2000. Most notably, the Rotterdam safety index would have been very useful to get an accurate picture of the neighbourhood's impoverishment. Information on the state of Tarwewijk will therefore be derived from the archives and newspapers. Both will be necessary as they contain different information. Some problems are only addressed in either one. Also, newspapers give insight in the opinion of residents. However, because of their anecdotal nature, they will mostly be used as examples.



Image 1, the construction of the metro line through Mijnsheerenlaan around 1965.²⁶

²⁶ <http://oud.rotterdam010.nl/603-School-filmstrip/01-Metrobouw.htm> visited on 18-1-2021.

Chapter 1 A neighbourhood in decline

In the beginning of the 20th century the harbour of Rotterdam expanded, attracting a lot of labour migrants from Brabant and Zeeland. To accommodate housing for the dockworkers, building started in the north side of what is now Tarwewijk. The north area was mainly constructed between 1909 and 1930. The buildings consisted of large blocks of three to four floors. This part included relatively a lot of shops, cafes and businesses. Tarwebuurt and Geervlietbuurt, located in the centre of the neighbourhood, were built between 1919 and 1935. The Tarwebuurt has the resemblance of a village as it's made of small single-family houses with front and backyards. The Geervlietbuurt is similar, except its houses do not include gardens. The Millinxbuurt, taking up the south-east, was built during the 1930's. Here the building density is the highest. The area is made out of solid building blocks of four floors with shallow inner areas. The streets are small and there is no residual space. The rest of the neighbourhood consists of pre-war buildings and complexes built during and after the Second World War. These include some flats of four to five floors and two high-rise flats.²⁷

Not just dockworkers lived in the Tarwewijk. The broad streets surrounding the Millinxbuurt, the Mijnsherenlaan and Dordtselaan, mostly housed doctors, lawyers and notaries. From the 1950's onwards guest workers settled. First Italians, later in the 1960's Spaniards, Turks and Moroccans.²⁸ In the 1970's the neighbourhood started to decay due to the construction of a metro line straight through the area. The metro line crossed right through the broad streets of Mijnsherenlaan on a viaduct, destroying the view and making noise for the people living there. A lot of higher income residents would start to move out. During the same period the harbour of Rotterdam experienced new fierce competition internationally, for instance, from the Pacific Rim. Consequently, the shipbuilding industry would have lost around 80% of its workforce. At the same time new technologies emerged that made fewer people necessary for operating harbour equipment. In search for jobs, many people would leave the city.²⁹

These trends caused a lot of houses to become vacant in the whole of Tarwewijk. The dropping of house prices attracted slumlords. This is arguably visible in the splitting of rooms, to house people in separate rooms while staying one residence. Between 1977 and 1980, 1871 apartments were created by splitting up rooms.³⁰ By 1982, 3438 of the 6951 residences had been split, almost half of all residencies in the Tarwewijk.³¹ As the interviewed lady in the introduction pointed out, the decline was quickly visible. In the newspaper article from 1981 residents complain mainly about a

²⁷ Projectgroep stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk, *Stuurgroep rapportage Tarwewijk* (Rotterdam June 1986) 4, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

²⁸ <https://cultuurwerkplaatstarwewijk.nl/over-ons/de-wijk/> visited on 18-1-2020.

²⁹ J. van Ostaaijen, 'Regenerating urban neighbourhoods (RUN): an overview for Rotterdam' in *Regenerating urban neighbourhoods in Europe: eight case studies in six European countries* (Zürich 2014) 183.

³⁰ Y. Schreiner, 'Werkplan Partikulier bezit Tarwewijk', *Werkplan Partikulier Bezit Tarwewijk en notities* (Rotterdam 30-8-1982) 2, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 43.

³¹ Author unknown, 'Evaluatie '82-'85', *Werkplan Partikulier Bezit Tarwewijk en notities* (Rotterdam 1-4-1985) 1, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 43.

lack of urban green space and facilities, like playgrounds. Soon after, the neighbourhood gained political attention. Municipality (Charlois) councillor Vleggeraar (PvdA, Labour party) and the municipality commission for neighbourhood contact had visited the Millinxbuurt to make an inventory of the problems. Behind the scenes, the Charlois council was making plans to renovate the neighbourhood.³²

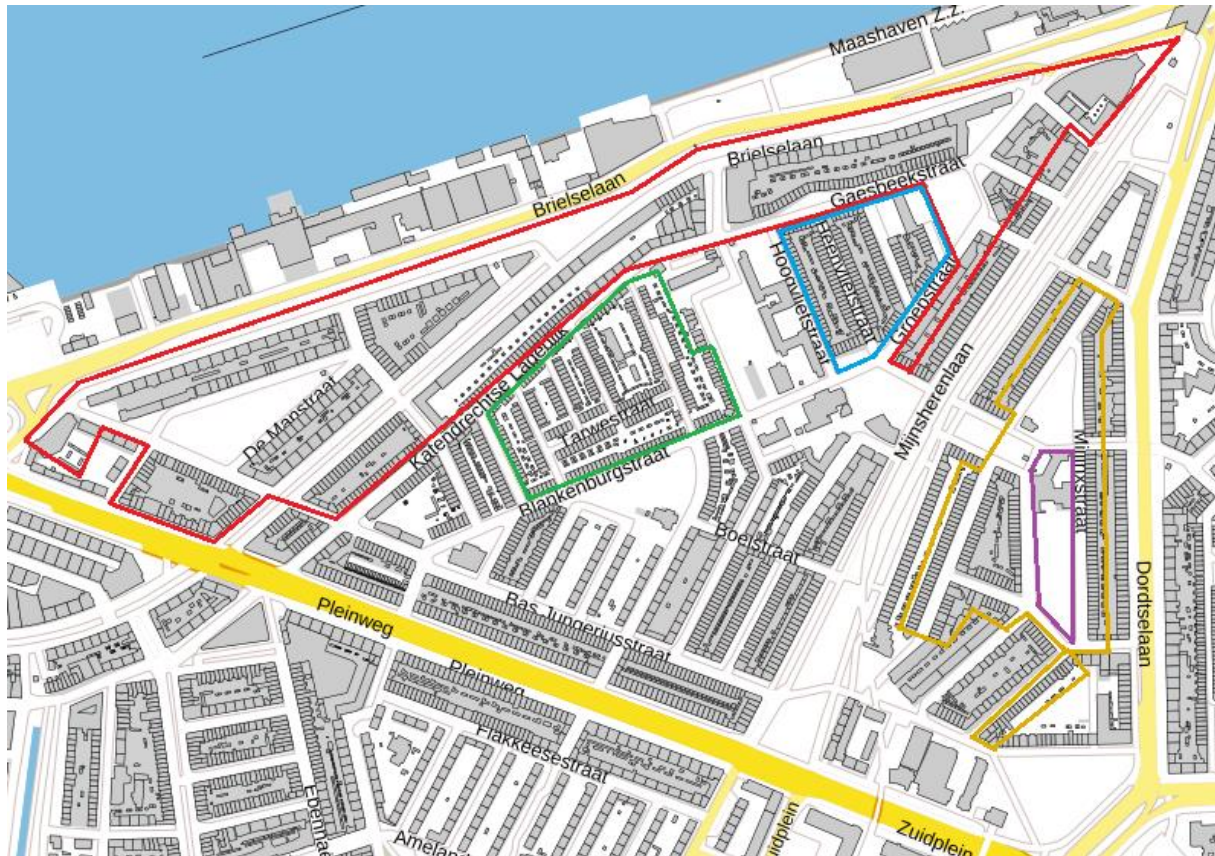


Image 2, The Tarwewijk in 2020 (enclosed by Brielselaan, Dordtselaan and Pleinweg): the north side in red, the Tarwebuurt in green, the Geervlietbuurt in blue, the Millinxbuurt in yellow, the park in purple (after 2000).³³

³² Wigbold (chief editor), 'Millinxbuurt krijgt extra aandacht deelgemeente' in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 22-1-1981), 14.

³³ The original map is from <https://bagviewer.kadaster.nl/lvbag/bag-viewer/>

In June 1982, a commission was created to plan and execute renewal projects in Tarwewijk, ‘projectgroep stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk’ (Urban renewal project group Tarwewijk).³⁴ The project group was part of one big project office, also involving Oud-Charlois and Carnisse. As is pointed out in its work plan from August 1982, housing quality was a prominent issue. The pre-war buildings had small rooms, no showers and an old-fashioned impractical layout, additionally they had been maintained badly for years, causing leakages and draft issues.³⁵ These problems couldn’t be solved easily, as 93% of the neighbourhood was owned privately.³⁶ From experience with houses built before 1945 in other parts of Rotterdam it was found that implementing renovations had the highest chance of success if the government bought the house. Getting the landlords to renovate their residences rarely succeeded as the landlords would only lose money on renovation works for low-rent apartments.³⁷ The project group started with the worst cases. Hereafter, less problematic houses would also be targeted for renovation.

While the urban renewal commission was starting up, other problems arose in Tarwewijk. In the summer of 1983, municipality councillor Franken stated: ‘If we don’t take measures against further aggravation, soon things will get way out of hand in this neighbourhood. Otherwise I foresee serious clashes between different groups of residents.’³⁸ The low house prices in the declining neighbourhood made it a very attractive starting point for labour immigrants. However, immigrants were not received with enthusiasm. The quote in the introduction clearly shows the negative associations residents had with the rising number of foreign settlers. A newspaper from 1983 gives an indication of how severe the clash between cultures had worsened. In it, native Dutch residents shared their complaints about the immigrants and the culture they brought with them. Especially an illegal mosque (hidden in a regular apartment in the Brielselaan 244) caused a lot of noise and odour complaints. Furthermore, the Dutch residents also complained about the Ramadan, as allegedly a group of about 40 Muslims would chant and pray until 1 after midnight. The intensity of the animosity towards immigrants should not be underestimated as an interviewed resident stated the following: ‘If those people don’t want to stop their practises willingly, it shall be stopped forcibly.’³⁹ To counter the

³⁴ H. P. Zoeteman, ‘Betreft: Deelname projektgroep Tarwewijk’, *Instelling, taakopdracht en functioneren projectgroep 1982-1987*, 1, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 1.

³⁵ Y. Schreiner, ‘Werkplan Partikulier bezit Tarwewijk’, *Werkplan Partikulier Bezit Tarwewijk en notities* (Rotterdam 30-8-1982) 1, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archive 838, inventory number 43.

³⁶ The complete numbers of the houses in Tarwewijk: 494 apartments were owned by the government, of these 310 in one complex. 6596 apartements were privately owned. Of these 56% was owned by small landlords and 23% was owned by the residents.

³⁷ Y. Schreiner, ‘Werkplan Partikulier bezit Tarwewijk’, *Werkplan Partikulier Bezit Tarwewijk en notities* (Rotterdam 30-8-1982) 2, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 43.

³⁸ ‘Raadsleden maken jacht op illegale bedrijven’, in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 17-6-1983), 14. Translation of: ‘Als we geen maatregelen treffen tegen verdere uitwassen, loopt het in deze wijk op korte termijn gierend uit de klauwen. Ik voorzie anders ernstige botsingen tussen de verschillende groepen wijkbewoners.’

³⁹ Idem, 14. Translation of: ‘Als die mensen er niet goedschiks mee stoppen, zal het kwaadschiks moeten.’

rising tensions the municipality of Charlois decided to pass a regulation which forbade the modification of buildings inside and outside. The illegal mosque would be investigated.

From the same newspaper article it becomes clear that in June 1983 at least 550 apartments in Tarwewijk were vacantly for sale, including tens of shops. Franken explains that for almost every empty shop there was a request, from immigrants, to turn it in to a tea house or 'some other house'.⁴⁰ According to him, a number of shops had been squatted. However, there was not much the city government could do about that, Franken stated. Lastly, there appeared to have been an increase in prostitution in the neighbourhood, based on complaints from residents. Three interviewed women told the newspaper that there were four prostitutes working behind a video store. 'I've even been called out of bed a few times. If they could use the toilet at my place. Apparently they don't have one there.'⁴¹

The decline of Tarwewijk was only getting worse in the 1980's. Anyone with enough money to move had done so or was starting to. As more houses became vacant, more squatters came to occupy them. Another newspaper article makes clear how serious this problem was becoming. The mother of family de Does explained to the newspaper: 'We don't dare to leave our house anymore. We're afraid of returning and find that our house had been reduced to its bare foundations.'⁴² The apartment of family De Does, on the second floor, was surrounded by vacant houses. Three weeks prior to the interview the first floor had been broken into. 'Junkies and kids sleep rough there regularly.'⁴³ The family decided to clean the apartments around them because the owners did not want to do anything about the increasing litter in the area. The walls were starting to crack and pests were filling the gardens. The inability to leave, as a result of investing all of their savings in the apartment, made them hoping that the municipality would buy them out.⁴⁴

The municipality of Charlois was aware of the vacancy problems. Project group Tarwewijk and 'Bouw- en Woningtoezicht' (Building and house inspection on city level) worked together to combat the problem. The project group would check the neighbourhood for vacant apartments and keep an eye on them. If apartments were unoccupied for too long, the government would claim the apartment, in accordance with the law.⁴⁵ 'Bouw- en Woningtoezicht' would keep an eye on the state of the buildings. If any structural defects were noted, the owner would receive a summons, forcing her/him to repair the damage. The same strategy was applied to rental apartments.⁴⁶ To oversee the

⁴⁰ 'Raadsleden maken jacht op illegale bedrijven', in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 17-6-1983), 14. Translation of: '...een thee of ander huis...'

⁴¹ Idem, 14. Translation of: 'Ik ben zelfs al een paar maal mijn bed uitgebeld. Of ze bij me konden pissen. Kennelijk hebben ze daar geen toilet.'

⁴² A. Riethof (author), 'Slecht wonen in de verpaupering', in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 29-6-1983), 15. Translation of: 'We durven niet meer weg te gaan. Je bent bang dat als je terugkomt alleen nog de fundamente er liggen.'

⁴³ Idem, 15. Translation of: 'Junkies en kinderen bivakkeren er nu regelmatig.'

⁴⁴ Idem, 15.

⁴⁵ Y. Schreiner, 'Werkplan Particulier bezit Tarwewijk', *Werkplan Particulier Bezit Tarwewijk en notities* (Rotterdam 30-8-1982) 4, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 43.

⁴⁶ 'Woonruimte' bestrijdt leegstand Tarwewijk', in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 11-8-1983), 12.

vacant buildings, controllers of ‘Woonruimte-zaken’ (the city’s department of living space quality), worked together with Tarwewijk’s residents’ organization. In August 1982, the project group stated that ‘Woonruimte-zaken’ drastically needed more employees if this plan was to succeed.⁴⁷ A newspaper article from one year later reveals this was never accomplished. In the article, ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’ reported that, as of June 1983, 524 apartments were vacant (of the 6955 apartments in total). After the check by ‘Woonruimte-zaken’, however, it became clear that 167 of these apartments were actually being rented out. Another 46 were emptied because the owner was awaiting a building permit. Out of the other 311 vacant apartments, only six owners had received a summons, for having serious defects. It remains unclear if the other 305 apartments had any problems.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, at this rate, solving the vacancy problem would be a slow progress.

Likewise, ameliorating the ‘clash of cultures’ also did not seem to make much progress. A newspaper article from May 1984 shows that many Dutch residents of Tarwewijk still had trouble with the increasing foreign population. By this time, 9 percent of the population of Tarwewijk came from a non-Dutch origin. The anti-immigration party ‘Centrumpartij’ (centre party), subsequently chose Charlois as its base of operations. A. van Putten, an official at the information department of the Charlois municipality, feared that the ‘Centrumpartij’ may win upcoming elections. He explained that the Dutch people did not want to live in Tarwewijk anymore: ‘also because the schools are getting more and more foreign kids. [...] If you’d know what we as municipality have tried to make the people understand each other’s cultures. We have organised parties with Turkish orchestras, held intercultural days, we had a work groups of immigrants. But, to no avail.’⁴⁹ The ‘Centrumpartij’ would win 4 seats out of the 31 in Charlois. Which is quite successful for first time participators in Rotterdam elections. Furthermore, it indicates that a substantial portion of the residents in Charlois were eager to dispel the labour immigrants.⁵⁰

Two and a half years in, project group Tarwewijk found its progress to be stagnating. In an evaluation document covering the period between 1982 and April 1985, its problems were summarized. In its first year, the project group had received a very small budget for buying out residents and renovating houses. In 1983 and 1984, the government permitted them to buy 228 houses each year, and in 1985 this number had been raised to 290. Between 1983 and April 1985, the project group bought a total of 440 houses, not nearly hitting the restriction ceiling. One of the reasons for this

⁴⁷ Y. Schreiner, ‘Werkplan Particulier bezit Tarwewijk’, *Werkplan Particulier Bezit Tarwewijk en notities* (Rotterdam 30-8-1982) 4, in Stadarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 43.

⁴⁸ ‘Woonruimte’ bestrijdt leegstand Tarwewijk’, in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 11-8-1983), 12.

⁴⁹ H. de Lange, ‘Verkiezingen in ‘Sjaarloos’ hebben bittere bijmaak’ in *Trouw* (Rotterdam 12-5-1984), 25. Translation of: ‘... , ook al omdat er op de scholen steeds meer buitenlandse kinderen komen... Als je weet, wat wij als deelgemeente allemaal al niet geprobeerd hebben om de mensen meer begrip bij te brengen voor elkaars culturen. We hebben feesten georganiseerd met Turkse orkestjes, interculturele dagen gehouden, we hebben een werkgroep migranten gehad. Maar effecten zie je niet of nauwelijks.’

⁵⁰ J. Rath, *Migranten, de Centrumpartij en de deelraadsverkiezingen van 16 mei 1984 te Rotterdam* (Leiden 1985) 167-168

was that the project group tried to buy whole blocks of houses, so that they could either be demolished or renovated in full, which would save money. The landlords of Tarwewijk, however, rarely owned more than one or two houses, and in the latter case these were often spread over the neighbourhood. Furthermore, landlords were very specific about which house they wanted to sell. It therefore took much time and negotiations with various landlords before the project group would own a lane of houses. Another major problem was posed by houses which were auctioned due to insolvency of the owner. Between May 1983 and April 1984, 73 houses in Tarwewijk were auctioned (many of which were located in the planned acquisition area), of which the government only succeeded to buy one.⁵¹

The following months would prove to be even worse for the regeneration plans. The project group still had to deal with the abovementioned problems, and in addition struggled with a shortage of personnel. On the other side of the regeneration plans, things were stagnating as well. ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’ had stopped renovating houses of neglectful landlords themselves. A neglectful landlord or owner would first receive a warning to fix the problem within a certain time period. If the owner did not do so, ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’ would take on renovations and declare the costs with the owner afterwards. In many instances, however, owners were not willing or able to pay the costs incurred and according to one newspaper article, ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’ had lost many millions of guilders this way.⁵² So, if a landlord just ignored summons from ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’, nothing was done. This put some residents in a hopeless housing situation.

The slow progress of the renewal projects was also noticed by tenants living in Tarwewijk. As part of project group Tarwewijk’s archive, a document of complaint by a member of the Tarwewijk residents’ organisation was stored. It remains uncertain how credible the complaints were, but they do give an indication that the collaboration between the project group Tarwewijk, ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’ and the Tarwewijk residents’ organisation was not untroubled. The complainant wrote: ‘The impoverishment, the decline and the speculation are for a large part the consequence of laxity, disinterest and incompetence of the city government, the municipality and ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht.’ They had and have the legal means to combat this, but they have omitted these means.’⁵³ O. Zwaneveld wrote this letter because the city officials didn’t want to meet with him or her anymore. Zwaneveld added two examples of the lacklustre procedure. In both cases tenants found it hard to get ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’ to do a check on the deferred maintenance in their apartments.

⁵¹ Author unknown, ‘Evaluatie ’82-’85’, *Werkplan Particulier Bezit Tarwewijk en notities* (Rotterdam 1-4-1985) 2-3, Archive 838, inventory number 43. Numbers by year: 134 in 1983, 263 in 1984, 43 in April 1985.

⁵² ‘Stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk vlot niet’, in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 25-10-1985), 14.

⁵³ O. Zwaneveld, untitled letter in *Werkplan Particulier Bezit Tarwewijk en notities* in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 43. Translation of: ‘De verpaupering, het verval en de speculatie zijn voor een groot deel mede het gevolg van laksheid, ongeïnteresseerdheid en ondeskundigheid van het gemeentebestuur, de deelgemeente en BoWoto [Bouw- en Woningtoezicht]. Men had en heeft de wettelijke middelen om dit te bestrijden, maar heeft dit achterwege gelaten.’

After this had finally happened, no action was taken. With this letter Zwaneveld also resigned from the residents' organisation, s/he was moving out of Tarwewijk.

The vacancy problem of Tarwewijk was not getting any better either. By the end of 1984 the number of vacant buildings had increased to 739 (from 524 in 1983). Only ten buildings got claimed and had subsequently people move in. The vacant buildings could only be claimed if there are people available to move in. However, the vacant houses, in most cases, were in a too bad condition for anyone to move in. Furthermore, two thirds of the candidates dropped out. They either found another house, did not respond anymore or lost interest. Also, it appears that a lot of the vacant buildings consisted of the purchased houses of the government. These buildings were up for renovation, but had to wait for the rest of the block to become government property.⁵⁴

In the fall of 1985, the Tarwewijk project group found itself to have gained minimal results in regards to the renewal plans. It had managed to buy 152 houses in 1985 by October, while the restriction ceiling had been raised to 290 (see the number for 1983 and 1984 for comparison on the previous page).⁵⁵ 74 of the 152 purchased houses still had to be transferred to the city. By letter, Y. Schreiner (the Tarwewijk project group coordinator) addressed the overarching urban renewal group (Stuurgroep Stadsvernieuwing, 'Steering committee urban renewal') to inform about the problems and ask for help. The main reasons given for the stagnation are summarized by: a complicated ownership situation causing disappointing purchase results and a shortage of employees. Furthermore Schreiner adds she suspects the urban renewal group of not taking Tarwewijk's renewal problems seriously.⁵⁶ Consequently, the Tarwewijk project group and the overarching group would meet two weeks later to discuss a solution.

During the meeting, some particular problems came to light. O. Zwaneveld was not the only member of the residents' organisation who struggled with the renewal process. All of its members threatened to resign, if the Tarwewijk project group would not obtain more employees and their own office. When the project group started out it was expected that urban renewal in Oud-Charlois would be done quickly. The plan was to dedicate the office to Tarwewijk only, after a short while of sharing it. However, not only did urban renewal in Oud-Charlois take longer, but also the urban renewal of Oud-Carnisse was added to the office.⁵⁷ Furthermore, it appears the project group had no concrete plans yet for the purchased houses. Schreiner did not find this to be problematic, as the project group had not acquired a whole block of houses yet. It seemed impossible to obtain a block without the use of expropriation. However, opinions on expropriation differed. For instance, city councillor Miss Van

⁵⁴ Projectgroep stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk, untitled report about the urban renewal in Tarwewijk 1981-1985 (Rotterdam 24-10-1985) 34-35, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁵⁵ Projectgroep stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk, untitled report about the urban renewal in Tarwewijk 1981-1985 (Rotterdam 24-10-1985) 18, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁵⁶ Y. Schreiner, untitled letter to 'stuurgroep stadsvernieuwing' (Rotterdam 15-10-1985), in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁵⁷ Bewonersorganisatie Tarwewijk, 'kapaciteit projectburo' (Rotterdam), in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

der Pol-van den Dorpel said her party, the VVD (liberal party), was against expropriation in principle. Firstly, the possibilities of private home improvement should be investigated, she added. Nevertheless, eventually it was decided that expropriation was necessary for acquiring a block of houses. It would be used as a last means, and only if a building plan was ready.⁵⁸

To combat the problems, a crisis team was called in. This group of urban renewal experts would investigate the situation and propose a solution to help the Tarwewijk project group get started up again.⁵⁹ After a few months of meeting and planning it was decided to split up the project office Tarwewijk/Oud-Charlois/Carnisse. The project group Tarwewijk would form its own office and get more employees. If the threat from the residents' organisation had anything to do with this is unclear. The director of the overarching urban renewal group, F. de Ruiter, informed the project groups by letter on the 28th of February 1986. He added that personally he still thinks it would be better to not split the office. Furthermore, he finds the number of employees in project group Tarwewijk to be reasonable in comparison with other project groups. Unfortunately he does not want to explain his thoughts about the causes of the failing regeneration plans: 'for the sake of the continuity of the work.'⁶⁰ It's hard to make anything of this statement. However, there seemed to be going on more with the Tarwewijk project group than the official documents consist.

The residents' organisation of Oud-Charlois responded to the splitting announcement with criticism. The project group found the split in itself to be a good idea, but the way it was done not so much. The complaints mostly come down to administrative and positional disagreements.

Interestingly, in the letter, the problems of urban renewal in Tarwewijk are addressed:

'The problems you [F. de Ruiter] have identified are nothing new to us. Intensive consultation has already been going on for more than a year between the three residents' organizations involved and the project office on how to improve urban renewal in the Tarwewijk, and to ensure progress in Oud-Charlois and Carnisse. In this consultation Mr. J. Scholte was involved as an organizational expert to work out joint proposals to this end, which unfortunately could not be agreed for purely budgetary reasons. What has become clear to everyone, however, is that the totality of policy views and administrative decision-making regarding urban renewal progress in Charlois is the source of these problems and the resulting frustrations.'⁶¹

⁵⁸ Unknown Author, *Notulen van de openbare vergadering van de stuurgroep voor stadsvernieuwing op donderdag 31 oktober 1985* (Rotterdam 31-10-1985), in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁵⁹ A. Liedorp, *uitnodiging vergadering over de Tarwewijk op 14 november 1985* (Rotterdam 8-11-1985) in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 1.

⁶⁰ F. de Ruiter, *zelfstandig projectburo* (Rotterdam 28-2-1986) 1, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 1. Translation of: 'Mijn mening over de oorzaken daarvan zal ik omwille van de continuïteit van het werk voor mij houden.'

⁶¹ Bewonersvereniging werkgroep oud Charlois, *Zelfstandig projectbureau Tarwewijk* (Rotterdam 27-3-1986) 1, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 1. Translation of: 'De door u geconstateerde problematiek is voor ons niets nieuws. Er bestaat al ruim een jaar een intensief overleg tussen de drie betrokken bewonersorganisaties en het projektbureau over de wijze, waarop de stadsvernieuwing in de Tarwewijk op een hoger plan te brengen en de voortgang in Oud Charlois en Carnisse te waarborgen. In dit overleg is de heer J.

As O. Zwaneveld had complained likewise, this letter suggests the regeneration plans were failing due to procedural complications. These include: 'Bouw- en Woningtoezicht' doing nothing anymore with deferred maintenance if the owner ignores the summons, and the city government refusing to make use of expropriation. Of course the other problems with regeneration plans, which were caused by the high ratio of privately owned houses and the limited budget, played a huge role. However, it now becomes apparent that the historiography has been incomplete in regards to identifying the causes of the failure of the renewal projects in Tarwewijk.

An example will be used to clarify all complications. On the Borselaarstraat, Weverhoekstraat and Millinxstraat are 44 buildings of the same type. The buildings were built in 1922, and are typically impractical, as explained in the beginning of this chapter. The plan was to destroy and rebuilt some houses completely, and partly renovate the buildings. The renewal was planned to take place in two steps, the first half in 1985, the second in 1986. In May 1984 preparations started. For the first step, 20 buildings (containing 60 homes) would be renovated and 5 buildings would be destroyed (containing 12 homes and 2 offices). Of the 20 buildings, nine were owned by the government, of the five buildings, all were government property. Obtaining the remaining buildings would not be easy.⁶²

Among the private owners, one stood out in particular. Wilgental B.V. owned 22 very badly maintained apartments, on which summons rested (only some were in the target area). Also the company had debts with the government ('Bouw- en Woningtoezicht' among others) and the bank(s). Negotiations with Wilgental quickly lead to nothing, as his debts had to be calculated into the purchase price, which was quite a lot. The use of expropriation would be considered. Furthermore, two other owners (both owning one building) in the target area suddenly decided to proceed to implementation on the summons they had received. However, the project group had actually hoped they wouldn't, so they could buy and renovate the buildings themselves on a higher level.⁶³ Renovated houses were more expensive and harder to expropriate. In such a way, the use of summons could actually hinder the progress of obtaining privately-owned buildings. This particular problem seemed to be unavoidable, as renewal plans were changed very often in order to secure progress, making it hard to specifically rule out buildings for the use of summons. In the opposite scenario, residents would have to wait in their badly maintained houses during the obtaining phase. This practise would be very risky, as renewal plans changed and delayed often due to owners not wanting to sell their property.

Quickly, a second problem developed. Neither the residents' organisation, nor the renovation corporation felt the need to guide the residents, leading to an impasse. The residents needed to live

Scholte als organisatiedeskundige betrokken geweest om gezamenlijk voorstellen hiertoe uit te werken, waarover helaas om zuiver budgettaire redenen geen overeenstemming kon worden bereikt. Wat echter wel voor een ieder duidelijk is geworden, is dat het totaal aan beleidsopvattingen en bestuurlijke besluitvorming ten aanzien van de stadsvernieuwingsvoortgang in Charlois, de bron van deze problemen en de daaruit voortvloeiende frustraties is.'

⁶² Projectgroep stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk, untitled report about the urban renewal in Tarwewijk 1981-1985 (Rotterdam 24-10-1985) 16, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁶³ Ibidem.

somewhere else during the renovations, requiring them to be guided individually. Every resident had their own specific problems and questions regarding the process. The guide would function as a contact person between the residents, the project group and the renovation corporation. It would take until the first of January 1985 for a new regulation to come into effect. Per home, 500 guilders would become available (from the urban renewal fund), to be spend on social workers to guide the families. However this would take too much time. After some time of asking around, the director of public housing ('Volkshuisvesting Rotterdam') was found to finance a private company for social guidance in advance of the new regulation. The company would start visiting residents from November the 8th.⁶⁴

In the meantime renovation plans were made and approved. By December the 7th 1984 everything was completed, except for the obtainment of several buildings. It would take another few months to get the rest of the block. Another inspection had pointed out that the buildings of the aforementioned 'other owners' was worse than thought earlier. The buildings would have to be destroyed as well. Luckily, this made the owners decide to sell them to the government. All in all, this had delayed the start of the first step in renovation project from September 1985 to the beginning of 1986.

Negotiations with Wilgental were still not progressing. To avoid further delay, it was decided to reduce the first step to the renovation of just eight buildings. This would be less profitable than doing all 20 in 1 take. However, it was argued that further delay of the project would be unacceptable. Aside from the less profitable plan change, the quality of the buildings turned out to be worse than calculated. The frame, walls and windows for instance were disappointingly bad. Because of all the troubles (mostly budgetary) with these renovations, it was decided to just destroy all the other targeted buildings instead, if Wilgental would ever sell its buildings.⁶⁵

This exemplifies how private ownership often caused plans to be delayed and subsequently changed. Due to the delay, impoverishment and vacancy only increased, making the project eventually more expensive than anticipated. Cases like this characterized the Tarwewijk. The high ratio of privately owned buildings in Tarwewijk demanded a different approach than other urban renewal projects in Rotterdam. It took almost four years of bad achievements for the project group and the steering group to draw this conclusion. Still the director F. de Ruiter was not convinced, which might explain why it took so long in the first place for the steering group to act on Tarwewijk's renewal problems.

In March 1986 the final report from the crisis team was finished. Besides some general advice and decisions surrounding the amount of employees, the report consisted of specific plans for urban renewal in the whole of Tarwewijk. The complicated ownership situation, and a lack of employees in the project group and other connected institutions were characterized as the main problems. Other

⁶⁴ Projectgroep stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk, untitled report about the urban renewal in Tarwewijk 1981-1985 (Rotterdam 24-10-1985) 16, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

issues which resulted in the bad purchase numbers boil down to: high prices, many apartments (instead of whole houses), many emergency buyers ('noodkopers')⁶⁶, a failing auction policy, and an inadequate claiming policy. The solutions to these problems come boil to three things: more employees, the use of expropriation on a big scale and the need for 'Bouw- en Woningtoezicht' to renovate houses on behalf of the owner again. For the expropriation policy to work 'Grondbedrijf' (the city institution for purchasing houses among others) would need extra employees as well.⁶⁷

The crisis team also reports on issues that are not necessarily related to housing. Tarwewijks population consisted mostly of elderly people. According to the report, this caused a problem as most homes were not equipped for elderly people. Also, the Tarwewijk still had a huge lack of green space and facilities, for the latter, a special fund was available. Lastly, it appeared that the amount of Tarwewijks shopping facilities was decreasing. Plans for countering this, also, still had to be designed.⁶⁸ As of now the Tarwewijk lacked a service centre for senior citizens, had only one kindergarten (with a capacity for 45 children) and one community centre (which was open three days of the week). The population of Tarwewijk consisted roughly of 13000 people, making the lack of these facilities a huge shortcoming.⁶⁹ Seniors and children were not the only ones in need for facilities. In a newspaper article from November 1987, a group of young people demanded the establishment of a youth centre in Tarwewijk. The group was squatting a former bar, until the youth centre would be build. One of its members explained: 'We want to prevent the rise of excesses. The youth in Tarwewijk does not have anything. The decision to build a youth centre is not going fast enough.'⁷⁰

⁶⁶ 'Noodkopers' are people who bought a house of poor quality because this was financially more feasible than renting, in the short term. The new owners do not have the means to perform necessary repairs or to properly renovate the house. The poorly maintained house imposes additional costs, like high a high energy bill. This way new owners become trapped in a vicious circle. Emergency buyers pose a problem for urban renewal projects as the renovations often required a contribution or pre-finance by the owner.

⁶⁷ Krisisteam, *Rapportage Tarwewijk Maart 1986* (Rotterdam March 1986) 5-6, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 18.

⁶⁸ Idem, 10, 15.

⁶⁹ Projectgroep Tarwewijk, *Stuurgroep-rapportage Tarwewijk 1987* (Rotterdam April 1987) 15, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁷⁰ 'Café gekraakt', *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 18-11-1987) 15. Translation of: 'We willen voorkomen dat er excessen ontstaan. De jongeren in de Tarwewijk hebben helemaal niets. Het besluit om een jongeren centrum te bouwen duurt ons veel te lang.'

Chapter 2 A bleak outlook

In 1990 the new Tarwewijk project group coordinator F. de Jong found the progress of urban renewal to be promising. Delays were still frequent, but de Jong found them to be inherent for urban renewal. Arguably they are, because the Tarwewijk was not lacking behind other urban renewal projects in Rotterdam anymore in production. According to the evaluation report of March 1990 all the preparations were done for the coming renewal plans to be executed. The project group succeeded in buying 359 houses between 1987 and 1990. It does not seem much compared to the numbers from 83 till 85. However, only 448 houses were planned to be bought in this time period.⁷¹ The use of expropriation was very time consuming procedure prone to delays. The crisis team therefore had anticipated a stagnation in urban renewal for 1987, when the expropriation procedures would be planned and set up for future renovations.⁷²

The urban renewal numbers were finally going in the right way. Nevertheless, the problems identified earlier still persisted. The unwillingness of a few owners caused major delays for certain projects. This is exemplified by the case of the Borselaarstraat. Originally, 40 houses would be demolished and replaced. The residents would temporarily live in other municipal-owned neighbourhood homes until the project was finished. In February 1987, the demolition had to be paused as two residents had refused to evict. The housing association had tried to negotiate, but to no avail, as the residents did not accept the terms. Therefore, the housing association had brought the case to court, which would take another 6 months. In the meantime the other residents were still waiting in the temporary houses. Members of the residents' organisation were starting to get fed up and demanded that something was done. Eventually it was decided to restart the project where possible. This would leave out six to ten houses, as these surrounded the two refusing residents, which would be tackled in a later project.⁷³

Despite serious defects, in general residents of Tarwewijk rather had their homes renovated than demolished and replaced. They had often improved parts of their homes themselves and feared the rent of the new constructions would be too high. However, some buildings were in such a bad condition that even extensive renovations would not be enough to stop further decay. For example, if foundations were skewed, renovations would be useless, as further subsidence may occur.⁷⁴

By 1990, the construction of facilities was prospering as well. In February the first pole was struck for a multifunctional community building. Herein two community centres, a kindergarten and a service centre would be housed. It had taken five years of negotiations, due to problems with the size,

⁷¹ Projectgroep Tarwewijk, *Voortgangsrapportage projectgroep Tarwewijk* (March 1990) 1, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁷² Projectgroep Stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk, *Tarwewijk 1987 stuurgroep rapportage* (Rotterdam April 1987) 2, In Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁷³ 'Ik wacht nu al zeventien maanden in 'n wisselwoning', in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 11-2-1987) 14.

⁷⁴ 'Conflict over toekomst huizen Tarwestraat' in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 13-5-1986) 14.

budget and location. The crisis team had managed to get Tarwewijk on the priority list of the city level facility fund. Nevertheless, the budget had been the main problem, as cuts were made over the years. The cuts had caused the plans to change drastically, removing the elevator and changing the flooring for example. Furthermore, the primary schools in Tarwewijk had been refurbished, even though there was no lack of primary schooling (there were six in the area). Lastly, the project group was making big plans to increase the green space in the neighbourhood. In previous years little had been done, but for 1987 and 1988, the budget allowed almost 5 million guilders to be spent on the living environment. However, the final expenditure was only estimated to be roughly 1 million guilders. This had to do with a shortage of employees in certain city level institutions, but was mostly related to budget cuts in the urban renewal fund. A major redecoration project in the Mijnsheerenlaan was therefore postponed.⁷⁵ Despite these setbacks, the future looked promising as additional projects were getting started. The urban renewal had primarily focussed on the north side of Tarwewijk, as the housing conditions were the most extreme. Green space was mainly lacking in the south side (the Millinxbuurt area). The plan was to demolish a whole block there, and replace it for a small park. Problematically, the houses in this block had recently been renovated (by the use of summons from 'Bouw- en Woningtoezicht'). Nevertheless, for the project the city fund could be used again.⁷⁶

Since 1988 the project group started to invest in the business sector of Tarwewijk. This was done partly by renovating shops and office buildings and partly by building new ones. By 1992, it had succeeded in the renovation of 846 square meters, and the creation of 4060 square meters of company space. Furthermore, a new supermarket building was constructed. Above the new supermarket new houses were built, specifically for seniors.⁷⁷

The urban renewal in Tarwewijk was finally taking off and the foundations for further improvements were made. From 1982 until 1992 the project group had succeeded in renovating 647 homes, improving 130 homes on a lower level and building 376 new homes. These numbers only consider (newly) government owned buildings. It had planned to renovate another 882 homes, and to build another 283. The urban renewal in Tarwewijk was estimated to be finished in 2000 at the earliest.⁷⁸ The progress of urban renewal in Tarwewijk was arguably going too slow to keep up with the impoverishment. By 1990 the population had dropped to roughly 12000 people. The tendency to hare away was still very much existent for those financially able to do so.⁷⁹ In the beginning of the 1990's, prostitution, drug nuisance and littering was increasing, mostly in the Millixbuurt, according

⁷⁵ 'Bijlage 1' in: Projectgroep Stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk, *Tarwewijk 1987 stuurgroerapportage* (Rotterdam April 1987) 11, In Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁷⁶ Projectgroep Stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk, *Tarwewijk 1987 stuurgroerapportage* (Rotterdam April 1987) 15-22, In Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁷⁷ Dienst stedenbouw en volkshuisvesting sector projectmanagement en stadsvernieuwing, *stuurrapportage Tarwewijk* (Rotterdam April 1992), 7-16, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁷⁸ Dienst stedenbouw en volkshuisvesting sector projectmanagement en stadsvernieuwing, *stuurrapportage Tarwewijk* (Rotterdam April 1992), 7-13, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁷⁹ Projectgroep Stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk, *Tarwewijk 1987 stuurgroerapportage* (Rotterdam April 1987) 3, In Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

to 'Steunpunt Tarwewijk Veilig'. This was a new temporal organization for building management, safety and neighbourhood policy.⁸⁰ The neighbourhood was also receiving more negative attention from the media, which will become apparent later in this chapter and the next one.

The project group had been reluctant in renovating the Millinxbuurt. The houses within the area were of better quality than in the north side of Tarwewijk. Also, the ownership situation in the Millinxbuurt was even more complicated than other areas. In the evaluation report from the project group it is noted that: 'The ownership situation in the Millinxbuurt is so hopeless in several parts, that it would be delusional to expect that these buildings will ever be bought for the sake of renovation. Twenty owner-residents within ten connected buildings is unfortunately not an exception.'⁸¹ Nevertheless, the project group managed to get the earlier discussed plan, to demolish a whole block and replace it with a park, on the planning. Due to budget cuts, other plans would have to wait. It was estimated that the buying and renovating of houses in the Millinxbuurt would have to continue after 2000 (as this area was not included in the planning and funding till 2000 discussed in the previous paragraph).

After 1999 active police interference was implemented to fight the housing- and criminal problems of Tarwewijk. Previously, the government mainly relied on preventive measures. Incidentally every very few years the Dutch government would give money for certain impoverished neighbourhoods. In most cases the money was meant to help the unemployed and could only be used to pay their loan. The required materials and other additional matters would be financed by the city. It was a way to create jobs for the unemployed, to keep them out of illegal business. In 1985 Rotterdam received 13.5 million guilders this way. This money was also meant for six other neighbourhoods in Rotterdam. According to a newspaper article the amount of money was not sufficient to set up anything substantial or structural. It would mostly be used as face-lift for the neighbourhoods, like fixing overdue maintains on public buildings, fixing street lights and planting trees.⁸² In 1990 the national government funding was more specific. Spangen and Tarwewijk would receive 800.000 guilders every year for three years, to stop the frequent small criminal activities in the neighbourhoods. With this money 'Steunpunt Tarwewijk Veilig' was set up. This temporary organisation worked closely with the police and residents in order to make the neighbourhood more secure against criminals. The money was also used to create jobs for the long-term unemployed in the form of street maintenance, like fixing playgrounds and street lights.⁸³

⁸⁰ Dienst stedenbouw en volkshuisvesting sector projectmanagement en stadsvernieuwing, *stuurrapportage Tarwewijk* (Rotterdam April 1992), 22, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁸¹ Projectgroep Stadsvernieuwing Tarwewijk, *Tarwewijk 1987 stuurgroeperapportage* (Rotterdam April 1897) 24, In Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20. Translation of: 'De eigendomssituatie in de Millinxbuurt is op diverse plekken dermate hopeloos, dat het een illusie is om te verwachten dat deze panden ooit zullen worden aangekocht ten behoeve van hoog nivo renovatie. Twintig eigenaar-bewoners in tien naast elkaar gelegen panden is helaas geen uitzondering.'

⁸² 'Alleen wat cosmetica voor probleemwijken' in *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (Rotterdam 12-03-1985) 15.

⁸³ 'Justitie start buurtgerichte aanpak kleine criminaliteit' in *De Telegraaf* (Rotterdam 6-3-1990) 7.

The urban renewal in the whole of the Netherlands, which started in the 70's and was planned to finish in 2005, was funded primarily by the national government. The urban renewal fund was intended to make impoverished neighbourhoods (mostly pre-war buildings) catch up with the current housing requirements. Starting in 1991, the funding of urban renewal would increasingly be questioned. The State secretary for housing, E. Heerma (CDA, Christian-democratic party), tried to cut the fund for urban renewal by 30 million. This budget cut would not be implemented due to pressure from the cities and the House of Representatives. However, a year later the cuts could not be avoided anymore. Between 1993 and 1996, 150 million guilders were cut from the national urban renewal fund. The money would be retrieved specifically from the budget for small housing improvements in the private rental sector of old buildings.⁸⁴ So the Millinxbuurt and similar neighbourhoods in the Netherlands were hit the hardest. To compensate the private owners in this sector, the allowable yearly rent increase was raised from 3 to 5.5 percent. This way the owners would have enough money to implement renovations themselves. According to a newspaper article, people did not believe that private owners would invest the extra rent in renovations. The housing associations from the big cities thought the rent increase was not sufficient for replacing the subsidies.⁸⁵

For Rotterdam the budget cuts came at a bad time, if there would ever be a good one. The city ended 1991 with a deficit of more than 40 million guilders. Near the end of July 1992 the city announced it would only be able to renovate 10.000 of the planned 13.500 houses the coming years. After 1996, the remaining 3500 would be tackled. The housing associations feared that the cuts may force the city to stop projects halfway where the renewal was yet unfinished. Especially in already disadvantaged neighbourhoods, like the Tarwewijk, this would lead to impoverishment, according to the chairman of the federation for Rotterdam's housing associations P. van der Gugten. In a newspaper article he stated: 'People with higher incomes don't want to live in a street full of nailed up buildings. That means once again we'll get areas of concentration for people at the bottom of society. Housing associations would not risk millions of investments without the certainty of completed renovations.'⁸⁶

The cuts had a big impact in the Millinxbuurt, the renovations had been postponed to 2000, and residents even feared it might never happen. Since the start of the renewal projects in Tarwewijk, the Millinxbuurt had been put on the back burner for reasons discussed earlier. By 1992, the negative consequences of this course had become clear. According to the newspaper article, it was not a rare sight to see a pile of furniture on the streets at the end of the month. The landlords were very strict in upholding the due date for the rent. One's someone was kicked out, the same evening someone else

⁸⁴ 'Stadsvernieuwing toch kind van de rekening', in *Leeuwarder courant: hoofdblad van Friesland* (Leeuwarden 17-9-1991) 9.

⁸⁵ 'Steden vrezten verpaupering in na-oorlogse wijken' in *NRC handelsblad* (Amsterdam 23-10-1991) 2.

⁸⁶ 'Rotterdamse corporaties vrezten voor oude wijken' in *NRC handelsblad* (Rotterdam 29-7-1992) 2. Translation of: 'Mensen met hogere inkomens willen niet wonen in een straat vol dichtgespijkerde panden. Dat betekent dat je opnieuw concentratiewijken krijgt voor mensen aan de onderkant van de samenleving. Woningcorporaties zullen geen risico willen lopen met miljoeneninvesteringen zolang zij niet de zekerheid hebben dat de renovatie van een wijk wordt afgemaakt.'

would move in. The houses of the Millinxbuurt may look proper on the outside, but within conditions are lacking. Sometimes eight or more people live on one floor and many houses do not have a shower. Some apartments were used for drugs dealing and cars drove through the streets trying to sell illegal substances. The area had become a retreat for anyone who had nowhere else to go. The slumlords did not care who rented the apartment as long as they paid the rent. Many families had no idea of their legal rights or had no means to obtain justice, sometimes because they were in the Netherlands illegally. As discussed earlier, the national government was investing in projects against criminal activity in the neighbourhood. According to an interviewed resident, these projects had little effect: ‘without urban renewal it’s almost a waste of time.’⁸⁷

After April 1992 the project group Tarwewijk would cease to exist. Urban renewal would continue, but on different scale and with other intentions. Previously, renewal projects throughout Rotterdam and other cities in the Netherlands had focussed on making the Dutch housing stock up to date with the requirements. After 1993, renewal would be used more so in the context of urban regeneration. In an effort to reverse downwards trends in neighbourhoods with a lot of unemployment, crime and filth, urban renewal would be used in combination with other social projects designed to help the residents out of poverty. Some regeneration projects had already been started by ‘Steunpunt Tarwewijk Veilig’. A year before the project group stopped, the municipality of Charlois had called in the consultancy from ‘Dienst Stedebouw en Volkshuisvesting’ (the highest overarching city level organization for all things involving city building), to make a regeneration plan for the Millinxbuurt. This plan, and other housing projects in Tarwewijk, would be executed by the steering group of the project group. All other aspects of urban renewal, like neighbourhood and street redecoration and the stimulation of private housing improvements would be taken over by municipal level organisations (like ‘Steunpunt Tarwewijk Veilig’ and ‘Steunpunt Particuliere Woningverbetering Tarwewijk’).⁸⁸ The exact division of tasks was a bit more complicated, but not important for this paper.

When the project group started out, the Millinxbuurt was in relatively good shape. The worst problem was a lack of green space. While other parts of Tarwewijk got (partly) rid of their bad housing conditions and neglectful landlords, the Millinxbuurt deteriorated. After ten years of urban renewal it was realised the Millinxbuurt needed extensive renovations as well. Unfortunately budget cuts were made shortly after. The project group had managed to get the demolition of the central block (to be replaced with a park) on the planning, but further renovations would have to wait. This made a lot of residents lose hope. Consequently, more and more people would leave, causing the impoverishment to accelerate.

⁸⁷ ‘In Millinxbuurt gelooft niemand er meer in’ in *De Volkskrant* (Rotterdam 30-7-1992) 11. Translation of: ‘Het is allemaal niet weg, maar zonder stadsvernieuwing is het dweilen met de kraan open.’

⁸⁸ *Idem*, 24, 30.

Chapter 3 The forgotten triangle

As discussed before, between 1990 and 1993 Tarwewijk received 800.000 guilders yearly from the national government for an anti-crime project. Nevertheless, the municipality of Charlois thought more action was necessary to stop the impoverishment of the Millinxbuurt, thus ‘Stedebouw en Volkshuisbesteding’ was called in in 1991. In December 1992 their research was finished. In ‘De millinxbuurt, een vergeten driehoek?’ (a forgotten triangle), the problems and possible solutions were published. The piece was meant as a vision for the future and to stop further impoverishment.⁸⁹

In order to set realistic targets, ‘Stedebouw en Volkshuisvesting’ formulated short and long term measures. The short term measures were designed to be applicable without the budget for urban renewal. These included: going back to the active use of summons by ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’ for deferred maintenance, using collective tenant action against rent increases if deferred maintenance is not fixed, using heavier legal means (e.g. claiming and expropriation) for combating buildings used for drugs trafficking and prostitution (with the help of the police), organising more community action against filth and small criminal activity, organising community parties and other gatherings against anonymity and better management of infrastructure. The long term measures basically came down to the work previously done by the project group, with more of a focus on families with children and the elderly. It was thought that making the neighbourhood more attractive for families with children would help to improve the area. Families with children made use of the facilities in the neighbourhood, making these residents invested in keeping it clean and safe, more so than one and two person households who often used the Millinxbuurt as temporary stay. In the epilogue of the plan, the need for extensive collaboration between the residents’ organisation, police, ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’ and other involved institutions is emphasized. The short term measures make use of existing institutions, including ‘Bouw- and Woningtoezicht’ which in previous years had to stop their practises in the Millinxbuurt due to financial problems. To make sure similar problems do not arise, ‘Stedebouw en Volkshuisvesting’ advised the municipality of Charlois to consider financing the renovations on behalf of the owner out of their own budget.⁹⁰

Before the publication, some proposed measures had already been implemented, while the research continued. These were mainly organised by ‘Steunpunt Tarwewijk Veilig’ in cooperation with the residents’ organisation. Unsafe back paths were closed off, extra street sweepers were used, anti-cockroach actions were organised and financial aid was given to the community centres to organize social activities. The police was extra alert for drugs nuisance. Also, ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’ was sending out summons to neglectful owners, and had already renovated some houses on behalf of the owner in the Millinxbuurt. This practise would not be kept up long though, as

⁸⁹ dS+V-Consult: Adviesgroep bouwen en wonen, ‘De Millinxbuurt, een vergeten driehoek?’ (Rotterdam December 1992) 5-15. In Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 639.

⁹⁰ dS+V-Consult: Adviesgroep bouwen en wonen, ‘De Millinxbuurt, een vergeten driehoek?’ (Rotterdam December 1992) 61-85. In Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 639.

these means of renovating were still risky and costly.⁹¹ As discussed previously, the use of summons would often hinder the buying or expropriating of houses for demolition or renovation. To avoid this situation, ‘Bouw- en Woningtoezicht’ did not target houses in certain areas which may be up for urban renewal in the future. Consequently, residents in certain blocks had no legal means to make their landlord maintain their houses or fix deferred maintenance.⁹²

‘Steunpunt Tarwewijk Veilig’ would cease to exist after 1993. It had organised a lot of small activities for the prevention of crime, some of which have been discussed before. Its previous and final activities have been summarised in its work plan for 1993. Most notably, it had established a number of public servants, including: nine maintenance workers, two prevention mechanics (trained in 1992 to advise residents in preventing burglary) and three (of which one part-time) employees for the ‘Buurtpost’ (a community service point which will be discussed later). The project was mostly experimental in nature. Some of its doings, the closing of back paths, burglary prevention initiatives and porch lighting projects, were exported to surrounding neighbourhoods to prevent the transfer of Tarwewijk’s problems to neighbouring areas.⁹³ After 1994, ‘Steunpunt Tarwewijk Veilig’ would not be subsidized by the national government anymore. The municipality was considering continuing some of its projects out of their own budget.

As briefly discussed in the introduction, Antilleans would dominate the drugs scene in the later 90’s. The Millinxbuurt was used as a starting point for their economic escape from the Antilles. By 1992, 15.1% of the citizens in the Millinxbuurt had originally lived in either Suriname or the Antilles, this number was increasing relatively fast. 6.7% Originated from Turkey or Morocco, 13.2% came from other countries, leaving 65% of Dutch origin. These number do not include undocumented residents. In the vision, it was stated that tensions between the native Dutch and immigrants were not too problematic.⁹⁴ The clash of cultures had seemingly cooled off after the municipal elections of 1984. Almost ten years later, tensions would rise again, arguably only for a tiny fraction of the population though. The first noteworthy action against immigrants started in October 1993. At night, two men had sprayed racist slogans and swastikas on roughly ten places throughout the Tarwewijk. Especially schools had been targeted. According to a neighbourhood boy, racist tensions did actually not really exist there. He expressed that attention would only increase the problem. Furthermore, he found that people of all sorts of nationalities lived in Tarwewijk without any trouble. Likewise, members of the residents’ organization did not think much of it. They thought nothing pointed towards an explosive situation, and considered the action an incident. The police assumed the perpetrators

⁹¹ Dienst stedenbouw en volkshuisvesting sector projectmanagement en stadsvernieuwing, *stuurrapportage Tarwewijk* (Rotterdam April 1992), 22-23, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 838, inventory number 20.

⁹² E. de Lange, ‘Beheerplan Tarwewijk bijlage 2: plan van aanpak Millinxbuurt’ (17-5-1993) 11, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 658.

⁹³ Steunpunt Tarwewijk Veilig, ‘Werkplan 1993 van het project Tarwewijk veilig’ (Rotterdam 7-1-1993) 7-9, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 658.

⁹⁴ *Idem*, 24-27.

would be members of 'Jongeren Front Nederland' (Youth Front Netherlands), which is a movement linked to the aforementioned 'Centrumpartij.' Allegedly the party had started promoting anti-immigration sentiments in neighbourhoods with a lot of immigrants.⁹⁵

The racist action in Tarwewijk got somewhat underestimated. Throughout the whole of the Netherlands similar actions would take place, even leading to arson in Hoogvliet (part of Rotterdam).⁹⁶ In Tarwewijk things would quickly calm down. The incident did however spark discussion. In a newspaper article L. den Aantrekker, a resident of Tarwewijk, explains her point of view. She thinks migrants are getting favoured because criticising their behaviour is taboo. 'Maybe they [politicians] want to do something about the problem of immigrants, but they have started too late. They say so themselves: we have been too soft.'⁹⁷ According to Aantrekker things have gotten much worse in the last two and a half year. In the community centre, where Aantrekker helps, troubles with a big group of young Moroccans persist. She thinks it has to do with the rise of illegal immigrants residing in the neighbourhood.⁹⁸ Unfortunately, no details are given about the problems. In a newspaper article from a year later, similar problems were addressed. L. Elzinga had stopped believing politicians, as nothing was done about the criminal activities of a group of Moroccans in Tarwewijk. Her son had been threatened by this group and her daughter had almost been sexually assaulted by them. According to Elzinga, the group of Moroccans carried weapons and terrorized the playground.⁹⁹

The neighbourhood management department of Charlois expected the amount of immigrants to increase for the coming years. In general it was found that the social-economic position of these people was bad: a high unemployment rate, bad position on the labour market, low qualifications and bad housing. To properly integrate them in the Dutch society, improving their social-economic position was the first requirement. Creating more employment opportunities and better schooling was not the responsibility of the municipality, thus improving their housing and neighbourhood facilities was all that could be done for now.¹⁰⁰

In May 1993, the Charlois municipality published a plan for the Millinxbuurt. In the piece the proposed measures of the aforementioned 'De Millinxbuurt, een vergeten driehoek?' are discussed, their effectiveness and feasibility. Given that the neighbourhood could not make use of the urban renewal fund, the main priority for now was to deal with the buildings that caused the most nuisance. According to the police, at least 17 apartments were used for dealing drugs or prostitution. Combatting these buildings was a very complicated issue. The buildings could be closed using a local ordinance.

⁹⁵ 'Wijk beklad met racistische leuzen' in *Algemeen dagblad* (Rotterdam 14-10-1993) 4.

⁹⁶ 'Twaalf maanden racisme' in *Het Parool* (Rotterdam 13-11-1993) 13.

⁹⁷ 'Soms zijn we misschien te soft geweest' in *De Volkskrant* (Rotterdam 1-3-1994) 13. Translation of: 'Misschien willen ze wel wat doen aan het probleem van de immigranten, maar ze zijn te laat begonnen. Ze zeggen zelf ook: we zijn te zacht geweest.'

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁹ 'Rotterdamse buurtbewoners ontevreden over vervolg huiskamergesprekken, 'na de verkiezingen hebben we geen PvdA'er meer gezien'' in *De Volkskrant* (Rotterdam 25-3-1995) 9.

¹⁰⁰ Deelgemeente Charlois Bureau wijkbeheer, 'Beheerplan WOB Tarwewijk 1993-1994' (Rotterdam April 1993) 7-8, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 657.

However, the main occupant and family would keep access to the building. This made it very expensive to maintain the closing, as frequent check-ups would be necessary to make sure no one would start living there again illegally. Another option was to terminate the lease. For this, the cooperation of the owner was necessary, which was unlikely to happen considering the unwillingness of owners to cooperate with the government in previous years. The third option was to buy the owner out, which would be very expensive. Tackling junkies and runners on the street (drugs dealers on foot) would have effect only if these trouble spots were combatted as well. Even if the government managed to buy the trouble spots out and tackle the junkies, the problems would likely move to another neighbourhood. A structural approach to these problems was however out of reach for the police.¹⁰¹

It was decided to make use of a combination of the possible measures. If owners were unwilling to terminate the lease they would be forced to the juridical way, if this would lead to meagre results by the end of the year, then the government would buy the buildings. The same protocol would be used for buildings which were suspected of illegal rental. According to an estimation made by 'Bouw- en Woningtoezicht' the Millinxbuurt had around 70 buildings which were suspected of either housing illegal immigrant or housing too much people. In the first few months the police had found no owner willing to cooperate. Thus the residents' organisation was called in as the interest group to sue the owner, forcing him/her to terminate the lease and evict the residents causing nuisance. In June 1993, the first juridical procedure was almost finished for one building. To prevent a transfer of problems to the streets, two extra police officers were employed to check the streets and fine even the smallest violations.¹⁰²

Problems surrounding the use and traffic of drugs were present in the whole of Rotterdam. According to a newspaper article there was little the police could do. As of 1993, Rotterdam employed a special corps of police officers to combat drugs nuisance, so called 'overlastteams'. An interviewed officer considered his work to mostly have a discouraging effect on the drugs business. The police focused on fining junkies and dealer, because there was no structural way to deal with the trouble spots. In the five years prior to 1993, the police officers had noticed this had led to dealers and users acting more cautiously. Furthermore, it seemed the appearance of drugs tourists had increased in the last two years. Especially buyers from Belgium and France increasingly visited Rotterdam to buy heroine, because the prices were relatively low and the quality was better. A portion of the drugs tourists used stolen cars for their journey. In 1992, 219 stolen cars with a Belgian or French number plate had been confiscated by the police in Rotterdam. Some citizens from Tarwewijk were so fed up with the rise of drugs tourists, that they had taken it upon themselves to scare them out of the

¹⁰¹ E. de Lange, 'Beheerplan Tarwewijk bijlage 2: plan van aanpak Millinxbuurt' (Rotterdam 17-5-1993) 1-4, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 658.

¹⁰² E. de Lange, 'Uitwerking plan van aanpak Millinxbuurt' (Rotterdam 25-6-1993) 8, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 640.

neighbourhood by puncturing their tires. However, during the night the tourists had swapped their empty tires with those of surrounding cars.¹⁰³

Meanwhile the battle against the social problems of the neighbourhood continued. In January 1993 the 'Buurtpost' was opened, a point of contact for all sorts of institutions. The Buurtpost would also be used to organise social activities for the Millinxbuurt, starting later in 1993. Furthermore, a new playground was opened, which in practise would be used as a meeting point for residents. The group of residents which formed around the playground had started taking community initiatives with the help of the residents' organisation. This way, the group had managed to install lights and ball catchers at the playground and it had helped residents with installing porch lighting. Despite these efforts, lighting was still a big issue in the neighbourhood, as residents complained about scary dark spots. The filth in the neighbourhood, mostly caused by littering and vandalism, also had yet to improve. For both problems the new public servants of 'Steunpunt Tarwewijk Veilig' would be used. The prevention mechanics would install more porch lighting (the costs needed to be paid by the residents themselves), and more maintenance workers would be employed to clean the streets.¹⁰⁴

While urban renewal in the Millinxbuurt was still on the waiting list, in other parts of Tarwewijk it continued according to the plan discussed in the previous chapter. In the management plan for Tarwewijk for 1993/1994 the progress was summarized. In the area as a whole, the renewal projects were progressing steadily, still with the heavy use of expropriation. In most parts only one to three renovation or construction projects were required for the work to be finished (including the Millinxbuurt demolition project). The exception is the northern edge of Tarwewijk, where only 25 percent had been finished and five percent was under construction. In the plan, new concerns were addressed for the south-western part of Tarwewijk. This area had a similar ownership situation as the neighbouring Millinxbuurt, and the first signs of deterioration were showing. However, the area had failed to receive priority in the urban renewal fund before the budget cuts had been made. Stopping the downwards trend would therefore take the same form as its neighbouring area.¹⁰⁵

In order to make the Millinxbuurt more attractive for households with children, a new plan was developed, making use of a revolving fund construction. The government would buy multiple apartments in the same building, renovate and fuse them to become one bigger home, and then sell them. This way apartments would be made suitable for bigger families, and be renovated at the same time. The costs of this project was estimated to be lower than the traditional way of urban renewal in Tarwewijk, as apartments would be sold instantly after renovation instead of remaining government property. Nevertheless, it was still an expensive procedure.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ 'De jacht van overlastteam-Zuid op drugtoeristen' in *NRC Handelsblad* (Rotterdam 22-4-1993) 2.

¹⁰⁴ *Idem*, 5-10.

¹⁰⁵ Deelgemeente Charlois Bureau wijkbeheer, 'Beheerplan WOB Tarwewijk 1993-1994' (Rotterdam April 1993) 13-15, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 657.

¹⁰⁶ E. de Lange, 'Uitwerking plan van aanpak Millinxbuurt' (Rotterdam 25-6-1993) 5, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 640.

Despite all efforts, the management department concluded little improvements had been made. In the planning for 1995/1996 a small section was dedicated to the evaluation of the previous measures. The investments in social activities had barely decreased the anonymity between residents, it also failed to stimulate residents to be more invested in their neighbourhood. The Charlois government found it had expected too much, as changing social structures is something that takes longer than a year. It would try to create more durable projects in the future. The criminal activities did decrease a bit. In the previous years, the neighbourhood safety was an issue for 'Steunpunt Tarwewijk Veilig'. While some of its projects were continued under 'Charlois Veilig', like the public servants it employed (fifteen in total) and the 'Buurtpost', neighbourhood safety was now predominantly an issue for the management department as well. The plan included a resident survey about safety and police reports on crime for Tarwewijk. Unfortunately, only 40 residents were willing to participate in the survey. Especially the elderly Dutch (around 55 years of age) were eager to share their complaints in the survey, making the youth and immigrants very underrepresented. On the basis of the police reports and survey, some interesting conclusions were found. The south-western part was impoverishing, as increasingly complaints about drugs nuisance were reported. Besides the Millinxbuurt, the north edge of Tarwewijk was considered very unsafe, mainly due to the many vacant buildings (a consequence of ongoing urban renewal projects) and a lack of lighting. Burglary was an issue in the whole of Tarwewijk. It seemed burglars systematically finished off certain areas, as relatively a lot of houses would be broken into in the same area in a short time span.¹⁰⁷

For future regeneration project, the management department prioritized including residents from all different groups. Specifically Antilleans, Turks, Moroccans, young people and the very elderly would be called upon to share their complaints and wishes for Tarwewijk. To do so, a representative per group was found, who would form the bridge between the government and the groups. These representatives had often worked with the government through social or community work before. While this project was just starting up, it had revealed some interesting opinions on safety in the neighbourhood already. Not only the elderly Dutch found the high ratio of immigrants in the area a reason to feel unsafe, immigrants themselves often found this as well. The Millinxbuurt in particular was found to be very unsafe, especially when big groups filled the streets. Moroccan men were found to experience the least feeling of unsafety. In contrast, Moroccan women did feel relatively unsafe, and their husbands also worried about their safety. Furthermore, the increasing amount of vagrants and junks hanging around in Tarwewijk made everyone feel uncomfortable. The second priority, of the plan for 1995, was to deal with these strangers. Getting a grip on these people was found to be very hard, as they were considered a lost group by most institutions. For now, no concrete plans were made. The last priority was to stop burglaries. Besides continuing the employment of the two prevention mechanics, the Charlois municipality was looking into the possibility of setting up a

¹⁰⁷ Wijkoverleg beheer Tarwewijk, 'Wijkveiligheidsplan Tarwewijk' (Rotterdam March 1995) 1-10, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 643.

security team. Furthermore, future renovation/building projects would incorporate more security against burglary.¹⁰⁸

The regeneration projects for 1995/1996 were very similar to those of the previous years. In cooperation with the residents' organisation, 'Charlois Veilig' and other institutions, twenty projects were launched throughout Tarwewijk, including: improving playgrounds, organising sport activities for the youth, creating more lighting, improving road safety and renovating the exterior of houses in some streets. Furthermore, the zoning plan for the Millinxbuurt was almost finished, after which the expropriation of the central block could start. In the Netherlands, the municipalities draw up rules on how a certain plot of land or area can be used. The zoning plan states for example where shops, homes and other types of buildings or companies may be established.¹⁰⁹

According to *Een drugsscene op Zuid*, the impoverishment of the Millinxbuurt accelerated halfway the 1990's due to developments elsewhere in Rotterdam. From 1987 until December 1994, heroin addicts were able to freely use and receive methadone on an area next to Rotterdam central station. 'Perron Nul' attracted a lot of dealers as well, because a lot of potential customers concentrated here. After the closing, a lot of them moved to Rotterdam West. During the summer of 1995 the city launched project Victor, a large-scale and intensive police action against concentrations of drugs nuisance and crime, which mainly targeted the West. Project Victor on its turn caused a lot of dealers and addicts to find a new area for their business. The Millinxbuurt was increasingly attracting more dealers and addicts on its own already. Arguably, this trend got accelerated after the closing of 'Perron Nul' and the launch of project Victor, as dealers and addicts no longer felt safe in their former areas of business.¹¹⁰ According to a newspaper article, project Victor caused the addicts to flee into neighbourhoods with a lot of vacant buildings, like Tarwewijk.¹¹¹

This correlation was also found by S. Boot, school principal of the Akker in the Millinxbuurt. The primary school participated in an employment project for immigrant women, which got covered in a newspaper article. These women would assist primary schools in teaching and raising four and five year olds. The help was very welcome, as the kids in the Millinxbuurt could use some extra care and attention. At the Akker more than 90 percent of the 277 kids had an immigrant background, Dutch was their second language. Most of these kids experienced a developmental delay of at least a year. According to Boot 'many children are not taken care of, they are hardly looked after. Parents who live in this neighbourhood are losers, otherwise they would be gone a long time. Five percent of the fathers is in jail, a lot of parents are poor, single, illiterate or suffer from an alcohol or drugs addiction.'¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Wijkoverleg beheer Tarwewijk, 'Wijkveiligheidsplan Tarwewijk' (Rotterdam March 1995) 7-11, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 643.

¹⁰⁹ Idem, 13-23.

¹¹⁰ Torre, Hulshof, *Een drugsscene op Zuid*, 16-17.

¹¹¹ 'Nog geen oplossing voor drugsoverlast', in *Trouw* (Rotterdam 20-9-1995) 8.

¹¹² 'Buurtmoeder in een wijk vol losers' in *Trouw* (Rotterdam 14-10-1995) 7. Translation of: 'Voor veel kinderen wordt niet gezorgd, er wordt nauwelijks naar ze omgekeken. Ouders die in deze buurt wonen zijn

Consequently, some kids would start their primary school still in diapers, or turn up severely underdressed for the cold weather. As part of the employment project, K. Kaorkmaz helped mothers in the neighbourhood in raising their children, informing them on proper nourishments, bed time, homework, etc. Boot found the Millinxbuurt had been plagued by impoverishment, pollution and criminal activity for years, but it had only turned into a real mess since the closing of ‘Perron Nul’. Regularly Boot had to send away junks who were doing their business at the school entrance. Sometimes they would try to steal stuff from the school.¹¹³

A month later, the Akker was in the news again, because the mayor of Rotterdam, B. Peper, had paid a visit. This time S. Boot talked more about the problems of the neighbourhood, offering some interesting insights. The high ratio of people moving quickly in and out had negative effects on the pupils. Boot found the school to function as a hotel, as yearly 100 kids left and another 100 enrolled. For the teachers this was very frustrating as they would invest a lot of effort in getting kids to participate. The kids would often leave, right when the teachers felt like they were making progress. Boot thought government help was necessary to reverse the downwards trend in the area, as he and his college’s had tried everything in their power. He feared the kids might end up living like the underprivileged that filled the Millinxbuurt, as they were exposed to their example on a daily basis. Prostitutes and junks walked the streets, supplied by a former pupil who now made his living as a drugs courier. The junks terrorized the neighbourhood, fighting each other, threatening school staff, and one time even robbing the milkman of the cartons that were supposed to go to the pupils. The mayor would try to get the Millinxbuurt on the priority list of the city government. However, he thought the impetus for a clean and safe living environment would mainly have to come from the neighbourhood itself. In response Boot laughed: ‘There are hardly any people here that care about their environment. They are too busy dealing with their own problems.’¹¹⁴

The Millinxbuurt would start to receive more attention again in November 1996, because its neighbouring street was impoverishing as well. The Dordtselaan is located between and shared by the two municipalities Charlois and Feyenoord. Like the Millinxbuurt, the quality of the buildings was not too bad, and a lot of buildings were split in small apartments. The street had a lot of shops which needed to be supplied, often leading to a messy situation as supply trucks filled the parking spots and the grassy separation between the lanes. The roads and streets were badly maintained and badly lighted. The problems of the Millinxbuurt were spreading to the Dordtselaan. Some addicts lived in the Dordtselaan, or used the small covered porches to hang out. They got their drugs from the Millinxbuurt, or from runners who often visited a snack bar in the Dordtselaan. Crime numbers were

loosers, anders waren ze al lang weg. Vijf procent van de vaders zit in de bak, veel ouders zijn arm, alleenstandd, analfabeet of kampen met alcohol- of drugsverslavingen.’

¹¹³ Idem, 7.

¹¹⁴ ‘Ik krijg een kick van die burgermeester’ Peper stuurt hulpverleners voor een warm nest in de koude Millinxbuurt’, in *Trouw* (Rotterdam 15-11-1995) 9. Translation of: ‘Er zijn hier nauwelijks mensen die zich bekommeren om hun omgeving. Ze hebben het te druk met hun eigen problemen.’

rising, especially street robberies occurred a lot in comparison with other streets. The impoverishment was noticed by the ‘Collegeteam drugs&overlast’, the city department for dealing with drugs use and nuisance. Representatives from Charlois and Feyenoord were called in to talk about an integral regeneration plan. Despite the talks, nothing was done. Almost a year later ‘drugs&overlast’ payed a visit to the problematic areas, which put it on the agenda again. The problems of the Millinxbuurt and the Dordtselaan would be tackled simultaneously, with both receiving independent regeneration projects and funding from the city.¹¹⁵

For the Millinxbuurt, ‘Maak Millinx Mooier!’ (make Millinx better) was launched in September 1997. According to the website, former regeneration projects lacked coordination, this time an integral approach would be used. Foremost, it aimed to recover the physical aspects and improve the liveability in the neighbourhood. Secondly, the social-economic and housing situation of the residents must be improved. This would be done partly by building on the already existing projects. Meanwhile the police department was working on a plan to deal with the criminal activities.¹¹⁶

It took some months before the first projects were set in motion. The previously discussed revolving fund construction for the renovation of houses was implemented. In January 1998 some buildings had been renovated (and been adjusted for families with children) this way. The government had bought a total of 50 houses for this project. The new owners of these houses were required to sign a contract forcing them to sell the house back to the housing association, preventing a take-over by slumlords in the future.¹¹⁷ In July, ten years after the plan was made, the demolition of the central block in the Millinxbuurt started. The demolition was estimated to be finished early 1999, until that time the exact lay-out for the park was up for discussion. The demolition brought the amount of houses down to roughly 1000. In November 1999, the city government in collaboration with the housing association signed a covenant to buy another 300 houses for the revolving fund renovations.¹¹⁸ The covenant also included the renovation of 200 houses by subsidizing private owners.¹¹⁹ This way, roughly half of the houses in the neighbourhood would be refurbished. Most of these houses were in terrible condition. The housing association would help these tenants find a new place in other parts of the city, as there was no available housing in the neighbourhood.¹²⁰ Lastly, a big number of buildings would be checked, not just for deferred maintenance and structural quality, but also for social

¹¹⁵ H. van Mastrigt, ‘Ambtelijke gespreksnotitie overlastproblematiek Dordtselaan’ (Rotterdam 20-11-1996) 1-2, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 648. Dienst Stedebouw + Volkshuisvesting, ‘Startdocument ‘Over grenzen heen’, integrale aanpak Dordtselaan’ (Rotterdam 23-2-1998) 1-2, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 648.

¹¹⁶ www.millinx.nl visited on 8-5-2001, with the use of web.archive.org on 17-12-2020.

¹¹⁷ Bruijn, Riemersma, *Verslaafd aan de Millinxbuurt*, 39.

¹¹⁸ *Idem*, 39.

¹¹⁹ *Idem*, 48, 60.

¹²⁰ *Idem*, 95.

problems. The identified problems would be passed to the right institution or organisation to be solved.¹²¹

A research by the ‘dienst Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid’ (department for social issues and employment) found that a large proportion of the residents in the Millinxbuurt were unemployed, and living of benefits. Of the roughly 1500 households, 600 depended on benefits.¹²² In some cases this had to do with a language delay or social-psychological problems. These people would be called, one by one, to investigate their motivation, obstacles, possibilities and problems. With this information a personalised plan would be made, helping them to find a job. Possible solutions typically included schooling, language lessons and parenting support. Furthermore, ‘Maak Millinx Mooier’ had found that a lot of social organisations and institutions in the neighbourhood were scarce on capacity and often worked at cross-purposes. Multiple professionals worked on the same problems, without each other’s awareness. To solve this problem, a care coordinator was established, who would organise a network of professional caregivers, keeping track of all the support at work. This way, individuals would be helped more effectively.¹²³

As part of the regeneration project, the kids and youth received special care. For kids with a troublesome home situation, a second home provision was established. Here, kids would be provided shelter and parenting support activities were organised for parents. To identify problems early, a neighbourhood network for kids and youth support was set up. From the ‘Buurtpost’ some activities had already been organised for the youth in general. Special attention was paid to the Antilleans and Surinamese, for them SOBER and ‘Stichting Welzijn Antillianen’ organised consultation hours and activities, which were attended well.¹²⁴

To incorporate the opinions of residents in the regeneration project the ‘Millinx money game’ was set up. Every two weeks residents received a scratch card, with multiple choice questions. The participants received Millinx money for every right answer. With the money, participants were able to suggest improvements, like plans for a new playground or more trees for the neighbourhood. Collaborating with others was allowed, more Millinx money meant bigger projects. This way, all sorts of things which annoyed the residents got fixed, like broken fences and a lack of flowers. Officials were still able to refuse suggestions, as happened with a request for lockable bicycle cages, because it would not fit the street scene.¹²⁵ In real money, 100.000 guilders were available for the projects. Furthermore, the resident who earned the most Millinx money got a special prize.¹²⁶ The Millinx

¹²¹ www.millinx.nl visited on 8-5-2001, with the use of web.archive.org on 17-12-2020. Maak Millinx Mooier!, ‘Nieuwsbrief no. 3’ (Rotterdam 1998) in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 648.

¹²² Bruijn, Riemersma, *Verslaafd aan de Millinxbuurt*, 41-42.

¹²³ www.millinx.nl visited on 8-5-2001, with the use of web.archive.org on 17-12-2020. Maak Millinx Mooier!, ‘Nieuwsbrief no. 3’ (Rotterdam 1998) in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 648.

¹²⁴ www.millinx.nl visited on 8-5-2001, with the use of web.archive.org on 17-12-2020.

¹²⁵ Bruijn, Riemersma, *Verslaafd aan de Millinxbuurt* (Rotterdam 2003) 50.

¹²⁶ www.millinx.nl visited on 8-5-2001, with the use of web.archive.org on 21-12-2020. Maak Millinx Mooier!, ‘Nieuwsbrief no. 3’ (Rotterdam September 1998) in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 648.

money game was very successful in giving voice to marginalised groups. So much that it won in a competition for best immigrant incorporating neighbourhood policy in 2000.¹²⁷

By October 1998 the Millinxbuurt had become the most visited area of south Rotterdam for addicts. Crack, XTC and speed were the most popular substances. In the Millinxbuurt the trade in drugs was mostly in the hands of Antilleans, operating on the streets. A relatively large part of the Antilleans had become increasingly problematic in previous years. In Rotterdam, 10 percent of Antilleans between 15 and 24 years old had at least one charge sheet on suspicion of a crime. This number rose to 12 percent for Antilleans between 25 and 35 years old. For native Dutch these numbers were 3 and 2 percent respectively. Furthermore, Antilleans were more violent in the crimes they committed. Therefore, the safety plan of 'Maak Millinx Mooier' was orientated towards getting Antilleans out of the crime circuit.¹²⁸

The causes which led so many Antilleans to be active in the criminal scene had its origins in their country of birth. The Antillean immigrants predominantly originated from working-class neighbourhoods in Curacao. These neighbourhoods consisted mostly of single parents households, in which the mother often took care of the children with assistance of female family members. There was a great shortage of jobs at the bottom of the market. Benefits were very low, causing many unemployed to get by with hustling. This hustling often went far beyond the limits of the legal and was accompanied by violence, bloodshed and killing to such an extent that people in these neighbourhoods had become used to it. The Antilleans immigrants often arrived in the Netherlands low-skilled and with little knowledge of the Dutch language. Having arrived, they were often helped by family members that lived in the Netherlands already. Their first priority was finding a home, as this was necessary in order to receive benefits. These were often found in the cheap informal circuits, causing some neighbourhoods to become an area of concentration for Antilleans, like the Millinxbuurt and Hoogvliet. A proportion of the low-skilled Antilleans had a hard time finding a job and consequently found an income in illegal businesses, continuing the life they had in the Antilles.¹²⁹

To reduce the criminal activity in the neighbourhood, 'Maak Millinx Mooier' focussed on preventive measures. The projects would be designed to prevent people from becoming criminally active by aiming at the youth and parents. The measures would not be targeted solely at Antilleans, but they did predominantly. The approach took form in three phases, with the aim of organising and mobilizing the residents and frequent visitors of the Millinxbuurt to take care of the safety and health of the youth themselves. Starting with an introduction, two teams were established. To get all sorts of different fields involved with the prevention measures, the first team would be composed of locally active authority figures, like influential people from the school, social work, justice, healthcare, the

¹²⁷ Torre, Hulshof, *Een drugscene op Zuid*, 12.

¹²⁸ Maak Millinx Mooier!, 'Veiligheid en criminaliteitsbestrijding in de Millinxbuurt' (Rotterdam 2-10-1998) 1-2, 7, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 648.

¹²⁹ Maak Millinx Mooier!, 'Veiligheid en criminaliteitsbestrijding in de Millinxbuurt' (Rotterdam 2-10-1998) 1-2, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 648.

police and religious and cultural organisations. The second team would be composed from all sorts of people involved with the development of the Antillean youth, including parents, teachers, municipal officials, neighbourhood officers and the youth themselves. This group would be taxed with the burden of positively influencing the development of the youth. The second phase consisted of identifying the factors which led to a criminal lifestyle, and making an inventory of the projects, institutions and organisations already active in the field of youth policy. During the third phase, a plan would be made based on scientifically proven strategies for reducing risk factors and promoting protective factors. The ministry of justice had suggested some measures already, for example: help and parenting support for mothers and pre-school stimuli programs for two to four years olds combined with training for parents. To succeed the project would need to last for a long time. It should work in such a way that residents felt like it was their own, and for the benefit of their children and themselves.¹³⁰

The police was still trying to find an effective way to deal with drugs-related problems. The amount of trouble spots had been reduced, due to the aforementioned protocol and more police actions. Since project Victor had ended in 1997, the police could focus on other parts of Rotterdam, leading to a lot of arrests. In April 1997, 25 drugs dealers were arrested who were operational in trouble spots. 30 Police officers suddenly jumped the dealers from a truck.¹³¹ By the end of 1998, trouble spots were not the main problem of the Millinxbuurt anymore, the drugs dealers had moved to the streets, which according to the police is harder to deal with. In order to get insight in the business and the nuisance it caused, the police had started counting. Every month undercover police officers counted the amount of runners and buyers in ten different spots in the Millinxbuurt and the Dordtselaan, for a couple of hours during the day and night, for a total of 8 times.¹³² The results showed that drugs related activity significantly decreased during opening hours of the police station in the Millinxbuurt. Unfortunately, due to a shortage of personnel, the police station could only be opened a couple hours a day. The Dordtselaan received a special police team, operational for a least 12 weeks, which would keep a check on the Millinxbuurt as well.¹³³

The addicts often slept rough in the vacant buildings in the neighbourhood. Especially the buildings which were up for demolition in the central block were used for this purpose. To accommodate the addicts, and to make them useful for the neighbourhood, the Rotterdam 'Junkiebond' employed addicts for a couple of days per month. On a daily basis, six to ten addicts swept the streets, emptied buildings up for demolition, cleaned polluted gardens and did deliveries.

¹³⁰ Maak Millinx Mooier!, 'Veiligheid en criminaliteitsbestrijding in de Millinxbuurt' (Rotterdam 2-10-1998) 2-4, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 648.

¹³¹ 'Politie pakt drugspanden aan', in *de Stem* (Rotterdam 18-4-1997).

¹³² Deelgemeente Feijenoord en Charlois, 'Telling vrijdag 4 december 1998' (Rotterdam December 1998) 1, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 648.

¹³³ Maak Millinx Mooier!, 'Veiligheid en criminaliteitsbestrijding in de Millinxbuurt' (Rotterdam 2-10-1998) 7, in Stadsarchief Rotterdam, archive 1450, inventory number 648.

The addicts were paid 50 guilders per day for the work. In addition, in the summer of 1999, a special space was opened where addicts would be able to use their drugs in the Millinxbuurt. This way, less addicts and their litter filled the streets. However, the accommodation did not supply, so it did not help to stop the dealing.¹³⁴

Considering safety, the Millinxbuurt reached its all-time low in 1999. The amount of various crimes rose sharply: shooting and stabbing incidences, groups of aggressive dealers, intimidation. This was partly the consequence of the intensified police surveillance, more crimes were uncovered. The municipality of Charlois concluded that the regeneration projects would have no effect in this climate. The situation called for a drastic intervention. Therefore the city decided on a new enforcement arrangement for the Millinxbuurt and the Dordtselaan, in September 1999. Herein the administration, the police and the judiciary agreed on a joint and integrated approach to combat the safety issues. Tackling trouble spots and drugs related business on the streets became priority. It was decided to make use of a regulation which made gatherings and alcohol consumption punishable. The credo was zero-tolerance. Preventive measures for the youth and helping addicts would have to wait. The same month, a new police station opened in the Dordtselaan, in exchange the one in the Millinxbuurt would close. This brought the amount of police officers up from two to ten. A couple of months earlier, a judicial office opened in Mijnsherenlaan. The office used quick procedures to impose community service orders on perpetrators of small criminal activities.¹³⁵

On the 26th of November the police carried out the aforementioned preventive search.¹³⁶ The police sealed off all entrances to the Millinxbuurt, anyone who set foot in the neighbourhood was searched for illegal weapons. The action was covered widely in the media and sparked heated debates. Preventive searches were against the law and the results were meagre for the amount of policemen deployed. However, safety was found to be such a high priority that the law was changed shortly afterwards. Reactions by residents varied. Some were mad, because the neighbourhood had gained so much negative publicity, others were glad because the government was finally making a stand.¹³⁷ These and other police interventions, which followed in the coming years, would succeed in decreasing the criminal activities in the Millinxbuurt.

‘Maak Millinx Mooier’ ended in 2002, and did succeed in improving the neighbourhood’s safety and physical aspects. The social and economic situation of the residents however barely improved. The unemployment project ended in 2000 and had called upon 200 residents which were very difficult to employ. Of these, fourteen found a job, eight were sent to language lessons and twelve received additional assistance and guidance. The project leaders concluded the rest of this group could not be helped without very intensive guidance.¹³⁸ Similar projects followed in the course

¹³⁴ Bruijn, Riemersma, *Verslaafd aan de Millinxbuurt*, 61-62.

¹³⁵ *Idem*, 63-64.

¹³⁶ Woltering, *Preventief fouilleren*, 11.

¹³⁷ Bruijn, Riemersma, *Verslaafd aan de Millinxbuurt*, 66-67.

¹³⁸ *Idem*, 99-100.

of the years, but to little avail. In 2003 the neighbourhood and other parts of Tarwewijk were positioned as one of the most precarious ‘hot spots’ of Rotterdam.¹³⁹ The neighbourhood was improving slowly, but it would still take some time for this to become visible. The origin of the problems was the constant inflow of underprivileged people. Urban renewal and strong policing by the intervention team (see introduction) would make sure to reduce the inflow over the years. The Millinxbuurt never got as bad as it was in 1999, but it did still fluctuate a lot between improving and impoverishing in the following years.

¹³⁹ G. Rendón, ‘Politics, practices and constraints of socio-spatial restructuring through citizens’ active engagement’, 39-40.

Conclusion

Between the 1970s and 1999 Tarwewijk changed from a middle-class to an impoverished port-of-entry neighbourhood. The origin of the problems, which caused the neighbourhood to become an area of concentration for people at the bottom of society, was the high ratio of privately owned, poorly maintained and cheap houses. While the pre-existing literature was correct in identifying the origin of the neighbourhood's impoverishment, it did not cover the government's attempts of combatting the situation before the late 1990's. This research fills the gap, showing that the city and municipality made efforts to improve the situation beginning in 1982 in the form of urban renewal. Initiatives failed or gained minimal results due to a variety of unforeseen problems. During the 1980's, foremost a lack of experience with the complicated ownership situation caused the involved institutions to produce meagre results. Both the acquiring of houses and the summoning of neglectful landlords took a lot of time and money, because the owners were often in debt. On top of that, the practises needed to be implemented in an adjustable manner and in such a way that they did not hinder each other's progress.

To avoid these problems, the urban renewal project group started to rely on the use of expropriation. This proved to be quite an effective alternative, bringing the production of renovated and newly built houses up to par with other urban renewal neighbourhoods after 1987. Furthermore, the project group managed to build some facilities and office spaces as well. In the late 1980s problems started to concentrate in the Millinxbuurt. Ironically, this area had not been eligible for urban renewal at first because the housing conditions here were relatively good. After ten years of urban renewal, other parts of Tarwewijk got rid of these deteriorated buildings, at least partly. By the time it was realized that the Millinxbuurt desperately needed urban renewal as well, it was too late. Budget cuts made new renewal projects impossible and forced the government to deal with the neighbourhood's problems in other ways.

In the form of regeneration projects, attempts were made to improve the safety, and the social and economic situation of the neighbourhood. Small improvements were made, however without urban renewal they had no lasting effects. Pollution, drugs nuisance and theft were becoming increasingly problematic as the years went by. Halfway the 1990's external forces made sure to accelerate this trend. Drug dealers and buyers were scared out of other parts of Rotterdam and found refuge in the anonymous Millinxbuurt. Increasingly, the streets became filled with addicts, being supplied from the notorious trouble spots. Meanwhile, more and more underprivileged Antilleans moved into the neighbourhood, fleeing the economic situation from their country of origin. Having no or few legal options, a relatively big minority of the Antilleans ended up in criminal circuits.

The cheap, badly maintained rental apartments of the Millinxbuurt attracted those who had nowhere else to go. Those who had the money to move out did so. Only by stopping the inflow of underprivileged people would the neighbourhood improve. This did however lead to conflicting practises, as G. Rendón has argued before. Throughout the period all government initiatives were explicitly intended for the residents and in accordance with the resident's organisation. In the first

decade of urban renewal this meant that the government made sure that their practises did not lead to displacement of the original residents. However, as more and more underprivileged people and undocumented immigrants moved in, displacement started to become a way of improving the neighbourhood. During the 1990's social and economic projects were set up to help the residents, while urban renewal projects were used to displace the residents and attract higher-income families.

The continuation of urban renewal in Tarwewijk was often under threat between 1982 and 1999. Difficulties with acquiring houses and budget cuts forced the municipality to find innovative ways of renovating the neighbourhood. When buying houses led to meagre results, expropriation was used as an alternative. After the budget cuts, the revolving fund construction was developed, to save money and gentrify the Millinxbuurt. In a similar way, the police found new ways to combat the illegal activities in the neighbourhood. The preventive search of 1999 even led to a change in law. While a lot of regeneration projects of Tarwewijk were slow and often lacklustre, some proved to be fruitful, providing many lessons for city management everywhere.

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