



Tenant Involvement for a Successful Renovation

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Abstracts

In this paper some general strategies and highlights regarding tenant involvement in retrofitting projects are presented. The paper compiles knowledge in this field with special focus on the experiences from the three participating housing companies/pilot sites of the BEEM-UP project. These pilot projects are being retrofitted to increase the energy performance of their houses, but social aspects are also considered in the renewal processes. The paper is written from the perspective of building owners who have the intention to interact with tenants when retrofitting their building stock.

The overall goal with the tenant involvement is to ensure that retrofitting projects are successful not only from a technical point of view but also from a social point of view. The involvement should therefore promote that the final building meets the tenants' needs, that the retrofitting project is accepted among the tenants and that social sustainable qualities will be established and maintained. Any specific goals of the retrofit, such as increased energy efficiency, could also be a goal of the tenant involvement.

The tenant involvement can be motivated from four different perspectives; the legal perspective, the society perspective, the building owner's perspective and the tenants' perspective. When selecting tenant involvement strategy, three dimensions could be considered. These are the kinds of renovation or measure that are planned, the kind of tenants living in the affected housing area and the degree of tenant involvement.

Previous experiences show that there are a number of factors that are important for a successful dialogue. These include among others that the housing owner has a plan for the involvement, that the involvement starts early on in the retrofitting process, that there must be an honest interest in a

dialogue with the tenants, that the housing owner gives continuous feedback, that the process is characterized by a long-term perspective and endurance and that fast results are shown.

There are a number of methods and approaches that could be applied when interacting with tenants. Experiences show that many different methods are used and tested in renewal projects – could be both one-way communication channels and two-way communication methods. Lastly, which actors to invite to the tenant interaction activities and at what stages of the process, will have to be considered.

Keywords: tenant involvement, renewal projects, renovation, multi-family buildings, rental apartments, energy efficiency

Introduction

Most housing owners want to offer attractive, secure and pleasant housing for their tenants. Policies to reach this include economic, ecologic and social aspects. To work with economic and environmental issues are pretty much standard but social aspects also need to be included in the physical planning and renovation process as well as in the management phase (e.g. [Wit 2006, Suschek-Berger and Ornetzeder 2010]). To focus on the residents and their wellbeing and needs - needs that can be quite differentiated - is part of striving for social sustainability in a housing area. Also included in the description of social sustainability is how neighbourhoods handle obstacles and problems that might occur (e.g. [Hancock 1993, Ghahramanpouri et al 2013, Adriaanse 2011, Olsson 2012]).

Today we are facing a big challenge to renovate large parts of the building stock. There is a need of changing pipes, bathrooms and kitchens as well as to improve the energy efficiency. The areas that are in most need of renovation are in many cases socioeconomically segregated areas. A renovation of these housing areas gives an opportunity to enhance the status of these areas as well. To use the participation and dedication of the residents is a prerequisite for a positive development and it should be done in collaboration with housing owners and the municipality [Jamison 1999].

This paper presents general strategies and highlights regarding tenant involvement in retrofitting projects. It is written from the perspective of building owners who consider tenant support as a relevant issue and who care for social sustainable performance of a housing estate. The question that is asked is: When building owners have the intention to interact with tenants when renovating their building stock, what are the key issues to consider before initiating this process [Hiller 2012, Bedir and Hasselaar 2010]?

The paper will explore the topics:

- The aim of the involvement.
- Why tenant involvement is important from four different perspectives.
- Three dimensions that will affect how the involvement will be carried out.
- Some important success factors.
- Methods that could be employed.
- Stakeholders that could be involved in the process.

The work has been carried out within the BEEM-UP project¹, which is an EU project in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). BEEM-UP stands for Building Energy Efficiency for Massive market Uptake. The project comprises three pilot sites, namely Cotentin Falguière in Paris, Van der Lelijstraat in Delft and Brogården in Alingsås. These pilot projects are being renovated to increase the energy performance of their houses, but social aspects are also considered in the renewal processes. The conclusions in this paper are based on experience from the BEEM-UP project and the pilot sites as well as on earlier work in this field.

Objective

The objective of this paper is to propose strategies of tenant involvement in renovation projects. This incorporates how the interaction with the tenants is carried out before, during and after the renovation process. An overview of different methods, stakeholders and experiences will be presented. Special focus will be given to energy efficiency aspects.

Building owners who have the intention to interact with tenants when retrofitting their building stock form the target group. The strategies presented can be adapted to local conditions and serve as a basis for further retrofitting projects across Europe. The focus is on rental apartments.

Method

The paper compiles previous knowledge in this field with special focus on experiences from the three participating housing companies/pilot sites. It can serve as an inspiration for housing owners to shift some of their focus in renovation projects – in the pilot projects of BEEM-UP as well as in other projects across Europe - towards including the tenants in the process.

Tenant involvement strategies

Aim of the tenant involvement

The overall goal with the tenant involvement is to ensure that retrofitting projects are successful not only from a technical point of view but also from a social point of view. The involvement should therefore aim at and involve the following key issues:

- That the renovated building meets the tenants' needs.
The first step is to get to know the tenants and pay attention to their needs and ideas about their living conditions. The idea is that the tenants' views and preferences can feed into the design phase of the building process.
- That the retrofitting project is accepted among tenants
Based on the tenants' views and preferences, ways to get acceptance of, support of and/or involvement in retrofitting projects and for energy saving changes should be developed and introduced in the projects. A question that could be raised is how the forthcoming renovation affects the tenants and what they can gain from a renovated, more energy efficient, building?
- That social sustainable qualities will be established and maintained.

¹ See www.beem-up.eu for more information.

- Any specific goals of the retrofit, such as increased energy efficiency, could also be a goal of the tenant involvement.

Why tenant involvement? - Four different perspectives

There are different perspectives on why the involvement of tenants in a renewal/renovation process of a housing area is important. It can be motivated from four different perspectives; the legal perspective, the society perspective, the building owner's perspective and the tenants' perspective (illustrated in Figure 1).

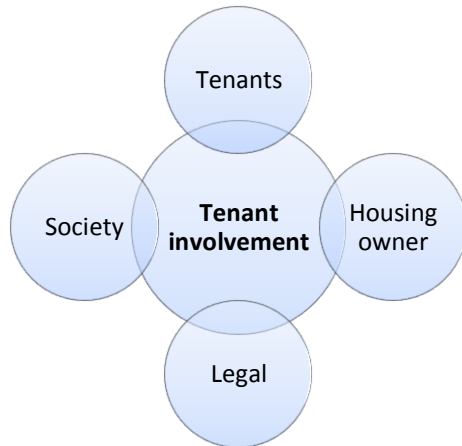


Figure 1 Four different perspectives on tenant involvement

Legal requirements

Any prevailing legal requirements are the minimum level for tenant involvement. These are nationally different and can range from voluntary actions (typically for private housing companies) to mandatory tenant approval before change.

Society perspectives

The municipality can, for social as well as economic reasons, listen to its citizen, especially citizens living in segregated parts of the city. Some fundamental reasons and goals could be [Boverket 2010]:

- To have a successful city development
The use of the tenants' knowledge and experiences is presumed to improve the prerequisites for a successful city development.
- To increase the integration in society and social empowerment
The involvement and commitment in one's own housing estate is presumed to lead to increased integration in society.
- To increase the status of rental apartments.

All these aspects contribute in increasing the attractiveness of an area, district or town, which of course is an overall goal.

Building owner's perspectives

Many different reasons could exist for building owners to involve the tenants in the development/renewal of a housing area. For example (e.g. [Boverket 2010]):

- That the number of satisfied tenants could increase.

If the tenants feel that they are listened to, if they identify themselves with their housing area and if they take responsibility for the area it increases the prerequisites for satisfied tenants. Commitment, solidarity and increased safety will also lead to satisfied tenants.

- To increase the possibilities to create and maintain a well-functioning housing area.
- That the value of the buildings/housing areas increases and that the rental losses decrease (economic reasons).
- To contribute to a smoother process for any forthcoming changes (including energy efficiency measures).
- Branding the owner's social responsibility.

Tenants' perspectives

The reasons for the tenants to get involved are surely differentiated. To get control of one's everyday life/situation could be one fundamental reason [Boverket 2010]. Economic issues concerning a renovation is an area which many tenants worry about and want to know about early on in a renovation project.

Several of the gains listed above for the society and building owner's perspectives are surely in the interest for most tenants as well. For example:

- A dialogue with the housing owner makes the tenants feel that they are listened to.
- Tenants participating in the renewal process of their housing area are more likely to take responsibility of the area which often leads to increased safety of the neighbourhood.
- Participation give tenants the opportunity to meet neighbours, to have fun together and to develop a personal identity with the housing area.
- To understand possible long-term economic winnings.

Selecting tenant involvement strategy – Three dimensions

When selecting tenant involvement strategy, three dimensions could be considered. These are the kind of renovation or measures that are planned, the kind of tenants living in the affected housing area and the desired degree of tenant involvement.

Dimension 1 – The kind of renovation/measures

The kind of renovation or measures that are planned affect the selection of tenant involvement strategy. A very comprehensive renewal of the building and building area obviously differs compared to if single measures are carried out.

Normally, the tenants have the most influence over their own apartments, less influence over the building as a whole and even less over the building area and the town district/neighbourhood. The role and the responsibility of the tenants shift with these boundaries, from an individual perspective to a shared or communal perspective with the whole neighbourhood's interests at heart.

If the tenants have to move out of their apartments during the renovation, it greatly influences the consequences for the tenants and for the communication process. For example, individual meetings with each household will be necessary and much focus of the housing owner will be on practical issues regarding temporary apartments. For the tenants it can give an opportunity to rethink their housing situation; at the same time it will interfere greatly with their everyday life during the renovation.

Dimension 2 – Tenants

To consider the kind of tenants living in the affected housing area is necessary. Some general socio-demographic characteristics are probably already known to the housing owner. If the rent and energy bill will be affected by the renovation this will be one of the first topics to consider, i.e. how this will affect the tenants and what economic capacity they have for a higher rent for example.

The tenants of a housing area are not a homogenous group of people with the same ability to get their voice heard. There are those that are willing to participate in big changes while others oppose it. The opportunity for involvement should be offered to all tenants, where the housing owner might have to be creative to reach all groups of people. It must be taken into account that people living in a housing area are acting as tenants, i.e. as private persons, and are in this role not acting as professionals. In addition, there could be cultural aspects, including various languages, within the housing area that have to be addressed [Boverkett 2010].

People do not only differ regarding their attitudes towards tenant involvement, they are also different regarding their attitudes toward their homes and also to energy issues. To increase the understanding of why different people look at their homes in such different ways, the housing owner can use so called "household lifestyle profiles".

Dimension 3 – Degree of tenant involvement

There are different degrees of tenant involvement. Which degree of involvement should be chosen for a renovation project has to be reflected on before the interaction with the tenants begins. The housing owner has to consider whether to "just" have information activities or to have "real" involvement of the tenants, and which consequences this has for the process.

There are different models to illustrate the degree of involvement. One often referred to is "the ladder of citizen participation" published by Arnstein [Arnstein 1969]. The bottom step of the ladder is manipulation and the top step is citizen control, which means that the participation ranges from steps of nonparticipation to degrees of tokenism to degrees of citizen power. This ladder and versions of it is discussed in different literature, e.g. in [Qu and Hasselaar 2011]. In [Boverkett 2010] a simplified version, considering the case of tenant involvement in residential areas, is proposed. The different levels could shortly be described as follows (illustrated in Figure 2):

- 1. Information** to the tenants about forthcoming changes
- 2. Anchoring** - the tenants can give their opinions about the suggested changes
- 3. Participation in planning** - the tenants participate in the development of the proposal of the changes and the tenants' knowledge and experiences are input to the process
- 4. Decision-making** – the tenants participate in the decisions about investments and/or in design or have the right to make decisions in certain questions.

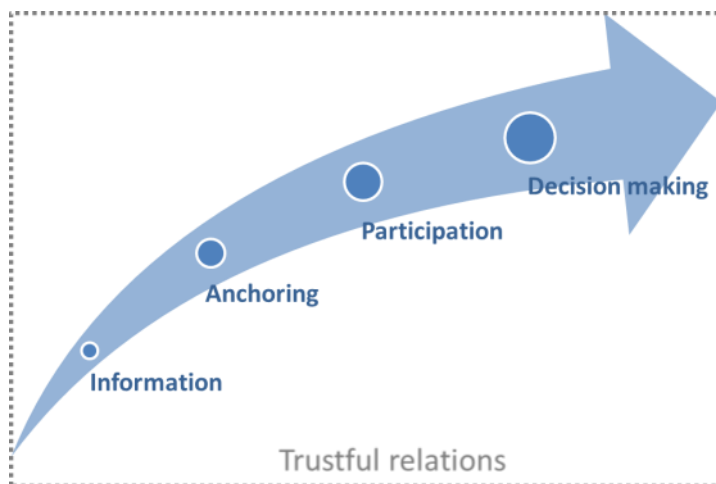


Figure 2 Different degrees of tenant involvement (based on figure in [Boverket 2010])

Regardless of degree of involvement the process must be based on “trustful relations” between the housing owner and the tenants as well as between the tenants.

Important factors for a successful dialogue

Previous experiences show that there are a number of factors that are important for a successful dialogue. From Swedish and Dutch renewal processes some factors have been identified (e.g. [Boverket 2010, Bedir and Hasselaar 2010, Qu and Hasselaar 2011, Hasselaar and Praag 2012]):

- That the housing owner draw up a plan for how to take care of and maintain the commitment mobilized during the renewal process.
- Involvement early on in the process can be significant for how the tenants perceive the participation process as a whole.
- There must be an honest interest in a dialogue with the tenants, where the housing owner is prepared to consider incoming ideas and comments. This is very important for building trust between the housing owner and the tenants. Additionally, in an open dialogue it is important for the housing owner to be able to say “We do not know”.
- That the housing owner gives continuous feedback on incoming proposals and remarks, whether they could be met or not. Here it needs to have great clarity on what can be affected and what is beyond influence.
- The renewal should, on the one hand, be characterised by a long-term perspective and endurance, but on the other hand it can be pedagogically important to provide fast results.

Additional factors are:

- It might be useful to employ many channels in parallel to reach out to different groups. If relevant, it is an asset for the communication, to have staff with knowledge of different cultures and languages.

- Accessible and informal means of interaction, such as decentralised management, can enhance the dialogue. Establishment of personal contacts can often be very valuable, although time consuming.
- It is usually more effective to arrange smaller meetings than larger ones.
- The selection of participating tenants does not necessary have to be characterized by formal representation. The invitation to participate should be open, dynamic and continuous. One might have to start with the tenants that are enthusiastic already. However, selective invitations to strive for representation of certain factors, such as different geographic regions, community groups, occupations or other factors could be valuable [Franklin and Ebdon 2002].
- It strengthens the process if several actors can participate at the same time.
- It is important to be sensitive to rumors and misinformation that might be spread. It is better to address it early on before it becomes a great issue.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that the tenant interaction is a continuous process. To maintain established social sustainable qualities after completion of the retrofitting project needs attention in order to keep “the dialogue alive”. This could imply the provision of common spaces and meeting places for interaction, the constant generation of new ideas and activities – these could be either social or building related, or both - the collection and handling of feedback from tenants – both new ideas and complaints - and to give a beneficial and welcoming introduction to new tenants.

Methods and approaches applied in tenant interaction

There are a number of methods and approaches that could be applied when interacting with tenants. There are one-way communication channels such as information meetings, newsletters and websites and there are two-way communication methods such as open houses, individual home visits and informal personal contacts [Suschek-Berger and Ornetzeder 2010]. Important is to ask for tenants’ needs and create opportunities to meet other tenants, to become actively involved and to facilitate bottom up initiatives of many kinds. Experiences show that many different methods are used and tested in renewal projects. The local conditions and also personal experiences of responsible persons influence the methods chosen. In some housing companies many channels are already in place and could be utilized in the dialogue.

Examples of common methods:

- Information meetings
This is typically one-way communication from housing owner at the initial phase of the renovation process to inform about planned activities.
- Open houses
Could be arranged at a show apartment where the tenants drop in and discuss the forthcoming changes and look at plans, drawings etc.
- Questionnaires and/or interviews
These methods could be used to survey needs, good/bad inputs, expectations etc. It could be used in a pre-retrofit study at the start of the project to get to know the tenants better and in a post-occupancy study after completion of the renovation to investigate satisfaction.
- Individual talks/home visits
This could serve useful especially in case of complaints, special needs, support or in case moving is necessary.

- Workshops/smaller gatherings
Could be a good way to discuss and generate ideas on specific topics, usually employed in a two-way manner.
- Information material
Information material in form of newsletters, brochures or leaflets as well as letters can be handed out, put on noticeboards or distributed via internet or e-mail. Newsletters, especially during the renovation phase, keep the information flow regular to the tenants.
- Personal contacts
An informal way of communicating that facilitates interaction. It is usually necessary that housing owner designate representative to be the contact person for the tenants.
- Other methods
Surely there are many other methods that could be applied such as open consultation (by contractor), focus groups, discussion forums on internet, training sessions, social gatherings etc.

Stakeholders involved in communication

Not all issues that are raised by the tenants might be the responsibility of the housing owner. Which actors that should be invited to the tenant interaction activities and at what stages of the process will have to be considered. To involve other actors can be especially important when other, more acute, issues are a barrier for an open-minded discussion on renovation plans.

Examples of stakeholders:

- Representatives of the housing owner
General manager, project leader for the renovation, communication officer, landlords, other service personnel
- Representatives of the tenants
The local Union of Tenants, formal or informal groups of tenants, house-keepers
- Representatives of the renovation project team
Project leader of the design phase (e.g. the architect), the contractor, experts on specific topics such as energy performance or participative planning
- Representatives of society
The municipality, the energy company, insurance offices, the police, the employment office, sport and other leisure organisations, local schools, local businesses

Concluding remarks

The strategies of tenant involvement are a support to building owners who have the intention to interact with tenants when renovating their building stock. Some of the key issues to consider before initiating this process have been outlined here. That the building owner has a plan for the tenant involvement before getting started is one of the success factors, which for example includes how to consider ideas and problems raised by the tenants. The bottom line is still to build trustful relations with the tenants.

The stand point of this paper is very much from a housing owner perspective - what he or she can do to facilitate tenant involvement and what can be done to strive for satisfied tenants which in the end will lead to a well function housing area and continuous rent income. From this stand point, the

renewal process is highly dependent on the interest and policy of the individual housing owner. To look into the participation process from a tenant perspective, with more of bottom up initiatives, would have resulted in another study and paper. However the tenant involvement strategies presented in this paper does not exclude such initiatives from the tenants.

The work of this study is half-way through and towards the end of the work, lessons learnt from the three pilot projects will be incorporated in the strategies. The success of involvement strategies, as perceived by tenants and housing owners, will be evaluated. Special attention will be given to how problems and complaints were dealt with during the renovation processes and furthermore how to maintain established social qualities of the areas after the completion of the renovation. The final strategies of the tenant involvement will be disseminated to other renovation projects across Europe. The strategies will serve as a basis for a methodology – which can be adapted to local conditions - to reach social sustainability of a housing area.

Acknowledgement

This work has been granted by funds from EU's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). The Swedish part in BEEM-UP is co-funded by CERBOF (Centre for energy and resource efficiency in the built environment).

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Experiences from pilot sites:

- Cotentin Falguière in Paris
- Van der Lelijstraat in Delft
- Brogården in Alingsås