The results of iTOD

The program aimed at developing insights to help force a breakthrough in the implementation of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in the Netherlands. In particular, we aimed at identifying critical success factors of TOD implementation, instruments for financing TOD, and models for designing TOD sensitive to the Dutch context. Furthermore, we aimed at identifying - in relation to these three subjects - effective approaches for transferring knowledge between different national contexts and between academia and practice.

By means of a meta-analysis of 11 international case studies we found 16 critical success factors that have contributed to successful implementation of TOD in city regions. These can be broken down into three groups: plans and policies, actor relationships, and implementation mechanisms. Using these factors, we conducted a rough set analysis based on in-depth analysis of case study data, which revealed a set of “rules” (specific combinations of factors) that have been used to implement TOD successfully. Most frequently, these refer to national political stability, relationships between actors in the region, regional land use-transportation body, interdisciplinary implementation teams, and public participation. Planners can use the 16 factors, or the rules we generated, to assess their own city regions for strengths and weaknesses in TOD. This can help them target their efforts to improve TOD implementation in the future, e.g. to implement TOD at a regional scale, to increase mode shift for public transit, or to make public transit more convenient and desirable.

In order to identify the preconditions for value capturing instruments that can improve the financial feasibility of TOD, we first made an inventory of innovative approaches worldwide. We then investigated some of these in-depth through gaming experiments: urban land readjustment, business improvement districts, transferable development rights and tax increment financing. Real estate developers and municipal employees tested the instruments by negotiating fictive development cases. We conclude that the investigated instruments are applicable in Dutch practice, but that each requires a different approach with regard to roles and responsibilities of government, developers and users. The findings also indicate that public and private parties can reach agreements more in line with the common good, if they share information and communicate about their intentions. However, providing for more information does not necessarily lead to more agreements, as negotiations tend to become more demanding.

With respect to TOD design, interactive exercises with stakeholders showed that an “ideal” Dutch TOD model involves a visually appealing, mid-rise, medium density, mixed-use, intricate, landscaped, and interconnected neighbourhood, centered on a multi-modal station. This ideal mirrors in many ways its “universal” counterpart found in the literature. However, context and culture-specific priorities are also present in this vision. While some differences are more subtle (i.e. the inclination towards cycling at the expense of other modes), other requirements (i.e. underground rail infrastructure in high demand areas) are rather striking and require a substantial amount of funding.

Finally, based on interviews and surveys with Dutch and foreign practitioners, we found that knowledge transfers are often highly dependent on the actions of individuals and the process is frequently uncoordinated and fragmented. Planning ideas from elsewhere or from academia often provide inspiration for policy makers but these do not often lead to changes in the formulation of policy or practice. Nevertheless, studying practice elsewhere or engaging with academic contributions, helps planners, politicians, or academics to understand their “home” situation better and to consider their own practices and knowledge in a different light or with a more critical eye. Through several workshops with stakeholders we demonstrated that this can help both identifying key weaknesses in existing approaches and generating ideas about how to improve them.