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## Conference Paper

# Social revitalisation of urban regions

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# SOCIAL REVITALISATION OF URBAN REGIONS

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Paper for the 41<sup>th</sup> European RSA Congress – Zagreb 2001

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## ***Abstract***

This research aims to analyse what social strategies urban actors do develop in response to social problems and how they are implemented to contribute in an effective and efficient way to a sustainable economic and social revitalisation. The observation that social exclusion is highly concentrated in the larger cities and persistent, owing to the accumulation of social problems there, made the need for a study into the organising capacity of social strategies even more pressing. The question crops up: what factors and conditions determine the success or failure of a city's "organising capacity" in social revitalisation? The exchange of experiences in this field is considered useful for public authorities and other public and private organisations involved in developing and implementing social strategies. The investigation consists of the analysis of strategies aiming to combat social problems by trying to link solutions to (economic and physical) opportunities. Social strategies of eight cities have been analysed according to a theoretical framework of organising capacity elaborated for this study.

## 1. Introduction

Globalisation and the transition to a knowledge and information society have considerably strengthened the position of cities as nerve centres of the "new economy" (see for instance Castells and Hall, 1994). Cities often form with their diversified economies the incubation environment for new developments and economic innovations [Jacobs, 1984]. Cities provide the daily context for the increasingly global and footloose interactions within economic, social and cultural spheres. However, these mega trends have also sharpened urban competition: cities behave in a logic of competition in a highly dynamic and complex environment. Urban policy is at the focus of attention at all administrative levels; competition for mobile investments induced national and regional governments to pay explicit policy attention to urban development, and the European Commission as well, has expressed the need to make better use of urban development potentials in the context of its regional policy.

However, in many cities economic progress is accompanied by a pile of social problems, boosting the emergence of a dual society and, among other things, raising feelings of unsafety. In the cities, large underprivileged groups are continually developing as an essential characteristic of changing urban economic and social structures [Eurocities, 1993, 4]. Where poverty in the Western metropolis used to be largely residual or cyclical, embedded in working-class communities, geographically diffuse and considered remediable by means of further market expansion, it now appears to be increasingly long-term if not permanent, disconnected from macro-economic trends and fixated upon disreputable neighbourhoods of relegation in which social isolation and alienation feed upon each other as the chasm between those consigned there and the rest of society deepens [Wacquant, 1999, 1640]. There is an increasing social polarisation, that is, a growth in both the bottom end and the top end of the socio-economic distribution, for example an increase in the proportion of households with low skills or low income (many of whom are immigrants) and at the same time an increase in the proportion of people who are highly skilled or the number of households with high incomes (Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998, 2). This is not only unacceptable from a societal point of view, it also threatens the (economic) attractiveness of cities. To stimulate urban revitalisation and to attract (and retain) economic activities, residents and visitors serious efforts are made to make cities *attractive*. Outspoken problem areas do not contribute to such an image.

Cities are observed to switch their focus of attention from urban *hardware* (tangible facilities like locations, labour, infrastructure) to *software* (intangible qualities like safety, ambience, quality of life) and *orgware* ('organising capacity', the capacity to deal adequately with *hardware* and *software*). To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of social policy is in that context often considered a major challenge for urban governments. In practice, social policy does not have a reputation of being very effective and efficient. This seems inherent in the extremely complex and stubborn nature of social problems (and their solutions). Furthermore, results are hard to measure for lack of unambiguously defined indicators. However, a change can be observed from the traditional problem-oriented approach to an opportunity-oriented one. According to Michael Porter, in many cities social policy has put economic policy in the shade and the economic potential of urban areas has all too often been neglected by public policy makers. "Social programs will continue, but they must support, not undermine a coherent economic strategy for the inner cities" [Porter, 1995]. One point to keep in mind in social policy is that it should not rob people of their own initiative. Welfare support should not take away (too much of) the stimulus to people to take their own future in hand. That approach seems to be increasingly adopted. In Europe, the traditional concern of welfare state policy since the 1950s has

been the establishment of an adequate "safety net" for individuals and families in employment and retirement. While this has played a vital role in sustaining those most in need, many of whom were to be found in the most run-down neighbourhoods within the major cities, it was not until the 1980s that serious attention began to be paid to the longer run incentive effects or to the fiscal cost [OECD, 1996, 22].

To develop comprehensive policies to combat social problems (in reaction to an ad hoc, problem-led approach), the formulation of a vision and the development of a strategy are of critical importance. Social problems usually have a physical dimension (unattractive, badly maintained dwellings and a depressing living area) and/or an economic dimension (unemployment, low spending budget). An adequate approach to social problems therefore demands co-operation and co-ordination between institutions that happen to function alongside each other. Education, house building, spatial planning, economic development are domains that have considerable influence on combating social problems. The ability to set up social programmes and projects in a more strategic, comprehensive way appears to depend on the quality of a city's *organising capacity*.

Organising capacity is understood here as the ability of those responsible to solve a problem to convene all partners (public and private, internal and external) concerned and jointly generate new ideas and develop and implement a policy that responds to fundamental developments and creates conditions for sustainable economic growth. Elements of organising capacity are: vision on long term sustainable development (for strategies, programmes and projects to hold on to); formulation of concrete, measurable objectives; strategic and coherent thinking and acting; leadership qualities to manage processes and projects adequately; creating and supporting strategic networks of relevant partners, needed to develop and implement policies successfully; creating political and societal support and emphasising communication strategies both within the city administration and as external communication (to citizens, companies, public bodies, etc.).

In the social sphere, organising capacity is closely bound up with the strategic networks of the parties involved. Public authorities play a dominant role because it usually is their first concern to take care of the sustainable well-being and prosperity of their citizens. But within the municipal organisation all kind of sectors and service departments (social services, economic affairs, spatial planning, real estate, health service, education, police, housing) that are not always accustomed to co-operation, are directly or indirectly involved. Bureaucratic organisation principles, traditional sector classifications (often related to political portfolios), lack of market incentives (subsidies are fixed) and lack of result-orientation do not usually contribute to comprehensive and innovative thinking and acting. Next to the internally divided public actors a variety of institutions, mainly non-profit organisations, are engaged in social care, education, job mediation, social housing, etc. Even some segments of the commercial sector seem to realise that it is to their own advantage to prevent or reduce social tensions that threaten the urban revitalisation process in general. An increasing number of companies, understanding that the public sector and the 'social care' organisations by themselves cannot adequately solve the problems, are considering or reconsidering their societal responsibility, not as 'charity' but as a form of 'enlightened self-interest'.

These considerations have induced eight cities to participate in an investigation aiming to apply the concept of organising capacity to policy programmes and projects in the social sphere, an important reason being that so far results of social policy have not always given rise to much optimism. Much money may be spent on solving a problem without effective progress being accomplished. Cities keep trying to develop ideas for new approaches that hopefully will have the desired results. Never before has so much time and effort been spent in tackling problems and seizing opportunities, for instance in the field of unemployment, integration of ethnic minorities and physical,

economic and social revitalisation. The question crops up: what factors and conditions determine the success or failure of the social organising capacity of cities? That question has inspired the following problem statement and study objectives.

## **2      *Problem statement, objectives and methodology***

*Problem statement:* What social strategies do urban actors develop in response to social problems and how are they implemented to contribute in an effective and efficient way to a sustainable economic and social revitalisation?

### *Main objectives*

1. To deepen the theoretical knowledge of ‘organising capacity’ in cities confronting social challenges.
2. To generate practical knowledge and tools by which cities can strengthen their ‘organising capacity’ on behalf of social revitalisation.

### *Methodology*

The method used is an international comparison and evaluation of experiences with strategies (programmes, projects) in the social sphere. For the analysis a theoretical framework has been drawn up, based on international literature and the results of previous empirical research into the organising capacity of major metropolitan projects in European cities [Van den Berg, Braun and Van der Meer, 1997]. This framework has been elaborated for this study and agreed upon by experts in the field of social policy and by representatives of the cities involved. The eight cities involved submitted a local programme or project for the analysis. The analysis of the cases is based on written documentation and on interviews with more than 90 key persons involved in social policy in the eight participating cities. A draft version of each case study has been commented (if needed) by the interview partners involved, as well as discussed among the members of the Steering Committee. The final report has been subject of discussion during an international conference held in Eindhoven in April 2001.

### *Selection of cities*

The city of Eindhoven, the initiator of the study, had proposed to conduct an investigation into the organising capacity of social policies among the member cities of the Eurocities network. Seven other cities, Antwerp, Helsinki, Malmö, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Strasbourg and Utrecht decided to participate, the main reason being that they were convinced of the need to improve the organising capacity of social policies. The selected cities offer a highly interesting mix of experiences with respect to, among other aspects, geographical situation (peripheral versus central locations within Europe), city size and population growth (growing versus stagnating populations), economic structure (port and industrial cities versus service centre cities), economic performance (affluent cities versus cities whose economy is trailing behind the national average), local competence in the formulation and implementation of policy (autonomous cities versus cities more dependent on higher layers in the administrative hierarchy) and schemes to deal with social problems (cities much beset with them and others for which social segregation is a newish phenomenon). Table 1 presents some facts and figures about the cities included in this study.

Table 1 Demographic data of cities involved in this study

City	Population of the city	Share foreign extraction <sup>1</sup> (%)	Population of the urban region	Year	Growth city population (%)	Year
Rotterdam	593,000	44	1,080,000	1996	+2.9	1981-1996
Strasbourg	264,000	14	451,000	1999	+6.5	1990-1999
Antwerp	456,000	14	1,161,000	1995	-2.5	1991-1996
Malmö	247,000	11	618,000	1996	+1.1	1991-2001
Stockholm	762,000	10	1,762,000	1996	+11.0	1981-1996
Helsinki	539,000	5	1,155,000	1998	+10.2	1980-1996
Utrecht	234,000	29	548,000	1996	+1.0	1980-1996
Eindhoven	202,000	20	700,000	2000	+1.0	1980-1996

Source: European Commission, 2000 a and 2000b, Berg, van den, et al., 2001, 4.

### Limitation

Programmes and projects in the sphere of social policy should offer solutions for (multiple or cumulated) complex social problems in cities. The present investigation does not cover the entire social policy field in the eight cities. A major part of the social problems (and the policy addressing them) has to be left out of consideration. Nevertheless an attempt has been made, with the help of well-chosen examples, to find an answer to the problem statement and attain the objectives of the research. The limitation of the relatively small number of cases should be considered while interpreting the results of the study.

## 3. The research framework

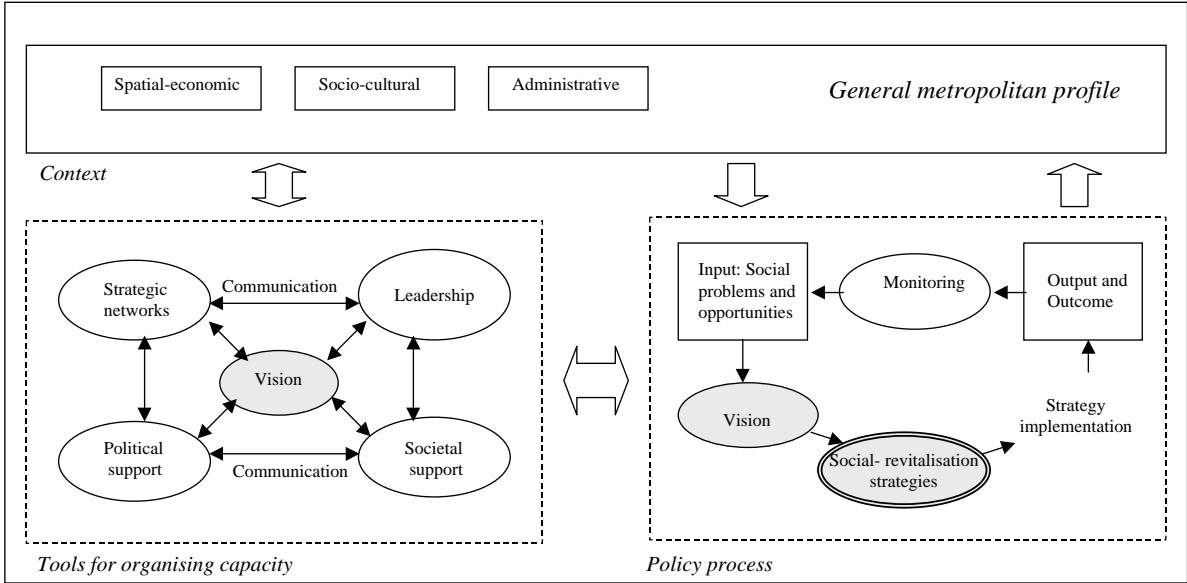
Figure 1 displays the framework for the present research. It is based on the theory of *metropolitan organising capacity* developed by Van den Berg, Braun and Van der Meer (1997). Organising capacity refers to the entire process from the identification of certain needs, through development of strategies and policy, to implementation of the policy and monitoring the results. This analytical framework has been elaborated and adapted to the specific features of social-revitalisation policies.

To our mind the key elements of organising capacity for policies of social revitalisation are the organisational tools (the instruments with which to achieve an adequate social policy) and the policy process. The tools are relevant to all phases of the policy process. The explicit introduction of the metropolitan context (upper part of the scheme) refers to the possibility that other factors than policy intervention, like a changing metropolitan context, can change problems and opportunities. The *output* of the policy process, that is the results of the policy intervention, and the *outcome*, that is the effectiveness of the entire process, may be influenced by a changing context. For instance, a policy oriented on empowering unemployed people to (re)enter the labour market will probably be more successful during a period with severe tension on the labour market than during periods with growing unemployment figures. The elements of the research framework will be described below.

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<sup>1</sup> These percentages have different definitions. The Dutch definition includes: ethnic minorities (based on native country of person him/herself, his/her mother or his/her father from a selection of typical migration countries) and non-natives from other countries. The other percentages refer to non-nationals.

Figure 1 Theoretical framework of social organising capacity



**General metropolitan profile (upper part figure 1)**

Each city is different; the metropolitan context is a strong determinant of economic and social opportunities and threats. Knowledge of the metropolitan context is necessary in order to be able to draw lessons from social revitalisation policies of other cities. This knowledge can also help to understand the urgency of social problems. (Changes of) the metropolitan context can have a strong impact on the outcome of the policy process in the social sphere. Moreover the administrative context influences the preconditions under which actors (can) co-operate with each other. For a better understanding of the regional context of social-revitalisation policies, we have distinguished three relevant aspects: the spatial-economic, administrative and socio-cultural contexts.

For each case study, the general metropolitan context has been described, including information about size, growth, demography, economic structure and economic development. Affluent cities will be better equipped to develop a policy of social revitalising and become less dependent on the support of, say, other governments. Social policy in less prosperous cities, on the contrary, will be more likely to need support from the national or European government or organisations outside the public sphere. Mark, however, that social problems in prosperous regions are often disguised by relatively high average prosperity figures.

Moreover, some understanding of the administrative structure is important, since the government, and especially the local government, often has a key role to play in policies of social revitalising. Is any form of neighbourhood management practised, and if so, what are its competencies? Neighbourhood administrators can flexibly respond to initiatives from the bottom up. We need to know how effective and efficient such administrative organisations are, and what their culture is? National governments tend to develop broad frameworks for (new) urban social policies, but do not always provide corresponding financial support to local governments. The European authorities may also issue specific policy measures that stimulate local actors. The granting of means from the European Structural Funds, for instance, depends on local co-financing.

In the context also attention is given to social problems. Metropolitan areas are often subject to voluminous immigration flows of people from other countries. The presence of a variety of cultures

(ethnic groups) may be fraught with specific problems. In the frame of this investigation they should be recognised. To be able to analyse the impact of social strategies or projects, it is first necessary to describe the relevant social problems together with their causes and backgrounds.

### ***Tools for organising capacity (left bottom part figure 1)***

#### *Vision*

Vision is the key element. Without a vision how to link social problems with opportunities, social policies will not lead to lasting results. It is the embodying of the opportunity-oriented approach of social policies. A vision of social policy should ideally be evolved on the basis of the overall vision of the urban region. Failing that, a vision will have to be developed just for the social policy field as such, without being imbedded in a wider perspective. Characteristics of an adequate vision on the level of social policy are multidisciplinary and surpassing of the narrow policy field. Social policy is traditionally oriented to the solution of social problems. An opportunity-oriented approach responds to chances. However, chances are often found in other fields, for instance in that of the economy, spatial development, or liveability.

A vision is a prerequisite for the integration of different aspects and the prevention of inconsistencies [Berg, van den, et al, 1997, 13]. A vision helps to formulate objectives and strategies. In principle, the vision must be based on the interests and aims of all actors involved. In the cities to be studied, the investigators will have to find out whether there is such a vision and if so, by whom it has been elaborated. Among the greatest obstacles to be overcome on the road to social revitalising is the adequate formulation of the problem. Such an analysis should in principle have general support. Parties tend to define the problems in different ways. The following questions suggest themselves: how can the problems be adequately charted, how can they be quantified and how can their background be analysed?

Vision manifests itself on different levels: a broad general vision on the future development of the entire urban region, a vision on the social policy field and visions on the level of social programmes and projects. On all levels the vision, the idea to combat social problems, is the principal element. That is the reason why vision has been indicated as the central policy tool as well as the starting point for the policy process.

#### *Strategic networks*

Strategic networks can be conceived of as patterns of interaction between mutually dependent actors that evolve around policy problems or projects. A network consists of the total of relations linking (public and private) organisations, the relations being marked by a degree of two-way dynamics [Berg, van den, et al, 1997, 11]. In the current investigation, the presence of strategic networks and their nature will be ascertained. Networks among and within organisations have to be identified. As pointed out, to 'un-fence' the segments within organisations is of the essence to social policy. The aim is to find out who co-operates with who in the development and implementation of social policies, and how and to what extent this co-operation takes place. Certain executive bodies actively engaged in the solution of social problems maintain direct formal relations with the local government. Others operate in formal independence and have to find another way to co-operate with the local government. Another matter to inquire into is whether there are incentives to co-operate, and if so, what incentives? Are they due to subsidies or for instance to mutual interests? On the other hand, lack of co-operation, agencies working in separate cocoons, are aspects that should be elicited as well.



### *Leadership*

Every organisation, programme or project needs a leading actor to initiate, continue and complete it. The assumption is that leadership of key actors contributes substantially to the successful design, development and implementation of projects. Leadership is a necessity, whether relying on specific competencies (the position in the administrative hierarchy, financial capabilities, specific know-how or other powers) or on the charisma of public or private individuals who successfully 'drive' the project [Berg, van den, et al, 1997, 12]. This investigation is concerned with leadership on all levels. The aim is to find out to what extent which leadership is crucial for the success of social policies and how this leadership arises.

A comprehensive approach makes high demands on the communicative skills of programme leaders. In a comprehensive approach within a sectorial structure, leadership on the level of programmes requires intensive consultation, negotiation and adjustment with other programmes and with the public and private parties involved. Communicative skills are crucial in such a situation. Leadership is important not only on the level of a project leader or motor, but also on that of, say, the envisaged target group or neighbourhood. Leadership should be anchored on several levels; the required operational skills and the tactical and strategic insights vary among levels. Leadership on the project level is focused on implementation; it should be operationally strong, and have a well developed relational component, because of the direct contact with the customers.

Leaders often occupy an essential key position between the rank and file and the institutions (for instance with respect to integration problems). A prominent aspect of leadership is stimulation with administering incentives. A project is initiated and propelled to achieve certain objectives. In a business company the objective is to yield a profit; the object of metropolitan projects can be to realise a new city quarter (and that implies setting distinct financial or economic targets). With social projects, the objectives are often less tangible and harder to measure. The commitment and enthusiasm of the actors involved often need to be stimulated otherwise. Because the results are less manifest, special efforts are needed to engage the actors' activity for a long span of time. To focus more explicitly on results may then be advisable. In matters of social policy, the part of director is often assumed by the government, but it may also be taken on by other organisations, such as NGOs. Whether there is a distinct director and how the leading part is performed in social projects, will be studied in the framework of this investigation.

### *Political support*

Social policy frequently depends on the political will to tackle social problems. Politicians are often key actors when new social programmes are to be introduced. Local politicians as well as national and even supra-national ones have a voice in matters of social policy. Programmes drawn up on the higher government levels can serve as catalysts for the development of social programmes on the local level. Programmes of social policy initiated on the (supra)national level (such as the European Community Initiative Urban) often call for local sponsors, thus stimulating local commitment to social policy. The relative intangibility and invisibility of social policy makes it difficult to enlist political support.

Most politicians are keen to 'score' on certain themes. If the results of social policy are charted better, there may be opportunities for politicians to enhance their profile. Representative bodies can do much to create political support for the tackling of social problems. A municipal council, for instance, can put pressure on the proper authorities to deal energetically and decisively with certain problems. This can stimulate the actors involved in the project implementation.

### *Societal support*

No matter how valuable a project might be for sustainable metropolitan development, lack of support from those directly involved or interested, notably the population or specific market parties (for instance private investors) may curtail the chances of successful implementation [Berg, van den, et al, 1997, 13]. One point to keep in mind is the need to get people more committed to their own neighbourhoods, to develop 'local pride'. In cities, the residents often lack involvement. Societal support for measures to overcome social problems depends on the active involvement of citizens/target groups. In the United States, but also in the Netherlands, there is a growing interest in approaches that underline the importance of social networks (networks of civic engagement) as a condition for successful social policy (community empowerment). That is why the creation and maintenance of social networks in cities is so important. To increase neighbourhood commitment, special incentives can be used, such as the *Opzoomer* action in Rotterdam, where residents (or streets) can win prizes for refurbishing their living environment.

### *Communication*

Where *vision* is the starting point of everything, *communication* is needed to bring the message of the vision to the networks involved, the (potential) leaders, the politicians and the society, the very important target groups of the social policy included. Much communication will proceed through the regular media channels (newspapers, regional/local radio/TV and internet). The actors involved in the social policy should make proper use of those channels to create social support. Excessive media attention for occasional disturbances and instances of pointless violence can build up strong incidental support for the solution of certain social problems, but 'regular' measures of social policy, which draw less publicity, could well do with some more positive attention.

The local government and other relevant actors will have to work out an adequate communication strategy to explain the importance of social problems and of the policy to be conducted to the population at large. Adequate mutual communication between the 'social partners' and the population appears to be a crucial success factor for (policies) of social revitalisation. Communication helps to chart the social problems and to reinforce the political and social support for the policy. The aim is to find out the meaning of communication to obtain societal and political support to all actors involved.

### ***The policy process (right bottom part figure 1)***

#### *Policy implementation and output*

Policy development implies the translation of the strategies into the 'right' policy measures. The objectives must always be clearly formulated so that their suitability in the broader vision and strategy of the urban region can be judged and their effects, after some time, evaluated. All dimensions of the social policy have to be considered: object, functions, scale, domain, method, and the mutual relationships of the actors involved. The implementation of policy consists in the acquisition of means, the allotting of partial tasks, and the execution of the strategy. What interests us in particular is the output: how adequately has the strategy been implemented? Were there sufficient financial and human resources available for the effective execution of the measures as proposed in the strategy? The quality criteria will not be thoroughly treated in this investigation, for cities have already gained much experience on that score and we do not want the research to lose itself into a surfeit of details.

Ultimately the success of social policy depends on the proper implementation of measures introduced to attain the objects envisaged. To that end, the right actors have to be activated and good feed-back instruments must be at hand for constant monitoring. Aim is to find out how policy is translated in the actual employment of means and manpower and how the implementation is managed.

#### *Monitoring and outcome*

The orientation of social policy is observed to shift from input to result. The implication is that more attention should be given to evaluation and monitoring. That is useful to gain insight into the degree to which the formulated objectives of social strategies have been attained. The outcomes of monitoring enable those in charge whether the strategy should be cancelled, adjusted or continued. Without periodic monitoring there is not much that can usefully be said about the success of a social strategy. The outcomes of monitoring permit comparison of the actual results with those envisaged or with the benchmarks formulated in the strategy. The following points are particularly relevant:

- Are the results of social policy adequately measured?
- To what extent are targets monitored?
- What will be done with the results of the evaluation?

Measuring the performance makes feedback to the actors possible. Should shortcomings come to light, then the organisational instruments and/or products need to be adjusted. Aim is to find out how the social problems and opportunities have evolved. Did the problems diminish, did nothing change or even did they increase? Questions to be answered are:

- How did the social problems evolve during the implementation of the programme?
- To what extent can external factors (context-variables) be accountable for this development?

#### **4. *The selected social programmes***

This section briefly describes the programmes and projects submitted by the participating cities. Table 2 presents the social programmes submitted by the participating cities, including the main sponsors and the aimed functions of the programmes.

##### ***Integrated Area Approach in Rotterdam-Hoogvliet***

The "Integrated Area Approach" (IAA), a political spearhead, marks a new phase of urban and social renewal policy in Rotterdam. Whereas the "old" urban renewal (during the 1970s and 1980s) was predominantly physical and strictly oriented to social housing, the new approach aims at the integrated economic, physical and social revitalisation of backward boroughs, among them the borough of Hoogvliet. Hoogvliet is a post-war "satellite", built close to the port area (spatially detached from the rest of the city), counting 45,000 inhabitants, most of them living in unattractive apartment buildings. Some years ago Hoogvliet's socio-economic situation was considered tragic in several respects. For the 2000-2010 period Euro 90 million has been allocated to Hoogvliet for the more than 60 projects within the framework of the IAA. Next to the social pillar (among other things reinforcement of social cohesion and educational levels, fight against youth crime, help to young Antillean single mothers) and the economic pillar (revitalisation of the borough centre, enhancing the image) the Hoogvliet IAA concentrates on a drastic physical restructuring of the housing stock; one quarter of the low-quality apartments will be demolished and replaced with more attractive and varied housing.

Table 2. Social strategies submitted by the cities

City	Name programme	Sponsor	Functions
Rotterdam	Integrated Area Approach	National government City	physical renewal, social investment, employment
Strasbourg	Masterplan for social intervention	City National government Département	reorganisation, physical renewal, employment
Antwerp	Social Impulse Fund	Region City	reorganisation, integration employment, physical renewal
Malmö	Metropolitan Initiative	National government City	employment, integration education
Stockholm	Territorial Employment Pact	European Union City	employment
Helsinki	Strategy against Social Exclusion and Segregation	City	employment, stimulating partnerships
Utrecht	District Service Centre	City	reduction distance city-citizen
Eindhoven	Chain approach to Addicts	National government City	reintegration, reduction nuisance

### ***Restructuring social policies in Strasbourg***

Strasbourg is confronted by severe social problems, such as many long-term unemployed, and deteriorated neighbourhoods. Neuhof, in which a *Grand Projet de Ville* (GPV) is being carried out, is one neighbourhood seriously beset with social problems. The GPV aims to stimulate cultural and social inclusion, improve living conditions and accomplish urban and economic transformation. Much attention is given to the physical restructuring of the urban area. The approach approach to social policies has changed drastically after the development and implementation of the “Masterplan for Social Intervention”. The Masterplan aims to reorganise the existing structures to achieve a more comprehensive approach to social policies in which the client has a central position. It aims to restructure the social-policy field according to:

- A territorial dimension: by introducing a district approach social services should be set up in the direct vicinity of the clients, and differentiated according to the specific needs of individual districts;
- A thematic dimension: intervention according to themes related to the competencies attributed or delegated to the urban Department for Social Action;
- A logistic dimension: comprising activities that complement those of the former two dimensions.

### ***Organisational reforms in Antwerp***

Social problems in Antwerp are most painfully evident in the high and persistent unemployment rate, the unequal spread of prosperity and the poor quality of housing. In Antwerp a new approach to social policy has been stimulated by the Flemish Social-Impulse-Fund programme (SIF). It helps cities to carry out a policy intended to restore the living and environmental quality of backward neighbourhoods to raise prosperity and fight deprivation. On the basis of a contract concluded between the Flemish government and some Flemish cities, financial impulses are given for that purpose. In the city of Antwerp, the most important part of the strategy concerns organisational changes. The vision behind this strategy is that the current social organisational structures have not been able to adapt to changing societal circumstances and to act in a more opportunity-oriented way.

### ***Integration and employment programme in Malmö-Hyllie***

Compared to the rest of Sweden, Malmö suffers from high unemployment rates, low education levels, and the highest concentration of immigrants (mostly refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq and former Yugoslavia). People with low incomes and poor education (among them 90 per cent of the immigrants) live in the areas built up with massive apartment housing. Together these problems threaten the social structure in Malmö. In recent years the municipality has given much attention to possibilities of overcoming this situation. The interest has extended to the national government, which for the first time has launched an explicit urban programme, the Metropolitan Initiative (MI) oriented to helping the seven most disadvantaged cities, including Malmö. The idea of the programme is for residents, NGOs, municipalities, regions and county councils and the state joint forces to create growth in vulnerable areas. For Malmö the crucial need is for methods to stimulate the integration of the foreign inhabitants. Hyllie (population 30,000) is one of the four districts that participate in the MI programme.

### ***New ways to employment in Stockholm-Norrmalm***

The European Territorial Employment Pact (TEP) is a response to long-term unemployment. It aims to set up innovative approaches to that problem. The underlying philosophy was the awareness that unemployment was a major threat to the cohesion ideal of the European Union. Welfare differences within regions had become more severe than those between regions, and the most proper way to deal with them was to try and reduce (long-term) unemployment. That awareness led to the formulation of the four EU-goals of the TEPs: to improve employability, to develop entrepreneurship, to encourage adaptability, and to create equal opportunities. Stockholm translated these four goals into the vision explicitly laid down in the 1998-1999 City Action Plan: All people should have the possibility of supporting themselves by gainful employment. As in the other 88 European Pacts, the concept of the Stockholm-TEP is to mobilise all the players in the city's districts to combat unemployment, as well as to strengthen the employment effects resulting from European Structural-Funds contributions. In the Stockholm TEP-projects both public actors (such as the city of Stockholm, the County Council, and the Public Social Insurance Office) and private ones (like the Swedish Association of Enterprises, and Sweden 2000) participated.

### ***Preventing social exclusion and segregation in Helsinki***

Until the early 1990s Helsinki was a socially balanced city. However, the recession brought the city massive unemployment and other social problems till then unknown, related with education, age, gender, and housing. In the last few years the acute problems that hit the city seem on the way to being solved. Unemployment decreased to 10 per cent, but long-term unemployment persists and differences in income are widening. Moreover, immigration has increased to five per cent of the population. The idea is that prevention (rather than combating) of social exclusion should become a policy objective for the Helsinki government. The Strategy against Social Exclusion and Segregation is a first response to the new situation. This Strategy is based on recommendations made by a special Committee in 1998. These recommendations are among other things: to alleviate unemployment (by improving labour-market qualifications as a basic tool against social exclusion), to bring the prevention of social exclusion to the notice of municipal departments, to encourage internal and external partnerships and citizen's initiatives to fight social problems especially in (potentially) weak neighbourhoods.

### ***A District Service Centre in north-east Utrecht***

To some extent, Utrecht suffers from the same social problems as other major cities. They are concentrated in some neighbourhoods, for instance in two smallish areas within the relatively prosperous north-east district. Problems here spring from the high proportion of foreign residents, the high unemployment rate, the incidence of (petty) crime (often associated with drug abuse) and the emergence of black schools. The strategy in Utrecht is to bring the city closer to its citizens. As part of the political programme the municipal board has initiated a special programme ("Involved City") intended to strengthen the relation of residents, entrepreneurs and social organisations with the city administration. One of the 17 points of the "Involved City" programme is to establish District Service Centres (DSC). A DSC is a low-threshold "desk", supposed to fulfil a high-grade intermediary function; matters that bother residents can be reported there and, if necessary, channelled through to other bodies. No longer does the government dictate the enhancement of a living environment in the conviction that it knows what is good for its citizens. Efforts to raise the quality of living now imply the co-operation of public and private actors. The government has a facilitating role with experiments like the District Service Centre.

### ***Eindhoven: a chain approach to addicts***

In the city vision, the 290 registered chronic drug addicts are counted among the most vulnerable groups. That group suffers under a range of problems (debts, health, living, relations) and responsible for considerable nuisance and crime. The number of addicts is relatively low compared to other cities in the Netherlands. They are concentrated in the city centre and two other neighbourhoods. An increasing number of clients can be characterised by a double diagnosis – the combination of drug addiction and mental disorders – resulting in very complex and unpredictable behaviour. In 1995, Eindhoven launched the strategy "Handles for Recovery", a chain of services delivered by several actors. Its main objectives are the decrease of inconvenience caused by drug and alcohol addicts and social integration of the target group. Underlying vision is that a chain approach is the only effective and efficient way to achieve the reduction of the nuisance caused by addicts and their reintegration in society. The chain approach demands close co-operation of the various actors, including the police, the judiciary, municipal services, business companies and neighbourhood organisations. The core actor is Novadic, a network for addict care in the Eindhoven region.

## ***5. The findings of the comparative study***

This section summarises the principal conclusions of the comparative research. As already pointed out, the conclusions are perforce based on a limited number of programmes and projects, which in turn had been selected from a multitude of local programmes and projects. That makes hard statements hardly meaningful. Nevertheless we believe, supported by the unique material that this investigation has collected, that the outcomes can contribute to the further development of strategies of social policy and all its implications. We are particularly hopeful that the results of this investigation will encourage the critical observation of the contribution of elements of organising capacity to programmes and projects.

### ***Vision development***

Three levels for vision development were distinguished: the city or functional urban region, the social-policy field and the social programme or project. The intermediate one was determined mainly by national governments, and essentially sectorial, spatially undimensional and oriented to solving problems but not responding to chances. Under the influence of a decentralising tendency, cities are more and more filling in their visions on social policy themselves.

The visions in the case studies were all aimed at one objective, namely to make the target groups self-supporting (or emancipated). That objective seems the recurrent theme in the investigation. Stockholm formulates it as follows: *All people should have the possibility of supporting themselves on gainful employment.* However, the opportunities seized in the individual cities (whether or not incorporated in their vision) differ. In Rotterdam and in Strasbourg, measures to raise the quality of life are seen as an opportunity to make the population more self-supporting. The measures are often concerned with physical restructuring. Attention for the quality of the housing and living environment is increasingly recognised as important for overcoming social arrears. The attention for neighbourhood identity, image and physical differentiation is emerging as a component of urban revitalisation. Utrecht wants to supply citizens with made-to-measure social services in the neighbourhood itself, responding better to demand and persuading suppliers to join their forces. In Antwerp, the economic revival of the Central-Station area is seen as an opportunity that can benefit a wider part of the city and with which employment for the long-time unemployed in depressed neighbourhoods can be created. To accomplish that, Antwerp adopted the “partial vision” that reorganisation of the civil service was a necessary condition for social revitalisation.

National policy remains a catalyst for structural changes in municipal social policy. Social policy practice seems to be based primarily on social values and standards agreed upon on the national level. There is not so much a vision as well as a set of politically agreed-to social rights, such as the right to education, accommodation, health, care, benefit, safety, etc. National social policy has tended to be sectorial, without spatial dimension, and decisive for the lower authorities, which mostly had but limited opportunities to give it substance. Local social policy was mostly confined to the implementation of national policy by public actors or by NGOs financed by the national government. In the last decade, however, a remarkable shift has been perceivable. Increasingly, social policy in the major cities (especially for the problems of social segregation) has become a national concern. While formerly social differences among regions were dominant, nowadays social discrepancies are most poignant in cities. That is one reason for the switch from a purely sectorial, spatially dimensionless approach to one that is directed explicitly to social problem concentrations; that switch is accompanied by others: from a problem-oriented to an opportunity-oriented and from a sectorial to a comprehensive policy. Those switches seem to be related to the trend of policy decentralisation manifest in many countries. The awareness is growing that the nearer one comes to the problems, the more effectively a policy can be evolved. With the exception of Finland, the same trend can be observed in all the countries of our study. In France, cities have since the late 1980s gained more independence regarding social policy, which now should be made comprehensive and opportunity-oriented as well. In the Netherlands (Major-City Policy) the shift occurred in the mid-1990s, to be followed by Flanders (Social-Impulse Fund), and very recently by Sweden (Metropolitan Initiative). Especially in Sweden, where regional policy had always been dominant, the introduction of this new approach explicitly oriented to cities, forms a clean break with the past. In all four countries the means of various policy fields are combined, and the cities are expected, in partnership with other actors (mostly NGOs) to develop comprehensive policy strategies. Characteristically, the national government and the municipalities present themselves as contract partners. The State undertakes the

orchestration and fixes the preconditions, while the cities formulate social strategies and are financed on the basis of an implementation commitment. In Finland, a first step in that direction was taken in 1998, but there the State has not yet imposed on the cities the “duty” of a co-operative approach, so that initiatives have to come primarily from the cities themselves. The new trend to address the problems from closer by, in a neighbourhood-oriented or customer-oriented approach, is remarkable.

### ***Strategic networks***

Existing administrative structures are often inadequately equipped for a comprehensive approach. In several cities, the administrative structure is so inert that the required effective and efficient comprehensive policy is all but impracticable. That is why Antwerp and Strasbourg want to reorganise their own administration before venturing to comprehensive strategies. In Strasbourg, in spite of a particular history, like in other French regions social policy was essentially carried out by the State and the *Département*. Since social problems call for comprehensive solutions, Strasbourg claims a heavier role in social policy, with co-operation between social organisations as crucial factor. In Rotterdam, the comprehensive approach adopted (both functional among sectors, and spatially between municipality and borough) has led to a complicated structure, entailing long communication lines and a surfeit of consultation platforms. On the other hand, with the seriousness of the problems and the jointly formulated vision and strategy, the local actors are co-operating in a sound way.

Within the public organisations, networks of various sectors often appear to be poorly developed. The need for a comprehensive approach is understood (on paper), but its implementation is obstructed by rigid structures and traditional work cultures that are loath to work together. In the meantime, four of the five national governments of our study have stated that local social policy should be more result-oriented, mostly mentioning a partnership approach as a condition. Such an approach requires first and foremost better adjustment and co-operation among the parts (sectorial and spatial) of the municipal apparatus itself. In Helsinki, the “soft” departments (social services, education) co-operate better among themselves than with such “hard” departments as that concerned with real-estate. That the Finnish government has not yet explicitly demanded a comprehensive approach to those social problems that are relatively new to Helsinki (especially segregation), explains why unlike in most other participating cities, such an approach has not yet risen to political priority. In Malmö, an innovative, successful plan to have foreign teachers teach Swedish to their illiterate compatriots is insufficiently supported by the education department, which believes that the official, traditional approach (which has proved unsatisfactory in practice) has to be continued, merely because certified teachers have been appointed to that end. The education department keeps itself aloof, strictly adhering to the formal rules, and prefers not to be bothered with a possible role in social policy.

From the cases dealt with, the activities in the framework of social policy appear to be still largely reserved to public networks. The programmes are dominantly executed by (departments of) the local public sector. There are (secondary) parts for NGOs, housing corporations (as in Rotterdam, Utrecht and Malmö), residents’ associations, local entrepreneurs and the churches (for example the Lutheran State Church in Finland). Strikingly, private enterprise hardly figures at all among the actors. Despite the fact that opportunity-oriented policies such as the equipment of people for a position on the labour market (as in Malmö and Stockholm), specifically aim to respond to economic opportunities, the participation of the private sector is below par.

The developments in Rotterdam-Hoogvliet have demonstrated: the closer to the problems, the easier to reach co-operation. On the other hand, however, it is also true that the closer one gets to the



problems, the harder it is to keep sight of the whole and to give a problem its proper place in the urban or regional context. It is a matter of choosing the optimum level of approach. The impression is that, when a customer-oriented or a neighbourhood-oriented approach is at stake (concerning youth crime, for instance), the municipal level is too far from the facts. With an approach on the level of boroughs (as in Rotterdam, Stockholm and Malmö) the communication lines are shorter and the actors concerned are more apt to understand the inevitability of co-operation. That depends, of course, on the size of the city. Rotterdam, Stockholm and Malmö have borough councils. In the relatively large city of Helsinki there is no level of administration below the municipality. In Antwerp, boroughs are in preparation. In Utrecht, the wish to bring the municipal government nearer to the citizen has been a political priority for some time. Through district offices, citizens are served in communal matters by a centre “round the corner”. The latest form of service, the District Service Centre, adds a kind of “social shopping centre”.

### ***Leadership of key-actors***

In Malmö the foreign project leaders appear highly successful in their approach, thanks to their familiarity with the culture and language of their clients. A good project leader need not necessarily be a good strategist (or the other way around, although it is useful when both skills are present). On the level of policy formulation and (political) decision making, strategic and tactical insights are expected. In Strasbourg the director of the social department (DAS) needed to convince the associates that a completely different way of working was necessary. In spite of initial resistance, sufficient credit to gain the involved parties' acceptance of the new approach way built up, which was indeed quite revolutionary by French standards. In Antwerp, on the level of programmes the search was predominantly for persons with leadership qualities. To that end the implementing organisations were placed outside the municipal structure, so that bureaucratic rules could be circumvented. That is evidence of tactical insight, even though politically the solution found does not seem optimum.

How to fill in the part of the leader, and how effective his performance will be, are evidently dependent on personal qualities. In Rotterdam, the inspiring leadership of the political leader of the Hoogvliet borough has strongly marked the joint undertaking of the large-scale local renovation process. This leader is regarded by many as the motor of the renovation. In Malmö the programme leader, being in the background, left room for the project leaders to make their own contribution. That stimulated the project leaders' to use their own initiative, which was greatly appreciated by them, as was the unconventional approach as against the somewhat wary, traditionally thinking advisors and decision makers on the level of the municipality or district.

Without political backing or clear objectives there is a risk of diffuse leadership. In Helsinki the formal and informal leadership had not clearly been defined as far as the Strategy against Social Exclusion and Segregation was concerned, which was due in part to the lack of well-defined objectives and of political interest once the programme had been put on the rails. The politicians kept aloof from the suggestion that there should be underprivileged neighbourhoods in Helsinki. That was one reason for the poor results of the Strategy. In Strasbourg, the political support of the mayor and the alderman for social action was decisive for the purposeful way in which the Masterplan for Social Intervention was developed and implemented. That powerful political support was indispensable for the changes envisaged by this approach. It also meant essential support to those implementing the reconstruction of social policy in Strasbourg.

### ***Support and communication***

Explicit support by national governments has apparently become of great importance for the recent renewal of local social policy practice. Because on the national level the increasing social dichotomy has become a major political item almost everywhere, this support for a substantial change of policy in favour of a more effective and efficient approach on the local level is well accepted in most of the cities involved, as was already pointed out with respect to the development of a vision of social policy. In Belgium (Flanders), the Netherlands and Sweden cities have been designated to receive extra funds on the basis of their self-evolved vision, as well as greater freedom to strengthen their own social policy. That has proved a strong incentive. Only in Helsinki is such an incentive lacking, with the result that on the local level as well the political support remains on the meagre side.

Societal support is gained by explicitly involving the clients in the decision making; trust is of the essence. The successful developments in Rotterdam-Hoogvliet are mainly due to the high degree of solidarity and involvement of the population. In spite of its serious social problems, this somewhat isolated city quarter still displays the feelings of togetherness and solidarity that characterise a village. Just as characteristic is the manner in which the (real) desires of the customers are listened to and taken into account. As a result, popular trust in the leaders and the plans is relatively large. In Malmö the social support among citizens of foreign extraction increased tremendously when their “own” trusted people were enlisted to explain the (worthy) intentions of the Swedish approach.

The lack of societal support for “positive discrimination” of backward neighbourhoods or certain groups in the community constitutes a great handicap to the implementation of certain policy programmes. Sometimes parts of the population are not in favour for plans to grant certain neighbourhoods or groups in the community advantages above others. Notably in the Scandinavian cities the fact was emphasised that large portions of the population were not in favour of preferential treatment for certain neighbourhoods or groups in the community, for instance by granting extra money for special education. That form of “positive discrimination” seems to be hardly acceptable within the Scandinavian equality culture.

In Utrecht, a local political party, which in essence wants to vent its disenchantment with the Utrecht local government, has gained many voters. To recover trust, the policy is to emphasise the rendering of direct services to the Utrecht citizens. The District Service Centre is an exponent of that policy.

Societal support for measures to combat and solve the problems of drugs addiction, as in Eindhoven, is mostly poor. As soon as citizens or businesses have the slightest fear of bother, they set up powerful societal opposition.

Trust in policy does not evolve until results become visible: to see is to believe. Only when improvements can be seen with their own eyes will people begin to trust in the approach. That is why in some cities much store is set by physical improvements in backward neighbourhoods as a condition for approval on the flanking, less noticeable policy measures.

Communication is sadly underappreciated as a factor of social policy. From the examples cited above, concerning the lack of societal or political support, the key factor has often been that the problems and the plans for solving them by programmes and projects were not or poorly communicated to those immediately involved. The attention of policy designers and policy implementers tends to be focused on the product (programme or project); communication often comes at the bottom of the list. That is true not only of external communication but also internally, within the local government organisation or even within one and the same government department. Often those involved do not or not sufficiently know what the others are doing. Information and communication are required to avoid working at cross-purposes. Most projects lack an adequate communication

strategy, with a few positive exceptions. In Rotterdam-Hoogvliet the intensive communication with those directly involved (through mailings, meetings, house-to-house newspapers) has provided a sound foundation for trust in the happy ending of the drastic demolition and new-building propositions. In Malmö, the (labour-intensive) personal approach of the integrators (by visits or personal notes) created trust among the target group.

### ***Strategy implementation and output***

The comprehensive implementation of social programmes calls for frequent communication among actors in different policy fields and on different policy levels. The danger then looms that communication gobbles up so much time that too little of it remains for other policy matters, such as contact with the clients. The impression is, for instance, that the actors of the Hoogvliet borough and the municipality of Rotterdam are disproportionately engaged in mutual adjustment and communication. What with the complexity of the integrated area approach and the rather diffuse distribution of tasks among the levels (municipality, borough) and parties (municipal departments), extensive communication is unavoidable. The relevant actors themselves indicated that other activities regularly were in danger of being crowded out. In Strasbourg the same difficulties were encountered as social policies were being implemented on the territorial level. The new approach was considered time-consuming because so much time was “lost” in meetings to exchange ideas. However, one of the prominent ideas of the Masterplan is that the advantages of better mutual communication will outweigh the time spent on lengthy discussions.

Because relatively little is known as yet about a comprehensive, opportunity-oriented approach to social policy, and the problem fields are subject to much exogenous change, frequent adjustments are required during the implementation of a social strategy. Obviously, complete blueprints for new social concepts cannot be made in advance. During the process, learning effects as to the most advisable approach will occur, making certain changes in the implementation necessary. It is a matter of learning by doing, a try-and-error process. In several cities that has become clear: in Eindhoven for instance, which has added new chain elements in the course of the process, and Utrecht, where the concept of the District Service Centre crystallised gradually in the course of time. Through all adjustments of the social concept, it is imperative to hold on to a certain policy line that has gained consensus from a broadly supported underlying vision. Indeed, what is needed is a distinct overall concept to give direction to the policy implementation. Furthermore, a strong leadership is required to initiate the necessary changes. At the same time, a flexible attitude of those involved is desirable to learn from errors and to carry through adjustments. Earlier failures should indeed be admitted and recognised if the policy is to improve. Mutual trust of the actors involved seems an important marginal condition to that end.

Depending on the visions on social policies, new organisational structures might be desirable. They can be structured according to a categorial, functional or territorial approach. With the exception of Eindhoven and Helsinki, all the cities investigated have chosen to submit a programme or project with an area-oriented approach. Strasbourg is actually carrying through a drastic reorganisation of the municipal social-policy service for the purpose. Antwerp is also carrying through organisational reforms to arrive at a more opportunity-oriented social policy. In the other cities investigated there was no question of a reorganisation, although tensions between the organisational needs on behalf of the policy implementation wanted and the existing organisational structures were clearly observable. In many cities, the social policy still has a functional orientation, which may clash with an area-based approach. The fact is that an opportunity-oriented approach calls for a changed attitude of the

employees involved. In all the cities, a too stringent bureaucracy seems to be an obstacle to desirable reforms. Processes of social change are often slowed down by a conservative, non-innovative attitude among the civil servants. In Rotterdam-Hoogvliet the argument was that the new approach (the physical restructuring) called for innovativeness, creativeness, courage and deviation from standards. Therefore, the people employed in social policy should possess skills and a mentality different from what had been common. That means generous investment in training and schooling of those people.

### ***Monitoring and outcome***

The various programmes and projects offer varied pictures of adequate or inadequate monitoring. Two appear to be well advanced: the programme in Strasbourg in particular, but also the Eindhoven project. Both determined benchmarks in advance, and with the help of zero-measurement and regular monitoring are trying to correct if necessary. Strasbourg is also endeavouring to achieve comprehensive monitoring through the coupling of different types of data. In the projects submitted by Helsinki and Utrecht relatively little is done with the monitoring instrument. Hardly any benchmarks have been formulated, no zero measurements have been taken, hardly any regular monitoring has been performed so that there was no way to make adjustments on the basis of evaluation results. The quality of monitoring in the remaining four programmes is somewhere between the two extremes. Malmö and Stockholm do work with benchmarks and regular monitoring, but hardly perform any comprehensive monitoring and make too few adjustments on the basis of evaluation results. Antwerp has indeed set up an extensive monitoring system, but the aspects evaluated so far lack the concreteness required for actual adjustment. In Rotterdam, relatively many measurements of elements of the social policy are performed, but little is done with the results. The conclusion must be that monitoring has hardly had any adjusting effect. That financial donors tend to ask for separate measurements is one more explanation for the fact that in spite of the (intended) comprehensive approach, there has hardly been any comprehensive evaluation.

Many effects of social-policy programmes cannot immediately be quantified, such as the perception of the quality of life and safety in neighbourhoods. Admittedly, the formulation of measurable indicators, benchmarks, and methods to evaluate qualitative aspects is more and more the object of thinking and discussion. In Malmö the degree of integration of foreigners in the Swedish community is measured, among other criteria, by the results of interviews conducted every six months with people of foreign extraction. The (independent external) evaluators try to find out whether people have come to like their neighbourhood better since the stimulation of social networks among inhabitants. In Rotterdam-Hoogvliet, the perception of liveability is evaluated by regular surveys among the residents. A potential pitfall is that such surveys are strongly affected by incidents. A robbery, for instance, may temporarily distort the residents' perception of liveability.

Whether a project is a success or a failure is hard to assess. A possibility is to compare the financial results with the social investment made. However, nowhere has a true cost-benefit analysis of social strategies been performed that could enlighten us as to the final return on the means invested. One aspect worth evaluating is how far objectives stated in advance have been reached (effectiveness) and how efficiently that has been done. A very important question in that respect is: could they have done better? The answer to that question may reveal how far in the circumstances the policy implementers have done a good job. To understand the actual achievement of the actors, a specific social problem has to be related to its context. For instance, in the current flourishing economy, an employment policy (as in Stockholm and Malmö) is far easier to carry out than a measure to reduce

the nuisance caused by drug addicts (as in Eindhoven). A complication is that most programmes have not yet been completed, so that any conclusions must be tentative.

## 6. Conclusions

Increased social polarisation seems to be connected with the restructuring of the welfare state, a consequence of the emerging information society and increasing competition. Social problems, such as unemployment, lack of education, poverty, crime, youth delinquency, drugs or alcohol abuse, homelessness and other social deprivation, accumulate in parts of cities. In many of the larger European cities a polarisation is defining itself between the dynamic well-educated segment of the population and another segment that is falling into economic and social exclusion. Such a concentration of distressed groups is especially manifest in cities that have been hit by industrial decline, but also occurs in cities that have managed to reverse a downward economic trend as well as in cities that have been prosperous for a longer time.

To combat social polarisation seems to be the most important, but at the same time the most difficult challenge. The conviction is gaining ground that only a comprehensive approach will lead to long-term solutions. A change from problem-led to opportunity-led policies can also be observed, with opportunities for the economy being grasped. To enhance the effectiveness of social policy in that context considered a spearhead for many cities. In practice, social policy does not always seem to be carried out effectively. To create organising capacity seems to have become a *conditio sine qua non* for a coherent comprehensive approach to urban social problems.

To achieve a more efficient and effective social policy, attention to all tools of organising capacity distinguished in this research is essential, for all of them - vision, communication, strategic networks, leadership, political and societal support - are of great importance. Should one of them receive too little attention, inevitably the goals stated will fail to be attained, or failed to be attained efficiently.

The analysis of social strategies has revealed that vision and communication are the most important elements. Without a vision, programmes are unguided missiles, often not oriented to opportunities. Without a communication strategy the message of the vision will not receive the attention and support requested. Too often the role of communication as binding agent of organising capacity is underestimated.

Opportunities tend to be offered in other policy fields than that of social policy. Therefore, to design an opportunity-oriented social policy, comprehensive strategies should achieve a link with, for instance, economic or spatial policies.

Social policies can be observed to be progressing. Important elements of the transition are attempts to strike a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches, and between the dominance of public and of private actors. The objective is a better match between individual social needs and new opportunities, a sound internal coherence of policies, as well as adequate organisational structures.

A central aim of social programmes is to make target groups self-supporting (or emancipated). To that end, sustainable (lasting) solutions to social problems should be found. So, in principle social programmes should give temporary support to certain areas or groups, and as soon as the aims are achieved, be concluded, so that other urgent problems can be taken in hand.

Bureaucratic organisations appear to be a serious handicap for reaching the aims of social programmes. Dependent on the vision evolved, sometimes the administration has to be restructured to

make room for an area-based, functional or categorical approach. Whatever the organisational structure chosen, flexible structures and flexible attitudes are invariably needed.

Ultimately, the implementation of the chosen strategies falls to the employees of the public and private organisations involved. If they lack the necessary education or skills, the envisaged aims will not be achieved. Therefore, adequate training and education of the staff involved will always be a prominent pre-condition for organising capacity.

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