

**EU Urban Policy, European Urban Policies and the Neighbourhood: An
overview of concepts, programmes and strategies**

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Introduction

In this paper my aim is to provide an overview of the 'urban policies' developed to address urban problems at the EU level and in a number of different European countries. No attempt is made to cover all European countries¹, merely to examine a range of countries that illustrate the different, although sometimes broadly similar, approaches each country has developed particularly to the neighbourhood. First of all I provide an overview of the European context, outlining the general problems affecting urban areas in Europe and identifying the response of the EU, principally through the actions and activities of the European Commission. In the next section I then focus on neighbourhood based policies in Denmark, England, France, and Germany. In the final section I seek to identify and reflect on common themes, conceptualisations and approaches, with particular emphasis on the neighbourhood.

The European Level – Problems and Policies

The problems of urban Europe

This sub-section will briefly outline the issues currently facing 'Urban Europe' and those likely to influence it in the immediate future. There is a general recognition that urban areas/regions do not exist in isolation from wider economic, social and political factors originating in the national, European and global spheres. Indeed it has increasingly been argued that the process of globalisation has rendered the nation state redundant and that the 'national economic space' no longer exists as an independent unit. The implications of such a position are that there is little national governments can do to control their own economies or counter the forces creating urban decline. Interestingly one of the related arguments frequently developed is that, whilst national governments are largely impotent, cities (and city regions) can act to attract inward investment to improve their position through the development of new forms of social and cultural capital, efficient infrastructure systems, etc. This involves cities engaging in forms of competition with one another through place marketing or boosterism to convey their potential advantages to investors, what Harvey (1989; see also Paddison, 1993) terms 'urban entrepreneurialism'. Clearly there is an 'urban hierarchy' within Europe and cities do compete with one another to improve their position in this hierarchy by attempting to attract investment, prestigious events and important political institutions (see Lever, 1993; Meijer, 1993; Wegener, 1995).

¹ The main focus of this paper is on Western European countries and this reflects my own limited knowledge of developments in East-Central Europe. An overview and review of 'urban policies' in new Member States can be found in Van Kempen et al (eds) (2005); the basic conclusion to be drawn from this study is that none of the new Member States have what one might refer to as 'explicit' urban policies (see Parkinson et al 1992) nor do urban problems really figure on the policy agenda. Personal experience and contacts with colleagues in former 'socialist countries' who are now members of the EU strongly suggests that the 'urban problem' that is highest up the political and policy agenda is the legacy of large-scale housing estates built during the Soviet era. Of course in Germany, in the former Eastern *Länder* there is the pressing issue of 'shrinking cities'. Whilst working on a Framework 5 project on economic decentralisation it became clear during the course of the project that there is a developing issue of suburbanisation in the Czech Republic, although currently this seems to be largely restricted to Prague and there is currently no governmental recognition that this may become a problem in the future.

Whilst there is undoubtedly considerable truth in these arguments it does appear that the extent of globalisation and its effects are sometimes oversimplified and overstated (see Hirst and Thompson, 1996). The processes of deindustrialisation and economic restructuring have produced major changes in the economic structure of Europe (e.g. from manufacturing to services; growth of ITC; the knowledge economy) and in its corresponding spatial structure (see Lever and Bailly (eds), 1996), yet many of these developments pre-date the current wave of globalisation. While recognising that in order to understand what is happening to our cities we need to be aware of the 'global context' in which they operate (see Dicken and Öberg, 1996), we also need to recognise that these forces will have a differential impact upon cities depending upon national policies and their position in the European urban hierarchy (see Hall, 1995).

Hall (1993, p883) has identified the following factors that affect Europe's urban hierarchy:

1. Globalisation and the formation of continental trading blocs.
2. The transformation of Eastern Europe.
3. The shift to the informational economy.
4. The impact of transport technology.
5. The impact of informational technology.
6. The new role of urban promotion and boosterism.
7. The impact of demographic and social change.

Clearly many of these factors operate on a global scale, although even these are likely to be mediated by national, regional and local factors. But others may equally operate on a purely European scale, for instance the integration of Eastern European countries into the EU combined with the move of the German government to Berlin could shift the centre of gravity within the EU eastward with corresponding implications for Europe's urban hierarchy (see Lichtenberger, 1995). Another example is the development of trans-European high-speed transport networks that have important implications for cities and are strongly influenced by both national and EU policy (see Wegener, 1995). The point is that distinctly European and national developments can have important spatial impacts and implications (both positive and negative) for cities and city regions. Thus it seems premature to write off the implications of national policies for urban change and development, particularly when one recognises the different national political, social and policy traditions that continue to exist with member states.

EU Policy responses

Over the last decade the Commission of the European Communities (CEC), with the support of successive Presidencies, has drawn attention to the problems facing Europe's cities (see CEC, 1997 and 1998a) and the need to develop a strategic, consistent and co-ordinated response to these problems at the EU level. There has been a strong emphasis on the need to ensure that actions taken on EU, Member State, regional and local levels are vertically and horizontally integrated. These developments have produced what might be termed an 'urban agenda' within the EU that seeks to create a framework within which an EU urban policy could evolve (Atkinson, 2001; Parkinson, 2005). Moreover, there has been a growing recognition that the EU's sectoral policies have important impacts on urban areas and there

development and that these policies should take into account their 'spatial impact' (CEC, 1998b). The same point is, of course also relevant to the actions of Member States, and arguably is even more significant given that the level of resources controlled by Member States is much greater than that available to the EU. However, our focus here is primarily on the EU level and policy developments at that level.

Several DGs in the Commission have policies that directly impact on cities. For instance DG Regio through the Structural Funds, such as the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund, which although directed at regions, are important for cities in qualifying regions. With regard to the current period of the Structural Funds Objective 1 areas the former Secretary General of the Commission of the European Communities argued at the start of the period:

Strategic urban planning should become more explicit under the Structural Funds for a number of reasons: it would increase the quality of the policy by exploiting the role of towns and cities as growth engines for the regional economy in a more effective way. It would increase legitimacy and local accountability by involving local decision-makers in social and economic development policies. It would widen partnership structures and mobilise more 'local energy'. Thus under the Union's structural policies, cities within Objective 1 regions should play a stronger role in future programming. (Trojan, 1998)

In part this reflects the recognition that it is necessary to adopt a strategic and concerted approach to the problems facing a city-region and neighbourhoods within it. An added impetus has been that those Objective 1 regions in receipt of Structural Funds have been required to prepare Single Programming Documents that integrate, at least on paper, the activities of different political/administrative units which may have encouraged relevant authorities to develop an approach that identified 'deprived neighbourhoods' and ensure that actions directed at them are integrated into wider actions.

In terms of specific 'urban actions' URBAN I and II, along with the Urban Audit, are probably the best known. Although URBAN has been 'mainstreamed' within the new Structural Funds. This has led many people to express concern over the potential loss of a small (in terms of funds) initiative that had the advantage of explicitly concerning itself with urban areas and their problems; many fear this mainstreaming may lead to URBAN's distinct 'urban focus' being lost in the wider Structural Funds. DG Environment has also had a long interest in the Urban Environment dating back to 1990 and the current Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment is one of seven such strategies being developed under the Community's 6th Environmental Action Programme that establishes policy priorities and approaches for the period to 2010. Nor should we ignore the role of DG Employment and Social Affairs and its interest in the socio-economic dimension of cities, although since the end of Poverty 3 in 1993 and the failure to get Poverty 4 off the ground this DG has been less directly involved in urban issues.

Nevertheless, despite this 'history' there has been considerable debate over whether or not the EU should develop an urban policy of its own to provide a framework within which Member States can collectively address the problems facing Europe's cities.

Indeed the *Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion* (CEC, 2004) explicitly points to the importance of EU 'urban policy' which at the very least amounts to a *de facto* acknowledgement that EU policies have important implications for the future development of cities and that there is, at the very least, an implicit EU urban policy – or what we might term an 'urban agenda' (see Atkinson, 2001). Of course one of the main barriers to the development of an 'explicit urban policy' is the lack of any legal competence in the Treaty. Nor is it clear how the development of such a policy would relate to issues of subsidiarity and proportionality. Interestingly it would seem that cities are much more willing to see the EU develop an urban policy than are Member States and in some cases regions. This perhaps reflects a concern on the part of cities that national governments have not given sufficient attention to the problems they face and/or that their involvement in the policy process has been inadequate. It may also reflect a desire among cities to have direct contact (and influence) with Brussels (thus the existence of organisations such as Eurocities). Many cities may also view the European level as a potential avenue through which to exercise more influence over the development of urban policy in their own countries. However, many Member States view this as an undesirable, and unwanted, intrusion on their sovereignty. What this points us towards is a series of tensions lying at the heart of any attempt to develop an EU urban policy.

Nevertheless, as already noted, this has not prevented most EU Presidencies since 1998 from identifying urban issues as a key theme in their presidency. In particular I would like to highlight the initiative launched by the French Presidency in 2000 – the so-called Lille Agenda (or Lille Programme as it is sometimes known). I focus on this document because I believe it represented the most interesting attempt to date to develop a coherent 'urban agenda' as a basis for future action. This report was the "Multiannual Programme of Co-operation in Urban Affairs within the European Union" (CSD, 2000) (hereafter referred to as the Multiannual Programme). In particular the report opened up the possibility of bringing the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and urban policy communities' closer together and perhaps of even developing a common policy agenda in the future.

The report begins by stating that it builds on the earlier work initiated by the Commission's two Urban Communications (CEC, 1997 and 1998a), the Urban Exchange Initiative and the ESDP, and recognising the role of local authorities in developing urban initiatives. It states:

The new stage that is beginning must allow a common approach to be formalised through new ways of co-operation, although without standardising urban policies, and Community interventions to be developed in favour of cities. Moreover, it would be convenient to systematically analyse the impact of different EU policies from the point-of-view of urban interests. This is the objective of the working programme prepared by the Urban Experts and adopted by the Committee on Spatial Development. (CSD, 2000, p55)

This is followed by the identification of nine priorities (*ibid.*, pp56-57, see also Annex 1), which are:

1. Drawing on the ESDP a need to recognise: the role of towns and cities in spatial planning; the role of urban centres in development and cohesion at national and

European levels; the problems facing small and medium sized towns and the need to enhance urban-rural integration.

2. Developing a new approach to urban policies at national and EU levels that is properly integrated into the EU policy process and that is holistic, integrated and properly financed. These policies are to be focussed on outcomes rather than inputs and should aim to improve the quality of life for those living in deprived urban areas and promote an integrated approach to sustainable development.
3. Supporting community life in deprived neighbourhoods by involving residents in policies and empowering them.
4. Developing initiatives to address all forms of segregation affecting these areas, creating living conditions in them that are equivalent to those in other more affluent areas, tackling racial discrimination and promoting integration of ethnic minorities.
5. Ensuring policies are directed at the appropriate spatial scale and integrating actions at different spatial levels so that policy operates in an integrated manner to promote balanced urban development.
6. Developing public-private partnerships, particularly to address economic disadvantage in urban areas.
7. Ensuring that networking takes place in order to ensure all actors are linked together and that knowledge and best practice are widely disseminated.
8. Using IT to facilitate the above processes.
9. Carrying out new research to better understand the causes of urban decline and the problems experienced in disadvantaged urban areas.

In essence what these priorities set out to do was to create a common and permanent framework of reference within which, whilst recognising differences between countries and differing priorities within them, Member States could work together to develop a common approach. This vision was intended to facilitate debate, the sharing of experiences, the development of benchmarking and a more effective and integrated use of structural funds directed at urban areas. In particular it was hoped that these developments would help inform structural and regional policy post-2006.

At a more substantive level the report (see CSD, 2000, Annex 1) argued that while cities and urban regions are the motors of economic growth, and essential to maintaining Europe's competitiveness in the global economy, there is an inherent tendency for uneven development to occur. This tends to reinforce the existing urban hierarchy and further entrench inequalities at both the inter- and intra-urban levels. It argued for greater spatial distribution of economic growth and its benefits across the EU through the development of city networks at regional, interregional and international levels to promote more balanced development. The chosen model for this is that of polycentric development. It is hoped that this will allow for a more balanced distribution of growth and employment at interregional and intraregional levels, between urban areas and within them. This will ensure that all citizens experience the benefits of growth and promote social cohesion in cities thereby preventing and/or countering the development of social exclusion and segregated cities. At the same time economic development must take into account the need to ensure that it is sustainable and does not adversely impact upon the urban environment. Finally, there is a need to improve urban governance to both facilitate and integrate, in institutional and policy terms, the developments outlined above and to ensure that citizens are actively engaged in them. In institutional terms primary

responsibility for developing the above was to lie with the Committee on the Development and the Conversion of the Regions (CDCR), which was requested to create a sub-group to carry out this function.

The Multiannual Programme, at the request of Member States, was seen as a reference document internal to the Commission that meant that like the ESDP it is a 'non-binding' document. This suggested that its influence on EU policy development, at least in the short term, was likely to be marginal (which has in fact turned out to be the case). This perhaps reflected, and still reflects, the desire of Member States to limit debate over urban issues and maintain control over their own 'urban policies'. Moreover, it does seem as if the Commission itself, or more correctly DG Regio, has blown 'hot and cold', over the programme outlined in *Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: A Framework for Action* (CEC, 1998a). This partly reflects the small number of people in DG Regio working on these issues and the vulnerability of the programme to changes in political and policy priorities. Overall it is difficult to identify any long lasting impact of this proposal although some of the same themes/issues appeared under the Dutch Presidency in 2004 and in the UK Presidency in 2005 (see the Bristol Accord, 2005)².

What this seems to me to illustrate is that firstly, there is a lack of political will within the Commission to push these issues forward against resistance from Member States. Second, the fact that other DGs have had little involvement, or expressed support, for these initiatives points to real problems of coordination within the Commission. DG Regio was the lead with regard to the Lille Agenda and it received little, or no, support from other DGs whose work impacted on cities. This highlights serious problems regarding the Commission's relationships with Member States but also the issue of internal coordination, or the lack of it, within the Commission. Until these problems are resolved I see little possibility of progress on the urban agenda at EU level.

More recently there has been a renewed emphasis on cities through the Lisbon-Gothenburg Agenda. Whilst the initial Lisbon Agenda emphasised the economic dimension the Gothenburg directed attention to the social and environmental dimensions, thus providing a rounded approach. Nevertheless, it does seem that cities are still primarily viewed through the 'lens' of 'urban competitiveness'. Cities are seen to have a key role in the 'knowledge economy', are viewed as the 'engines' of regional development and allocated a key role within the European economy and enhancing its competitiveness in the global economy³.

A key issue on the 'urban agenda' that is of special interest to us is that of area-based policies, particularly those focused on neighbourhoods that exhibit high concentrations of poverty and social exclusion (or *quartiers en crise*) (see Atkinson, 2000a). To solve these problems requires the development of a comprehensive approach

² In 2007 the German Presidency presented a study on 'Integrated Urban Development', and also presented a "Territorial Agenda of the EU" (CEC, 2006) that included urban issues in a manner somewhat similar to the Lille Agenda. The Germany Presidency also held an Informal Ministerial meeting on 'Territorial Cohesion and Urban Development' in Leipzig at May 2007. This meeting builds on developments under the 2004 Dutch Presidency.

³ Some of these arguments are presented by the European Commission in a report on 'Cities and the Lisbon Agenda' (CEC, 2005); it also includes data relating to the performance of European cities is also presented.

which, whilst adopting "...area-based multi-sectoral policies..." (European Commission, 1998a, p12) "...must integrate such areas into the wider social, economic and physical fabric of the city and the region." (ibid). It is in the development of a more coordinated approach to such problems that the Commission believes it can play a key role. This can be done not only by helping coordinate the actions of, and encouraging cooperation between, different levels of government and those at the same level (e.g. vertical and horizontal coordination/cooperation), but also by assessing the impacts of EU policies in order to produce policies that are more "...`urban sensitive' and ensure that they facilitate integrated urban development." (European Commission, 1998a, p1a).

Clearly these are the areas deemed to require `special' forms of intervention (usually in the form of area based initiatives [ABIs]). Thus in parallel with the focus on the economic role of cities there has been a concern with urban social exclusion and social cohesion (see CEC, 1997 and 1998a). During these transitions from a `manufacturing' to a `service-based' then a `knowledge-based' economy, large numbers of (usually male) workers have found themselves facing long periods of, and in some cases permanent, unemployment, while at the same time women have often taken many of the new jobs created. Simultaneously, many young people, especially males, entering the labour market for the first time, have found themselves unable to secure permanent, reasonably well-paid jobs in the service sector (see Lawless et al, 1998). In most West European countries, especially in their cities, these developments have been expressed in a growth of inequalities between social groups, the development of `excluded spaces' and racial tensions (see Madanipour et al, 1998) – in many ways society, and urban areas in particular, have become more unequal, segmented and less cohesive (see Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998).

In the fragmented urban landscape, problem areas or *quartiers en crise* have emerged. This has triggered a renewal of an old debate on the origins of urban social problems: are they triggered mainly through spatial processes (e.g. neighbourhood effects) or are urban problems embedded in society in general (see Andersen and van Kempen, 2003). There is a widespread acknowledgement that spatial inequalities in urban areas are growing, with consequences for the social and economic dimensions of life for many urban dwellers, and differences within cities are also more acute. City residents may live in the same city but do not share the same environment and their quality of life and opportunities will often be strongly influenced by the neighbourhood in which they live. Furthermore, while it is recognised that neighbourhoods, whether poor or affluent, can function as important sites of social cohesion, disparities between poor and rich neighbourhoods within a city can affect cohesion at the urban and inter-community level (see Kearns and Forrest, 2000).

In this context, policy-makers have had to adapt existing policies, and in some instances develop new ones, to face up to the realities of increasingly heterogeneous cities. The EU and most West European states have developed some form of urban policy (see for example van den Berg et al, 1998 and 2004; Atkinson 2001; Atkinson and Eckardt, 2004) and a renewed emphasis has been put on the use of neighbourhood focussed ABIs throughout the EU (see Parkinson, 1998; Atkinson, 2000b) most of which involve some form of community participation. As we will see later, these policies have led to a reconsideration of local governance. The rationale for promoting community participation in ABIs varies across countries depending, in part, on national attitudes to pluralist democratic arrangements. This inevitably

affects the nature of participation, from its weakest form (information) to stronger forms (handing over resources and control to neighbourhood communities). In next section I turn to policies developed to address these policies in 4 different European countries.

Neighbourhood policies in Western Europe

In what follows I consider policies developed in Denmark, England, France, and Germany. However, no attempt is made to give a comprehensive overview of policies in the four countries; rather the discussion attempts demonstrate the similarities and differences of neighbourhood-based urban policies. In addition I point to the role their differing political traditions and governmental structures have on neighbourhood policies. Moreover, given that neighbourhood interventions are a form of welfare policy we need to bear in mind the nature of the welfare state model and the role of local government in each country; by this I mean the degree to which it is legitimate for central government to intervene, the status of local government and its role and the forms of local governance that have developed. In what follows I focus on the issues of community participation/engagement as this is central to contemporary neighbourhood based programmes and will allow us to investigate many of the issues relevant to neighbourhood policies/programmes more generally. The programmes are the *Grands Projets de Ville* (GPV) in France, the *Kvarterløft* ('neighbourhood uplift') programme in Denmark, the New Deal for Communities (NDC) in England and the *Soziale Stadt* ('Social City') in Germany. All four programmes focus on areas containing concentrations of poverty and social exclusion that are have 'fallen behind' and become 'detached' from the rest of society; it is this that is seen to justify 'special action' (see Atkinson, 2000a).

First of all I would briefly like to consider how neighbourhoods are selected for these programmes. The selection process in France is very much ad hoc in nature, based on factors thought to be relevant by the local and central state. The *préfet de région* (state representative authority in the region) selects the areas for intervention and mayors decide which neighbourhoods within their commune will benefit from *contrats de ville*. With the GPV programme, neighbourhoods were selected by local mayors and council in negotiation with local and regional *préfets*.

Within the *Kvarterløft* programme there was a far more explicit bidding process, for projects and selection of target neighbourhoods. Starting with the list of 500 disadvantaged areas prospective *Kvarterløft* areas put in their case for inclusion in the programme. The selection criteria adopted by the relevant committee included both quantitative, socio-economic indicators, as well as qualitative assessments of each proposal. An interesting aspect, compared with the selection process in both France and England, was the requirement to identify not just social exclusion or racial tensions, in the neighbourhoods, but positive factors, such as social networks, the quality of the built environment or of open spaces. However, the general framework and the basis of participation were still driven by central government, as they provided the major financial resources and the initial list of 'crisis neighbourhoods'.

The NDC programme operated in a similar fashion to the *Kvarterløft* programme in that central government used a set of indicators (the Index of Multiple Deprivation) to establish the most disadvantaged local authority areas in England. Local authorities

then co-ordinated a single bid (or bids depending upon how many NDCs they were allocated) for central government to choose the NDC areas; this took place over two waves. In the case of the *Soziale Stadt* the selection process appears to have been relatively open and based on 'well known areas' that exhibit social problems, as Aehnelt et al (2004, p8) point out "...the selection has often been carried out intuitively on the basis of knowledge of local conditions." As in France there seems to have been a lack of relevant data that could have been used to 'objectively' identify areas, this was the result of either a lack of data or a failure to systematically compile relevant data sets. In the UK case there was an attempt to relate intervention to a wider problem diagnosis and focus on what were central government considered to be key factors (Worklessness, Crime, Education, Health and Housing and the Physical Environment), although local authorities, in consultation with the relevant neighbourhoods, were allowed to make the final selection of the areas. Such issues matter because as Aehnelt et al (2004, p8) point out with reference to the selection of areas *Soziale Stadt*:

This did not lead to selecting the 'wrong' areas, however, it had a negative impact on the diagnosis of the problems to be tackled and made the appraisal of the success of neighbourhood development more difficult.

This is an important point if we take evaluation of these programmes seriously and want to learn from them in terms of 'what worked' and 'what did not work'. In order to do this it is necessary to have a clear idea of what an areas' problems are, how the programme will address them (i.e. through what means of intervention vis-à-vis which factors) and how change is to be brought about through intervention (i.e. a theory of change). Also good evaluation requires the construction of a robust and reliable base line that can be updated over time and against which we can measure change over time⁴.

In England the use of area-based targeting dates back to the 1960s and 1970s whereas in France area-based initiatives first emerged as part of the response to urban rioting in 1981. Area-based initiatives in both England and France have had a strong association with the need to tackle issues that have been linked to social unrest. Thus it was the threat of social unrest due to immigration that was the spur for urban policy in the late 1960s and actual rioting in the 1980s in England. In France it was the rioting of the late seventies and early eighties that initially sparked a concern with neighbourhood level problems. Denmark has a shorter history of using area-based initiatives for social regeneration with the initial list of 500 problem estates only set

⁴ I would strongly argue that it is important to build in evaluation of policy from the very beginning. After all it is important to understand the impact of policies on the problems they are intended to address and have the opportunity to reorientate or readjust policies if they are not achieving their aims. Thus it is important to ensure that the aims and objectives of a policy are clearly stated at the beginning of the process of policy development. Moreover, it is also important to identify how policy intends to bring about change through intervention in key aspects (or variables) of the problem that are believed likely to bring about change, what is currently referred to as identifying the 'key drivers for change'. This notion of a 'theory of change' also has significant implications for how we evaluate policy, without a 'theory of change' it is difficult to evaluate what policy is (or is not) achieving (see Kubisch, et al 2001). Additional information on a 'theories of change' approach to evaluation can be found on the Aspen Institute web site (<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/Programt1.asp?i=83&bid=0>); more detail can also be found on one of the Aspen Institute's linked sites specifically on Theories of Change (<http://www.theoryofchange.org/>).

out in 1994. While one can say that the other three countries have 'national urban policies' Germany is rather different; urban policies are strongly constrained by the position of cities in a Federal system in which the *Länder*, as important intermediate policy bodies, play a major role sometimes limiting the role of cities⁵. As a result there is a limit to the degree to which it is possible to identify a 'national German urban policy' as the autonomy of cities and the federal system play an important role in creating and sustaining diversity. The *Soziale Stadt* is however a national policy. This programme has been implemented in almost 160 cities aiming for the improvement of run-down housing areas and contributing to meeting the social needs of families and young people while also seeking to develop local employment strategies. The programme focuses on the neighbourhood level and follows an empowerment approach. In terms of Germany the *Soziale Stadt* programme "...represents a new approach within the framework of urban development assistance. It is aimed at improving the situation of disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods and their inhabitants by an active and integrating urban development policy." (Aehnelt, et al, 2004, p1). One of the central aims being to enable "...the people affected...to co-determine and co-design the process under their own steam." (Aehnelt, et al, 2004, p4).

The four programmes thus share a superficial similarity even though they are located in very different national contexts. All four programmes have an expectation of resident involvement but it is in the detail of resident participation that we can see the cultural influence of the national context in terms of what is observed and in what is expected of resident participation. The basic institutional structure for running these local neighbourhood programmes also show some similarities. All local programmes involve some form of partnership between key public agencies that have a stake in the neighbourhoods and rely to varying degree on the human, organisational and financial resources of central and local government. Despite this there are significant differences that, arguably, have their origin in different national traditions. For instance the issue of community involvement or participation is a good example. Whilst all four programmes aim to engage with local people the way they do this and the degree of involvement in the relevant programme varies considerably.

The approach of the *Kvarterløft* programme to resident participation was built on a traditional Danish 'consensus-oriented' decision-making model. Citizen participation was intended to help create sustainable neighbourhoods, both in terms of institutions and social policy. Resident and stakeholder (for example, local businesses, schools) participation, in practical terms, has been through public meetings, workshops and working groups from the early stages of the policy, setting priorities for projects to answer specific needs, through design, implementation and project management, in a number of regeneration fields. Community involvement appears to have been limited to the 'usual suspects' with only a very small number maintaining their engagement over the life of each project. One issue is also the legitimacy of the active citizens taking part in decision-making since they are not elected.

⁵ Although this does not stop individual cities from developing their own initiatives aimed at addressing city development issues and within this the position of marginalised groups and areas. For instance Stuttgart has its own Integration Pact (see Stuttgart, 2003) and Munich has its own Perspective Munich (City of Munich, 2005). These of course may also seek to integrate Federal programmes in their work.

The GPV programme emerged from within the agencies of the state within which local elected councillors have a significant role (Kirszbaum, 2002, p. 2). Participation mechanisms have increased over the past 20 years, especially since the 1995 local elections. However this has largely taken ad hoc forms associated with specific aims, means and results rather than within a coherent framework (Blondiaux, 1999). It was only in the 1990s that community participation *à la française* (more accurately described as community consultation) was given legal recognition. The intention of the GPV programme was that, from the beginning, the design of the project should be resident-led. Projects were to combine actions with an 'immediate impact' on people's daily lives with more long-term sustainable objectives. The logic of the French context dictates a high level of involvement from locally elected members (in particular local mayors), since the communes are seen as the most democratic level of government (Desjardins, 2006). However there would appear to be at least an emerging and implicit proposition that the purpose of resident participation has been to address social fractures not addressed by the existing system of representative democracy. As such it presents challenges both to the nature of representative democracy and to the way public services are produced. The commitment to involve local people at different stages of the implementation of ABIs does not refer to "political" empowerment; the official view on neighbourhood based forms of resident participation, at both national and local level, is a relatively restricted one.

Since the early 1990s community participation has been allocated a key role in urban regeneration programmes in England (and the UK more generally) at local level and more widely, and this has particularly been the case since 1997. Successive initiatives have sought to secure a central role for communities in urban regeneration partnerships. NDC (see Atkinson, 2003; Lawless, 2004 and 2006) represents the most recent, and arguably thoroughgoing, attempt to create 'community-led' regeneration partnerships that place the needs of local people at the centre of developments. Local NDC programmes are run by partnership boards that combine the executive and steering group function (in addition there are also groups that steer individual projects and that oversee thematic work). These boards have representation from the key public service agencies in the area (local government is only one of many) and in 34 out of 39 NDC areas there are elections for resident representatives on NDC boards. Local residents constituted a majority on 24 out of 39 boards (CRESR 2005, p.25). However in 38 out of 39 NDC areas the local authority remained the accountable body for the partnership meaning that it was local government who was liable for the accountable use of public money in NDC areas.

Within the NDC programme, multi-sectoral regeneration partnerships, involving the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, have been central to the elaboration and implementation of local programmes. There was a strong expectation that "the local community [would be] at the heart of the programme" (CRESR 2005, p. iii) and in particular there would be a particular emphasis on engaging and supporting black and ethnic minority (BME) communities. It was accepted that "...community engagement embraces a wide range of activities including consultation with residents, boosting community infrastructure, involvement of residents in partnerships and as board members, and direct involvement in devising and running projects." (ibid, 2005, p. iii). The patterns of resident involvement in NDC seems similar to those of the *Kvarterløft* programme with a relatively limited engagement in NDC activities by the

majority of the population and a smaller group of dedicated activists working as board members, project workers and volunteers

Evaluation studies of neighbourhood focused programmes such as the *Soziale Stadt* (see for instance Franke and Löhr, 2001; Becker et al, 2002; Aehnelt, et al, 2004) show that the mixture of top-down and bottom-up networks envisaged by the programme has not occurred and this represents a major obstacle to the development of a genuine neighbourhood based strategy. Becker et al (2002, p33) point out that “The lack of authority to make decisions locally, depriving grassroots organisations of possibilities to act quickly, has greatly hindered activation and participation.” Aehnelt et al (2004, p9) also make the point that:

As regards the involvement of the inhabitants, it is often not so much about the classic involvement in decision-making in the ‘Social City’ areas than more about their activation in the sense of ‘empowerment’. The degree to which this is put in practice, however, varies very much.

Basically the programmes are ‘successful’ when managed by urban elites; this reflects the political situation in which the neighbourhood approach is embedded. Most significantly there is a lack of any concept of participation by urban inhabitants. As a result such an approach is largely used as a form of legitimation when applying for funds, but it also runs the danger of bringing into question the approach as a whole.

All four programmes discussed here share the common aim of solving urban social problems utilising an area based policy and, at least rhetorically, resident and tenant participation. These superficial similarities emerge from quite different contexts reacting to a common set of socio-economic changes. They all include the aim of building citizen capacity at the neighbourhood level in a way that can either be seen to challenge or in a way that offers a complement to ‘traditional’ forms of representative democracy and governmental methods of action. However, the differing traditions through which the relationship between the state and civil society are articulated will either impede or facilitate this process. None of these cases demonstrate much evidence of new forms of neighbourhood governance evolving into co-management and co-decision making processes at a local level, let alone at a strategic level.

Nevertheless, the very act of engaging with people (communities) in specific neighbourhoods and providing people with the opportunity to express themselves represented a significant challenge to the French Republican ethos, in a political context where people are usually ‘briefed’ rather than engaged in a process of dialogue and co-decision making. When resident participation is underpinned by the idea of ‘sharing power’, it can then be argued, following Donzelot (1999), that participation is moving away from its original intention of involving people in dealing with the deficiencies of the institutions they engage with towards something more constructive and empowering. In effect the French government has been running ‘place-based’ policies focussed on neighbourhoods for around 20 years while denying (or ignoring) any conflict with the Republican ethos and the supposed universality of its welfare regime vis-à-vis all French citizens.

While progress in France may have been relatively slow, and ‘subterranean’, compared to the UK, it should be acknowledged that the very act of legitimating the

taking into account of local, territorially based, points of view, in tackling the issue of modernising public services, for example, is still a philosophically significant change in French State political culture. Even if it is not easily implemented, it can, indirectly and incrementally, lead to these developments initiating a process of wider change. Thus it could be argued that due to the largely pragmatic and ad hoc nature of local initiatives in France, neighbourhood based resident involvement could evolve from rhetorical statements to more effective forms of participation.

Denmark, on the other hand, with a longer tradition of 'direct' engagement with citizens, has had less difficulty in justifying neighbourhood based approaches that require the development of new forms of representation, although those elected through more traditional democratic means (that is councillors) have often found it difficult to come to terms with the idea of neighbourhood/ community based forms of representation, which potentially challenge their position. What has perhaps posed the greatest challenge to traditional Danish approaches is that the 'place-based' approach of neighbourhoods potentially comes into conflict with a welfare regime based around 'people-based' policies that seeks to guarantee equality of access and services to all. However, pragmatism seems to have over come any deep-rooted principles in the sense that the Danes have not agonised over 'place-based' policies in the same way that their French counterparts have done. More recently neighbourhoods with concentrations of immigrants have come to dominate the Danish approach and the problems of these areas have been redefined primarily in terms of their inhabitants' non-integration in Danish society with the blame being laid at the door of immigrant communities.

English urban policy has been much less concerned about the wider implications of ABIs and thus perhaps provides the most developed examples of neighbourhood/ community participation but also most vividly illustrates the problems faced (see Atkinson, 2005). Moreover, we should not assume that these communities are coherent, identifiable bodies with a single set of interests. Conflicts of interest frequently exist within neighbourhoods and the communities that make them up, thereby making it difficult to identify and articulate a coherent series of proposals that partnerships can address. Furthermore, we need to recognise that only a small number of people⁶ from a neighbourhood will be actively engaged in these activities leading to the possibility that they will succumb to 'participation fatigue' as the constant launching of initiatives makes more and more demands on their limited time.

The English turn to local (neighbourhood) citizen participation is part of a wider approach to modernising central and local government. This modernisation agenda aims to change the way in which public services are delivered through the 'empowerment' local people to put pressure on delivery agencies to change their mode(s) of operation. Arguably it also part of an even wider agenda – that of 'responsibilisation' – which seeks to govern through new territories and means (the neighbourhood and the community) and operates through the inculcation of people, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods, with new (individual) citizen rights and

⁶ Research by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions found that as few as 5% of the local population are regularly active in community groups and only a minority of this group will actively participate in partnerships or other representative activities (see Chanan, 1997).

responsibilities in order to make them responsible for their future and bring about changes in their behaviour (that is to make them active and responsible citizens).

Moreover, there is also an inherent assumption within these area-based programmes that one of the things needed to improve these neighbourhoods is a better 'social mix' of people and tenures; once the 'right mix' is achieved the assumption seems to be that the area will change. But this also carries the assumption that the problems these neighbourhoods experience have their origins within the neighbourhoods, or at best that the public services provided to these areas, are failing to address their problems. There is no attempt to link the problems of these neighbourhoods to wider forces originating at the urban and national (and even global) level. The assumption is that by changing the behaviour of those living within these neighbourhoods, by developing the 'appropriate forms of social capital', the problems can be solved.

The problems facing German cities developing neighbourhood-based policies are in some ways even more complex than those faced in the three other countries. This is because social policies have been designed to disregard territorial and local situations. The major objective of the German welfare state, laid down in the constitutional framework, is to ensure equal living conditions in all parts of the country. At national level policies such as "Sozialhilfe" are developed, but implementation is left to local authorities who have limited discretion to decide the volume and forms of delivery. This situation means that at local level there are incentives to social movements to articulate their interests and make them an issue in local elections. Thus potentially discouraging, or diverting, local grassroots activism that could contribute to neighbourhood programmes.

Like the other programmes the *Soziale Stadt* programme is mostly administered by urban authorities and integrated into existing urban management or private offices that run the projects. As in the other programmes it aims to achieve better coordination of the policies and activities of council departments and integrate actors, particularly the community, from outside traditional politics. The legitimisation of the "Social City" programme is achieved through the establishment of a formal system of co-operation with steering groups that include different social groups that operate as participative organisations that locally produce very varied outcomes at the local level. Regarding how neighbourhood initiatives fit into the system of local governance in Germany Franke and Löhr (2001, p17) point out that:

Despite the availability of organisational and management models, the question of how actually to structure and institutionalise the relationship between municipality, district and neighbourhood is still unanswered in many cities. Particularly thorny problems are how to establish cooperation at and between the different levels, and what decisions-making powers to vest in the various bodies and players.

In effect there appear to have been relatively little reconfiguration of the system of local governance, in the sense that local government, and the public sector more generally, remains the dominant player. A similar conclusion has been reached in the French case by Dormois et al (2005, p254) who argue:

...[French] urban renewal projects do not produce a new type of partnership between public and private actors and the regulatory framework. Despite a policy discourse emphasising the need for a new division of work between state, market and civil society, the projects remain publicly dominated policy-making procedures.

While the situation has moved on from this in England and Denmark there has not been a great deal of evidence to show a significant reconfiguration of the relations between public, private, voluntary and community sectors – local government still largely retains a dominant role. This situation significantly reduces the impact of social issues and community involvement at neighbourhood level, arguably limiting the possibilities for the development of new and innovative ways of addressing the problems of these areas.

Conclusion

The European Commission has sought to recognise and support many of the issues and initiatives outlined above in its various urban and spatial communications, but it finds its scope for action even more circumscribed than national governments. The need to respect subsidiarity places strong restrictions on what it can do. Moreover we need to remember that national governments are also limited by their particular historical, constitutional, political and institutional/ organisational traditions. Policies do not develop in a vacuum they are constrained by the particular circumstances from which they emerge which determines the limits of what is possible. Moreover we should also bear in mind that the way(s) in which urban problems are defined and conceptualised has important implications for both the manner and means by which they are addressed. The conceptualisation and definition of urban problems frequently develops out of, often largely unstated, ideological and political positions (see Atkinson, 2000b). Once again the point to bear in mind is that policies do not develop in a vacuum.

At the same time there has also been a growing emphasis on the need to develop a partnership approach to urban problems. However, we need to recognise that partnerships can take many different forms. For instance in the 1980s in Britain the partnership approach largely referred to public private partnerships; in France it was largely seen in terms of a partnership between different levels of the state in both a vertical and horizontal sense whereas in Britain in the 1990s and 2000s urban regeneration partnership referred to multi-sectoral partnerships between public, private, voluntary and community sectors. It is this last sense that has tended to emerge in European Commission pronouncements in the latter part of the 1990s and early 2000s.

We also need to recognise that within Western Europe, supported by the European Commission (see Atkinson, 2001 and 2002), there has been an increasingly emphasis on the involvement of local citizens/residents and the 'community' more generally in both traditional planned approaches and targeted urban policies. However, the roles assigned to these social forces vary considerably from country to country. Once again this variation, in terms of both meaning and practice, has its roots in the different historical, social, political and legal traditions of each country which sometimes makes it difficult to accept that at local level citizens/residents/communities should be

able to at least play a part, other than through elections, in determining how policies are developed and implemented.

However, given the current emphasis on the role of multi-sectoral partnerships and community participation in area-based urban regeneration initiatives, we once again need to be sensitive to the very different forms of thinking about, and attitudes towards, state-civil society relations across Europe. Thus terms such as partnership and community participation take their meaning from the different political, legal, social and cultural traditions of each country. As a result policies deploying these means often differ considerably between countries even when they operate under the same EU programme (e.g. URBAN and URBAN II). Nevertheless it is possible to recognise that broadly similar issues are being addressed by a range of policies that do share certain similarities and which increasingly appear to form the 'new conventional wisdom' of urban regeneration across much of Europe.

As an example of this last point we can see that all four neighbourhood-based programmes referred to share a common aim of addressing urban social problems through area-based or neighbourhood-based programmes and, at least rhetorically, resident participation. All aim to build citizen capacity at the neighbourhood level through engagement in project design and management. While we do need to be cautious, for reasons outlined above, it seems to me possible to talk of an emerging 'neighbourhood agenda' at EU level and within countries. Although we should be cautious in the use of this term given the different definitions used and the different roles assigned to neighbourhoods. In most instances when public authorities have displayed a new interest in exercising what might be described as a form of "enlightened power" (i.e. securing better information on resident needs through direct contact with residents) vis-à-vis the neighbourhood there is little evidence of these developments evolving into co-management and co-decision making processes at a neighbourhood level let alone at a strategic level.

Increased community involvement can aid the legitimisation of government interventions in an area, as well as playing an integrative role in terms of combating social exclusion and increasing social cohesion. However, it can also produce resistance to particular forms of development, calls for more social expenditure that cannot be met from regeneration budgets and demands for more democratic control of projects. Moreover, communities, particularly deprived ones, do not necessarily have an existing capacity to organise themselves, nor the resources that would allow them to participate in partnerships as equal partners. To achieve this requires the investment of significant resources over a considerable period of time and the willingness of other partners to support this, both financially and in terms of the development of community infrastructure (e.g. knowledge, confidence, self-organising abilities). Too often both local government organisations and private sector developers conceive and develop regeneration projects with minimal levels of community input. At best community involvement has rarely risen above the level of consultation. Too often new and innovative forms of community participation have been subordinated to forms of accountability and management required to win and retain external financing. In these instances partnerships have been forced to adopt systems of management, decision-making and representation that have diluted the role of the community and curtailed the scope for independent decision-making.

Finally I would like to briefly turn to the issue of governance. I do this with a degree of caution because the term governance has become ubiquitous its usage and to a certain extent its meaning as an analytical concept has become lost (see Atkinson, 2002). We need to acknowledge that governance has moved from being primarily an analytical concept to a normative and strategic notion⁷. Nevertheless it is a widely used concept and it does point us toward some important issues, I would like to break this into two aspects (whilst recognising that in reality they cannot be separated):

- The issue of coordination
- The issue of (political) accountability

Turning to coordination first this relates to what we call in English the issue of 'joining up'. This refers to the horizontal and vertical coordination between the various organisations involved in neighbourhood, or area, based programmes. All those reviewed above have this as an aspiration, although they place varying degrees of emphasis on it. Increasingly, especially in the English case, this has also come to include how place-based and people-based policies are coordinated to ensure that they compliment and reinforce one another, for instance a report by the British Treasury - *Government Interventions in Deprived Areas* (HM Treasury, 2000) - argued that the primary responsibility for tackling (urban) deprivation should lie with main programmes and that this requires a refocusing of those programmes. The report argues:

Targeted initiatives, including holistic regeneration programmes, have a role to play. But they should be part of a clear framework for tackling deprivation, rather than the main tool for doing so. (HM Treasury, 2000, p2)

Yet despite this commitment to a joined-up approach all the evidence from the programmes examined suggests that actions either vertically or horizontally has been anything but joined-up. In horizontal terms at central government level there is little evidence to suggest that departments responsible for mainstream services coordinate their activities to benefit deprived neighbourhoods. The same is true at regional level and most service providers at local level have proved reluctant, or unable, to

⁷ As Cram (2001) has pointed out there are problems with using governance in this manner. Essentially governance is an analytical concept developed by academics to help understand a situation in which the central state's traditional powers and abilities to achieve its aims appear to have been considerably reduced (see also Stoker, 1998). It was never intended to be deployed as a predictive concept nor as a strategy for opening up the decision making process. Rhodes, in common with many others, uses the concept of governance to refer to developments in Britain (and elsewhere) during the 1980s and 1990s where privatisation, marketisation and decentralisation of state services took place (i.e. what is often termed the 'hollowing-out of the state'). This led to a marked decline in the role of traditional hierarchies (or bureaucracies) and an increased role for markets and networks in the delivery of services. In this situation there has been a loss of direct control on the part of government, as a result: "There is order in the policy area but it is not imposed from on high but emerges from the negotiation of several interdependent parties." (Rhodes, 1997, p40). Although whether we should assume that there will be order in the policy area is questionable, the very complexity of the situation outlined above may actually lead to greater fragmentation, making the search for policy coherence even more difficult to achieve.

significantly change the ways in which they deliver services to these areas. For instance the health service still tends to operate separately from the local authority, and even within local authorities there is little real evidence to support joined up working to address urban problems.

In terms of accountability we should recognise that the development of a complex web of negotiations between public, private and non-governmental organisations (and individuals) that is a key distinguishing characteristic of urban governance may well actually mean that the decision making process is less accountable, more opaque and just as exclusive as traditional bureaucratic forms. Indeed in order to function efficiently and effectively governance may depend upon informal relationships/networks that are difficult to access for those outside the charmed circle. Thus it may well be impossible to understand how goals are decided upon; in terms of policy to identify who is responsible for taking particular decisions or actions; and the very informal and inter-subjective nature of many aspects of governance may well make it easier to exclude interests and groups deemed unhelpful or potentially disruptive. Thus while it is widely recognised that new forms of multi-level (urban) governance have developed over the last twenty years surprising little is known about the formal, let alone the informal, architecture of this system even in particular localities (see Stewart, 2003 for a rare exception). Even less is known about the power dynamics and flows that shape such a system and its activities. This situation may actually hamper political accountability (and other forms of accountability such as managerial, financial and legal accountability) and deter local people from becoming involved in the partnerships that have increasingly come to characterise these new forms of urban governance.

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