

European Urban Policies and the Neighbourhood: An overview

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Introduction

Over the last decade or so, particularly in Western Europe, a number of policies have been developed to tackle the problems of deprived urban neighbourhoods. In part these developments had their origins in the particular situations of individual nations. However, the European Union (EU) has also shown an increasing interest in such areas and has sought to disseminate lessons on 'good practice' and facilitate the development of an approach that emphasises integration, good governance, partnership and tackling deprivation. These developments have in many ways reinforced one another, and in some senses it is possible to talk of the emergence of a 'new conventional wisdom' within the EU. Nevertheless, while national policies do bear a strong 'family resemblance', important differences remain and there is a danger that, as with any 'conventional wisdom', they become taken for granted and are applied in a mechanical fashion rather than being creatively adapted to the relevant situation.

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the 'urban policies' developed to address urban problems in a number of different European countries and how, whilst sharing common assumptions about how to tackle these problems, each has developed its own particular approach. No attempt is made to cover all European countries, merely to examine a range of West European countries that illustrate the broadly similar, albeit at times distinctive, approaches each country has developed particularly with regard to the neighbourhood. First of all the relevant situation at European level will be briefly discussed. However, the main focus of the paper is on neighbourhood-based policies in Denmark, England, France, and Germany. The following section briefly considers some wider governance issues raised by these neighbourhood-based programmes. The conclusion then seeks to identify and reflect on common themes, conceptualisations and approaches.

The EU Policy Context

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 ^{1, 2} and the need to develop a strategic, long term 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. Despite the fact that the EU has no treaty based competence to develop an 'EU urban policy' 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 ^{3, 4}. Moreover, there has been a growing recognition that the EU's sectoral policies have important impacts on urban areas and their development and that these policies should take into account their 'spatial impact' ⁵.

A key issue on the 'urban agenda' is that of area-based policies, particularly those focused on neighbourhoods that exhibit high concentrations of poverty and social exclusion. The European Commission (EC) has argued that addressing these problems requires the development of a comprehensive approach which, whilst adopting "...area-based multi-sectoral policies..." ⁶ and "...must integrate such areas into the wider social, economic and physical fabric of the city and the region." ⁷. It is in the development of a more coordinated approach to such problems that the EC 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 sharing experiences of 'good practice'. In addition to this the EC has strongly emphasised the importance of community in the development and implementation of these policies.

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 declaration directed attention to the social and environmental dimensions, thus providing a more 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 are allocated a key role within the European economy and in the enhancement of its competitiveness in the global economy⁸.

To sum up we can say that the EU has demonstrated a growing interest in urban areas and although this may be mainly driven by their role as the 'motors of economic growth' there has been a consistent, albeit secondary, emphasis on addressing the needs of deprived urban areas. In relation to this latter issue the EC has sought to identify and disseminate a particular approach to addressing these problems that emphasises an integration and community participation.

Neighbourhood policies in Western Europe

This section considers policies developed in Denmark, England, France, and Germany. No attempt is made to provide a comprehensive comparative overview of policies in the four countries; rather the discussion seeks to investigate the similarities and differences of neighbourhood-based urban policies and provide a general comparison of policies. There is also a focus on issues related to community participation/engagement as they are central to contemporary neighbourhood based programmes and will allow us to investigate many of the issues relevant to neighbourhood policies/programmes more generally. In addition it is important to recognise the role their differing political traditions and governmental structures have on neighbourhood (or area-based) 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 country⁹, this refers to 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. The programmes considered are: *Grands Projets de Ville* (GPV) in France, *Kvarterløft* ('neighbourhood uplift') in Denmark, New Deal for Communities (NDC) in England and *Soziale Stadt* ('Social City') in Germany. All four 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 justifies 'special action'¹⁰. One final point should be made, there is no attempt to consider these programmes in detail, rather the aim is to examine them through the lens of their broadly similar approach which is part of the 'new conventional wisdom' that has emerged across Europe with regard to addressing urban problems¹¹.

In England the use of area-based policies began in the late the 1960s, whereas in France they first emerged as part of the response to urban rioting in 1981. ABI initiatives in both countries have had a strong association with attempts to address issues linked to social unrest, in part, linked to immigration. Denmark has a shorter history of using area-based initiatives for social regeneration with an initial list of 500 problem estates identified in 1994. While one can argue the other three countries have 'national urban policies' Germany is somewhat different; here national policies are strongly constrained by the position of cities in a Federal system in which the *Länder*, as important 'independent' policy bodies, play a major role sometimes limiting the role of cities. As a result it is difficult to unambiguously talk about 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, contributing to meeting the social needs of families and young people while also seeking to develop local employment strategies. 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." ¹². One of the central aims being to enable "...the people affected...to co-determine and co-design the process under their own steam." ¹³.

First of all the paper will consider how neighbourhoods were selected for these programmes. The selection process in France was largely ad hoc in nature, based on factors thought to be relevant by the local and central state. The *préfet de région* (the state's representative in the region) selected the areas for intervention and mayors identified neighbourhoods in their commune that would be targeted, although even here there were negotiations between local authorities and local and regional *préfets* over the selection of neighbourhoods. With regard to *Kvarterløft* there was a more explicit bidding process to decide which neighbourhoods should be targeted. Starting with the list of 500 disadvantaged areas potential *Kvarterløft* areas had to make a case for their inclusion in the programme. Selection criteria included quantitative socio-economic indicators and qualitative assessments of each bid. As well as identifying the problems affecting a neighbourhood bids had to identify positive factors in the locality (e.g. social networks, the quality of the built environment or 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 selected the initial list of 'crisis neighbourhoods' ¹⁴.

In a similar fashion to *Kvarterløft* English 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 [New Deal for Communities] they were allocated) for central government to select NDC areas in two waves (2000 and 2001). In the case of the *Soziale Stadt* the selection process appears to have been relatively open and based on 'well known areas' that exhibited social problems, "...the selection has often been carried out intuitively on the basis of knowledge of local conditions."¹⁵ 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 a lack of data due to 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 central government considered as key factors (Worklessness, Crime, Education, Health and Housing and the Physical Environment). Such issues matter because as Aehnelt et al 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.¹⁶

This is an important point if we take evaluation of these programmes seriously and wish 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 time¹⁷.

All four programmes stressed resident involvement but it is in the detail of resident participation that we can observe the influence of the national context in terms of their

development and what is expected of resident participation. Each programme involved a form of partnership between key public agencies that operated in the neighbourhoods and relied to varying extents on resources provided by central and local government. Despite this significant differences emerged that, arguably, originate in different national political traditions. The issue of community involvement or participation is a good example. All four programmes aimed to engage with local people, but the ways in which this occurred and the degree of citizen involvement in each programme varied considerably.

Kvarterløft's approach to resident participation was built around a traditional Danish 'consensus-based' decision-making model. Citizen participation was intended to help create sustainable neighbourhoods, both in terms of institutions and social policy. Resident and stakeholder (e.g. local businesses and schools) participation largely took the form of public meetings, workshops and working groups from the early stages of the initiative. This involved setting priorities for projects to address specific needs as well as being involved in project design, implementation and management. However, community involvement appears to have been limited to the 'usual suspects' with only a small number of people maintaining their engagement over the life of each project. In addition there were issues regarding the legitimacy of citizens taking part in decision-making since they were not elected.

In France since the 1995 local elections participation mechanisms have increased, although this has largely taken ad hoc forms linked to particular projects rather than within a coherent framework¹⁸. Moreover, it was only in the 1990s that community participation, perhaps more accurately described as community consultation, was accorded legal recognition. The *Grands Projets de Ville* (GPV) emerged in this context but was developed by state organisation within which local elected councillors had a

significant role¹⁹. Within this framework the objective of GPV was that the design of the project should be resident-led. Projects combined two forms of action: those likely to have an 'immediate impact' on people's daily lives and more long-term sustainable objectives. However, the situation in France requires a high level of involvement on the part of locally elected members, particularly mayors, since the communes represent the most democratic level of government²⁰. With regard to GPV there appears to have been an implicit proposition that one of the objectives justifying resident participation was the need to address 'social fractures' that had been ignored by the existing forms of representative democracy. GPV thus represented, at least implicitly, a challenge to the nature of representative democracy and to the way public services were delivered. Despite this the commitment to involve local people in the implementation of ABIs was not intended to lead to "political" empowerment, the official view on neighbourhood based forms of resident participation was a more restricted one limited to consultation and information dissemination.

Community participation began to take on a significant role in urban regeneration in England (and the UK more generally) at local level and more widely during the early 1990s, 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^{21, 22, 23} 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. NDCs are run by partnership boards that combine an executive and steering group function, in addition there are also groups that oversee individual projects and thematic work. These boards have representatives from key public service agencies operating 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, with local

residents formally a majority on 24 out of the 39 boards ²⁴. Within the NDC programme, multi-sectoral regeneration partnerships, involving the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, have been central to the development and implementation of local programmes²⁵. As noted above it was argued that NDC would be 'community-led', although more recently this has been replaced with the notion of 'community-centred' as some communities appear to lack the capacity to lead the programme. The nature and forms of resident involvement in NDC resemble those of *Kvarterløft* in that there has been limited engagement in activities by the majority of the population with a smaller group of activists working as board members, project workers and volunteers

Evaluation studies of neighbourhood focused programmes such as the *Soziale Stadt* ^{26,27}, ²⁸ show that the mixture of top-down and bottom-up networks envisaged by the programme did not occur and this represented a major obstacle to the development of a genuine neighbourhood based strategy. Becker et al²⁹ point out "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 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. ³⁰

It appears that the programmes were 'successful' when managed by urban elites, reflecting the political context in which the neighbourhood approach is embedded ³¹. More importantly it reflects a lack of any wider concept of participation by local communities. Such an approach appears to largely function as a form of legitimation

when applying for funds, but it also runs the danger of bringing into question the whole approach.

These four programmes share the aim of addressing urban social problems through area-based policies and, at least rhetorically, resident and tenant participation. However, despite these superficial similarities each originated in distinct politico-ideological and institutional contexts, albeit as a response to broadly similar socio-economic challenges. They all attempt to build citizen capacity at neighbourhood level in a way that can be viewed as potentially challenging 'traditional' forms of representative democracy and governmental methods. However, the differing traditions through which the relationships between the state and civil society are articulated can constrain or support these processes. In none of these cases is there a great deal of evidence that new forms of neighbourhood governance have evolved into co-management and/or 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 does represent a challenge to the French Republican ethos. In a political context where people are usually informed the emphasis on active participation in a process of dialogue and decision-making was something new. In instances where resident participation includes the idea of 'sharing power' it could be argued that participation has moved away from its initial aim of involving people in simply addressing the inadequacies of the institutions they, often, passively interact with towards something more constructive and empowering. In practice the French government has been running 'place-based' policies targeted on neighbourhoods for around 20 years whilst ignoring any conflicts with the Republican ethos and the supposed universal nature of the welfare regime. Even though progress in France may have been relatively slow, and largely unnoticed, compared to

the UK and Denmark, we need to acknowledge that the act of legitimating the taking on board local, territorially based, points of view represents a significant change in French State political culture. Even if it is not easily implemented, it can, indirectly and incrementally, initiate a process of wider change. Ironically, because of the largely pragmatic and ad hoc nature of local initiatives in France, neighbourhood based resident involvement could develop beyond rhetorical statements into more effective forms of participation although without any coherent political rationale.

Denmark, on the other hand, has a longer tradition of 'direct' engagement with citizens and thus had less difficulty in justifying neighbourhood based approaches that require the development of new forms of representation. Nevertheless, elected representatives (i.e. councillors) often found it difficult to come to terms with the idea of neighbourhood/community-based forms of representation that potentially challenged their role and position³². Perhaps what posed the greatest challenge to traditional Danish approaches was that an approach based on places (i.e. neighbourhoods) potentially conflicted with a welfare regime based around 'people-based' policies that attempts to guarantee equality of access and services to all. However, pragmatism appears to have displaced any deep-rooted concerns and the Danes have not exhibited the same concerns over 'place-based' policies as their French counterparts.

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^{33, 34}. However, we should not assume that communities are coherent and easily identifiable bodies with a single set of interests. Conflicts of interest are often present within neighbourhoods and the communities that constitute them, thus often making it difficult to identify and represent a consistent set of proposals partnerships can address.

Moreover, we need to acknowledge that a small number of people from a neighbourhood actively engage in these activities leading to the possibility that they will suffer from 'participation fatigue' as central government's incessant launching of new initiatives makes more and more demands on their time.

In England the use of local (neighbourhood) citizen participation is also part of a wider approach to modernising central and local government. The modernisation agenda seeks to restructure the delivery of public services by 'empowering' local people to place demands on delivery agencies to alter their mode(s) of operation. Arguably it also part of an even wider agenda – that of 'responsibilisation' – which attempts 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 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 an assumption underlying area-based programmes that in order to improve these neighbourhoods a better 'social mix' of people and tenures is needed - somehow, once the 'right mix' is achieved, the area will change for the better. However, this assumes that the problems affecting these neighbourhoods originate within the neighbourhoods, or at best that the public services provided to these areas are failing to address their problems. As a result there is a failure to locate the problems of these neighbourhoods in the context of wider forces originating outside them and over which they have little or no control. It is rather naively assumed that by changing the behaviour of those living in such 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 in the other three countries. This is because social policies have been designed to ignore territorial and local situations. Ensuring equal living conditions in all parts of the country is a major objective of the German welfare state, laid down in the constitutional framework. Policies such as “Sozialhilfe” are developed at national level with implementation left to local authorities who have limited discretion to decide the volume and forms of delivery. This 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. The *Soziale Stadt* programme, like the other three programmes, is mostly administered by urban authorities and integrated into existing forms of urban management 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 produce very varied outcomes at the local level. With regard to the way neighbourhood initiatives are integrated into the system of local governance in Germany Franke and Löh³⁵ note 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. Dormois et al³⁶ reached a similar conclusion in France, they argue:

...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 somewhat in England and Denmark there is not a great deal of evidence to demonstrate a significant restructuring of the relationships between public, private, voluntary and community sectors – local government still largely remains dominant. This situation significantly reduces the impact of community involvement at neighbourhood level, arguably limiting the possibilities for the development of new and innovative ways of addressing the problems of these areas.

The issue of governance

Finally the paper will briefly turn to the issue of governance. This needs to be done with a degree of caution because the term governance has become ubiquitous in its usage in the process losing some of its early precision and has become a contested 'concept'. Moreover, in terms of its use vis-à-vis urban governance and regeneration policy we need to acknowledge that governance has moved from being primarily an analytical concept to a normative and strategic notion.

This is not the place to review the vast literature on governance^{37, 38, 39} but it is useful to be aware of some of the key issues. Essentially governance originated as 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 appeared to have been considerably reduced as a result of privatisation, marketisation and decentralisation of state services (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 and a general fragmentation in the way that society is government and services delivered.

The overall outcome is widely considered to be 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."⁴⁰ Thus as Bevir and Rhodes point out "Patterns of governance arise as the contingent products of diverse actions and political struggles informed by the beliefs of agents as they arise in the context of traditions."⁴¹ .

Moreover, we need to recognise that not all interests are included in governance arrangements and the networks that underlie it. This may lead to the marginalisation, or exclusion, of potentially disruptive interests and groups, or that such interests and groups are persuaded, whether by material benefits, symbolism or the 'art of rhetoric' to accept the boundaries and objectives of governance as established by powerful groups.

Despite the contested nature of the concept and its use in a normative and strategic manner governance is a widely used concept and it does point us toward some important issues, not least the fragmentation of governing and service delivery. This points to 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 in English is termed the issue of 'joining up'. This refers to horizontal and vertical (and territorial) coordination between the various organisations and policies involved in neighbourhood, or area, based programmes. All the initiatives discussed 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.

Yet despite this widely espoused commitment to a joined-up approach all the evidence from the programmes examined suggests that actions have 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 significantly change the ways in which they deliver services to these areas. For instance health service delivery mechanisms still tend 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. A similar story can be told in terms of vertical coordination with the relationship between local, regional and national levels being similarly fragmented, although the centre still seeks to exercise control through a variety of mechanism ranging from direct intervention through traditional forms of regulation, to political negotiation and the use of targets in an attempt to indirectly regulate behaviour at local level.

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. 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 and area-based policies.

Conclusion

As we have seen in this paper despite attempts by the EC to disseminate a 'common approach' to regenerating deprived neighbourhoods national governments are limited by their particular historical, constitutional, political and institutional/organisational traditions. Even when policies exhibit similarities 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 positions⁴².

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.

We also need to recognise that within Western Europe, supported by the European Commission, 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, as we have seen 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. 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. 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 approaches 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 develop citizen/community capacity at the neighbourhood level through engagement in project design and management. While we do need to be cautious, for reasons outlined above, it is possible to talk of an emerging 'neighbourhood agenda' across Europe and within countries. However, we should be judicious in the use of this term particularly given the different definitions used and the varying roles allotted to neighbourhoods and the people who live in them. 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 play an integrative role in terms of combating social exclusion and increasing social cohesion. However, it can also produce resistance to particular forms of development, lead to 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; here community involvement has rarely risen above the level of consultation. Moreover new and innovative forms of community participation have often been marginalised by the need 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.

Overall we can see identify that, within a broadly common framework, similarities and differences characterise the approach to deprived neighbourhoods; each programme has experienced successes and failures and it is important to understand these in order to facilitate the sharing of experiences within the EU. It is only by doing this that European states can support one another in their common goal of tackling social exclusion and supporting social cohesion within the broader European framework.

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