



# Soziale Stadt

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The newsletter devoted to the federal-Land Socially Integrative City programme

October 2003

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### Aktivierung und Beteiligung – Ein Blick in sieben europäische Länder

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## Dear Readers,

Urban neighbourhoods characterized by high unemployment, poverty, neglect and social conflict are by no means a uniquely German phenomenon. In the last decade many European states have launched new regional development initiatives to promote integration and participation, comparable with Germany's Socially Integrative City programme. They are designed to combat sociospatial divisions in towns and the associated emergence of disadvantaged and blighted districts.

Neighbourhood residents, local organizations, project planners, companies, administrators and policy-makers are now joining forces to test bottom-up strategies in the place of traditional top-down approaches. Their main objective is to improve quality of life in the affected areas. Inhabitants and other local players play a central role in providing expertise, as they know their own needs best. "Activation" and "participation" are the keys to urban district development.

Implementing these complex programmes, which usually goes hand in hand with the formulation of new policies, requires considerable experience-sharing, knowledge transfer, cooperation and publicity work. This does not only apply to the national level, but to the international level, too. In view of the growing need to import good practice models from abroad, export ideas to other countries and build transnational networks, all parties now agree on the increasing importance of international exchange.

We intend this publication to contribute to international debate on the central issue of activation and participation. We have utilized our various European contacts in the UGIS (Urban Governance, Social Inclusion and Sustainability) project and from EURA (European Urban Research Association) conferences in Copenhagen in 2001 and Budapest in 2003 by asking some of these colleagues to write about their experiences within their own national contexts.

This publication contains information about programmes in Denmark (the *Kvarterløft* scheme), Germany (Socially Integrative City, the federal/*Länder* programme for urban districts with special development needs), Britain (New Deal for Communities), France (*Habitat et vie sociale* or HVS, later called *Politique de la ville*), the Netherlands (Big Cities Policy in the Hague), Austria (Social Urban Renewal, the *Grätzelmanagement* pilot project, Local Agenda 21, *Strategische Umweltprüfung*), and Sweden (the national urban development programme and Stockholm's Outer City Initiative).

Despite their different frameworks and subjective approaches, the articles share many common and comparable elements. These include:

- the crucial importance attached to activation and participation strategies for integrated urban district development and for democratic processes in general;
- mention of high-performance organizational and communication structures as prerequisites for effective activation and participation;

- emphasis on the need to clearly define responsibilities, duties and decision-making powers in order to avoid false expectations and resulting disappointments;
- the conviction that shifting administrative responsibilities to local level will encourage inhabitants to participate.

In general all contributors stress that activation and participation depend on governmental support to become effective instruments and methods in democratic decision-making.

- Your  
Difu Socially Integrative City team

# *Kvarterløft – Participatory Urban Regeneration in Denmark: 1997–2007*

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## **Programme background in Denmark**

The national integrated urban regeneration programme in Denmark is called Kvarterløft (possible translation could be neighbourhood improvement). The Kvarterløft programme comprises projects in twelve neighbourhoods in eight cities. Seven of the projects run in the Copenhagen Metropolitan area, and five of these are in inner city districts. The remaining projects are in cities in the western and northern part of Denmark.

The general objective of the Kvarterløft programme is to combine urban renewal and improvement of the social situation in the targeted neighbourhood to bring it into line with the rest of the city. The Kvarterløft programme combines a participatory approach with an integrated method that bundles initiatives from various traditional sectors, for example physical urban regeneration, labour market policy, educational policy and ethnic integration. A third key feature of the Kvarterløft programme is its management model. It applies a management-by-objectives approach, meaning that most activities and subprojects are regulated by detailed contracts that are renegotiated annually. The fourth characteristic of the programme is the limited geographical focus on a relatively small urban unit, the neighbourhood.

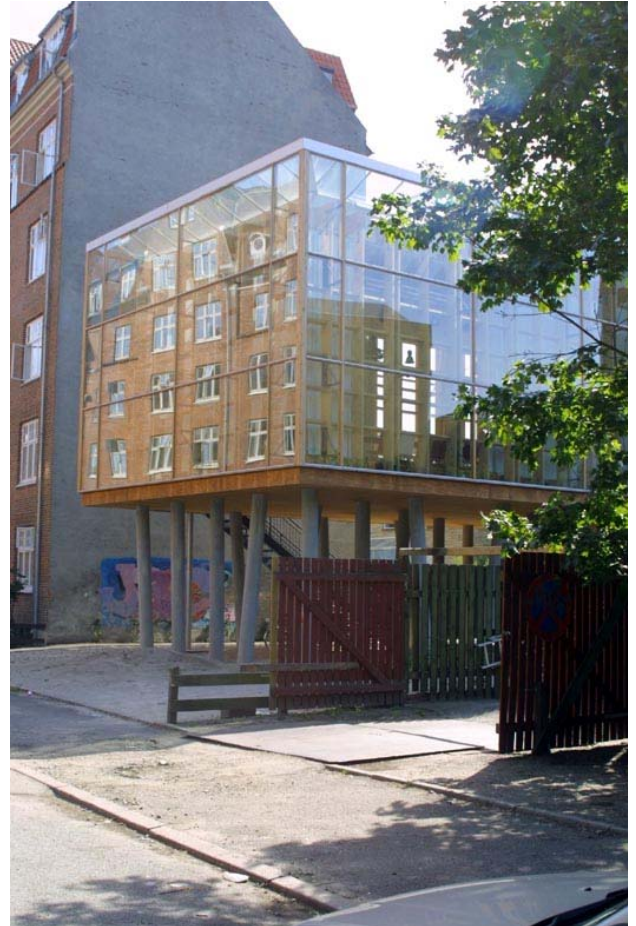
The Ministry of Integration has headed the Kvarterløft programme since November 2001. The Minister of Housing launched the programme in June 1996. The Minister invited the major Danish cities to submit proposals for Kvarterløft projects. Of the 18 proposals received, the Ministry se-

lected seven for funding from 1997 to 2002. Another five neighbourhoods were later included in the programme and will be funded from 2001 to 2007. Central state funding depends on complementary municipal funding. Depending on the type of activity, the degree of central state funding varies between 30 and 60 per cent. Physical regeneration activities typically receive more funding from central administration than do social or labour market projects.

The urban regeneration programme is a national scheme implemented by local governments at neighbourhood level. The selected neighbourhoods vary in size from 1,000 to around 20,000 inhabitants and are generally smaller than the existing urban administrative districts.

## **The role of activation and participation in the programme/ policy approach**

Originally, the Ministry of Housing described the intention to involve citizens as an ambition to “include and rely on local forces”. Two specif-



New community centre in Holmbladsgade in Copenhagen. The establishment of meeting places for neighbourhood residents is seen as crucial to increasing citizens' participation in neighbourhood activities (photo Jacob Norvig Larsen).

ic arguments have been used in favour of active public participation. One is that the more people from the local community become involved in Kvarterløft activities, the more this will promote a sense of belonging and ownership among residents of the neighbourhood. The other argument is that the nature of the problems that confront deprived urban neighbourhoods necessitates activation of local knowledge and resources to aid the public sector to cope with the challenge – and to stretch resources

by mobilizing voluntary manpower. Consequently, active steps have been taken to involve local citizens and firms and public institutions in the neighbourhood. Participating locals contribute to the formulation of needs and wishes, the generation of ideas for improvements in the neighbourhood and both general and detailed planning.

### **Organization of activation and participation**

Generally, a Kvarterløft project is regulated by a contract between the Minister of Integration and city management represented by the Lord Mayor. Each Kvarterløft project is then organized by a local governing body and an administrative secretariat. In daily operations, professional secretariat promoters coordinate resident involvement and are responsible for liaising with local businesses and institutions, etc. To some degree the members of the local governing body, which includes representatives of local tenant associations, ad hoc Kvarterløft working groups and local schools and kindergartens, also take the lead in organizing events that involve citizens themselves.

### **Forms of activation and participation**

Generally, all Kvarterløft projects were initially introduced to the community at large public meetings typically attended by between one and three hundred persons. Here ad hoc working groups were established. In most projects these large public meetings have been held more than once, and working groups have reported back with proposals for activities, projects and improvements in the neighbourhood. Later in the course of Kvarterløft, other working groups have been involved in detailed planning and supervision of the implementation of specific activities and projects. In addition, various kinds of local festivals, seminars, meetings,

tidy-up-the-neighbourhood events, etc. have been organized.

### **Goals of activation and participation**

The main purpose of tapping local resources, be they individual citizens, community-based organizations, private enterprises or public institutions, is basically to improve the quality of the services and investments offered to the community by the Kvarterløft programme. Thus it is assumed that involving residents and other people in the neighbourhood can foster a sense of ownership, which in turn is expected to enhance the long-term sustainability of the investments made under the Kvarterløft programme. In quantitative terms an unofficial goal has been to involve around five per cent of the population in the activities.

### **Experiences with activation and participation**

Experiences show a clear link between the choice of organizational form and successful public participation. The more openly and supportively local government and the local Kvarterløft organization run the project, the more people become involved. A closely related and equally important prerequisite is that dissemination of information is timely, substantial, reliable and relevant. A slightly more sobering finding is that activation and participation tend to favour the local elite in the community. Ample time to participate is just one of the prerequisites. Others are insight into the ways that meetings are conducted, knowledge of how local government decisions are made and – last but not least – a clear understanding of the limits of the influence that the participating citizens have been given. Otherwise frustration, desertion and apathy are likely to result.

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# Activation and Participation in Germany

Activation and participation in urban district development have been a “fixture” of German policy since the 1970s. They were consistently incorporated in Land urban district renewal programmes during the 1990s. The federal-Land programme launched in 1999, “Urban Districts With Special Development Needs – the Socially Integrative City”, has given activation and participation national coverage. The Leitfaden zur Ausgestaltung der Gemeinschaftsinitiative “Soziale Stadt” (Guideline for Implementation of the Joint Socially Integrative City Initiative) published by the Construction and Urban

ment will be rebuilding autonomous district activity, restoring the social fabric, augmenting all existing resources and motivating inhabitants to participate in initiatives and associations and organizing themselves on a permanent basis. This is designed to gradually enable the districts to function as independent communities again.” (ARGEBAU 2000: 4 ff).

The Land guidelines and bulletins on programme implementation adopt the ARGEBAU recommendations to different degrees and interpret them variously. The significance of activation and participation is recognized

ever, the appreciation of activation and participation scopes and the choice of methods vary greatly from municipality to municipality.

## Methods and forms of activation and participation

In Germany activation can be understood as a central component of urban-district social work and community development. In this context the process is “not tied to any specific project or topic involving (as a rule) activation of the local population over several years” (Hinte 2001). The purpose is to identify problems, organize stakeholders, mobilize capabilities, i.e. “communication, innovation and organization of human and financial resources”. Activation is need oriented and draws on resources existing in the district/neighbourhood. Appropriate methods and tools include stimulatory surveys; guidance services; outreach; streetwork; networking and mediation between individual players, public and private organizations; organization of meetings, (district) festivals, events and campaigns; site and facility inspection tours; publications and briefings; neighbourhood public relations through (multilingual) district newspapers, posters, flyers, brochures, newsletters, websites; use of logos and slogans (cf Mohrlök et al. 1993: 223 f).



Citizens' forum founding meeting, Hanover-Vahrenheide  
Photo: Thomas Oberdorfer, Hanover.

Planning Panel of the Housing Committee (ARGEBAU) cites “harnessing local potential”, “helping people to help themselves” and “creating self-reliant civic organizations and stable neighbourhood social networks” as major programme goals. In underprivileged neighbourhoods, “a central concern of urban district develop-

in principle, but few of the Länder provide concrete tips on implementation. In most cases the participating municipalities are merely urged to create suitable structures, establish procedures and take appropriate steps. The vital importance of activation and participation is also controversial in both cities and towns. How-

In contrast, participation tends to be at a formal level and based on more or less planned procedures (fixed programme, specific locality, moderated agenda) and to involve comparatively concrete objectives (e.g. discussing certain topics, developing projects, representing group interests). Forms of participation include district conferences, district and citizen forums, futurology workshops, lay ex-

pertises, task forces, task groups, workshops and participation-oriented projects.

### **Experience with activation and participation in implementing Socially Integrative City**

#### *Importance of outreach and low thresholding*

In all programme districts – regardless of their starting points – activation tools are employed, especially publications and briefings, guidance services, district festivals and (stimulatory) surveys\*. In many cases, however, it has become apparent that outreach methods must be used more vigorously than in the past to have an impact on certain target groups – primarily (young) migrants, the unemployed and recipients of transfer payments. Participation is also a policy in all districts. This takes the form of district conferences and forums, task forces and participatory projects. Triggers, goals, subject orientation and duration vary greatly, however. Lowering thresholds, i.e. maximizing transparency and minimizing access barriers (including previously established structures) plays a major role. It has also become clear that achieving the desired activation and participation effects requires an atmosphere of trust that can only be built gradually.

#### *Demand for viable organizational structures*

Success in the fields of activation and participation are mainly observed in districts which have established efficient neighbourhood management in municipal government, on site and at an intermediate level. Onsite neighbourhood management is crucial to activation and involvement – the ongoing presence of experts at the grass-roots and the creation of an onsite office are indispensable prerequisites for establishing communication, relationships of trust and player networks



Tree planting campaign, Gelsenkirchen – Bismarck/Schalke-Nord  
Photo: Stadtteilbüro Bismarck/Schalke-Nord

(cf: Difu 2003: 175 ff as well as [www.difu.de/english/occasional/neighbourhood-management.shtml](http://www.difu.de/english/occasional/neighbourhood-management.shtml) and [www.sozialestadt.de/veroeffentlichungen/arbeitspapiere/zwischenbilanzkongress/1-socially-integrated-city-appraisal.shtml](http://www.sozialestadt.de/veroeffentlichungen/arbeitspapiere/zwischenbilanzkongress/1-socially-integrated-city-appraisal.shtml)).

Problems primarily arise when collaboration with neighbourhood residents is basically restricted to formalized participation procedures, leaving the activation effort out in the cold. As a result, participation panels in some municipalities are attended mainly by highly vocal and/or previously involved citizens, while disadvantaged population segments rarely or never gain a hearing.

#### *Adapting to district idiosyncrasies*

If activation and participation are to work, it is crucial that the measures be tailored to the district and its heterogeneous population. Simple transfer of experience from one district to another does not usually succeed. Support of residents' ideas and their involvement in implementation of measures and projects are central features of activation. Any related

conflicts with concrete government project, scheduling and output conceptions must be resolved constructively. Annual budgeting and accountability sometimes collide head on with onsite timeframes.

#### *Necessity of clear rules of procedure*

Insufficient decision-making latitude hinders operations significantly. However, we do not dare allow inhabitants to harbour illusions about putting their wishes into effect. This involves timing of project implementation and procedural transparency. It includes defining how important participation is in the overall process, how binding participatory panel decisions are, who receives recommendations and resolutions and how extrapanel procedure is shaped. Vagueness on these issues may cause frustration and withdrawal.

#### *Support from local budgets*

The creation of contingency funds or district budgets has proved helpful, sometimes vital, in establishing local participation structures. These resources enable local players to expedite projects and measures unbureaucratically. The amount of "cash in hand"

is less decisive than the mere possibility of tapping these monies locally without having to negotiate. More than half of the programme districts have set up such a contingency fund, usually allocated by neighbourhood management boards, award juries, district forums or municipal authorities.

### *Political clout and government backing*

Implementation of Socially Integrative City has clearly shown that activation and participation are always dependent on support from legislative and administrative organs if the grassroots are to take them seriously as tools and methods of self-determination.

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### NOTE

- \* Statements on the status of Socially Integrative City programme implementation are based on results of German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu) support. Difu conducted surveys in communities participating in the programme and ensured onsite assistance in 16 pilot districts, one in each Land. See German Institute of Urban Affairs on Behalf of the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing (2003)

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# Activation and Participation in England

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## Introduction

The New Deal for Communities programme is designed to help narrow the gap between 39 severely deprived areas and the rest of England. The programme is attracting £2 billion over 10 years for the 39 communities. The individual schemes are led by local partnerships in neighbourhoods comprising between 1,000 and 4,000 households. The programme is about helping residents to reduce crime, improve employment and health prospects, and rebuild the physical environment and skills of local people.

The Government intends that the New Deal for Community partnerships work with departments and agencies to regenerate neighbourhoods and deliver sustainable change through a co-ordinated approach, i.e. the partnerships are working with community organisations, public, business and voluntary sectors. These include local, municipal and regional bodies. Responsibility for the programme lies with the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister ([www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)).

The National Audit Office ([www.nao.gov.uk](http://www.nao.gov.uk)) reports on the value for money with which Government departments and other public bodies have spent their resources. As part of this work, we are examining the New Deal for Communities programme. We are planning to publish a report on the New Deal for Communities programme in January 2004. Our audit has involved detailed case study work with five partnerships:

- Bradford Trident ([www.bradford-trident.co.uk](http://www.bradford-trident.co.uk))

- Devonport Regeneration Company
- Marsh Farm Community Development Trust (Luton)
- Shoreditch Our Way
- Back on the Map (Sunderland)

We have also studied regeneration/renewal approaches in three international regions to tease out the benefits and barriers of alternative community participation approaches:

- North America – New York (USA) and Toronto (Canada)
- Europe – Amsterdam/ Dordrecht (Netherlands) and Berlin (Germany)
- India – Hyderabad and Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh

It is important to note that the comments below are not representative of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

## The role of activation and participation in the programme/policy approach

The Government intends that residents of the 39 neighbourhoods should be at the heart of the New Deal for Communities programme. Residents, including ethnic minorities, local organisations and agencies are working in partnership to shape local services and improve neighbourhoods. The intention is to find bottom-up rather than top-down solutions to local problems.

## Organization of activation and participation

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (<http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/>) manages the New Deal for Communities programme. Neighbourhood partnerships are composed of elected boards of residents (who form a majority), public, business and voluntary

sectors. The partnerships have implemented skill-building strategies that suit the proposed neighbourhood plans. Examples of sustainable capacity building include the opportunity for residents to develop projects, liaise with relevant groups and chair meetings.

## Target groups for activation and participation

The New Deal for Communities programme is using residents and the involvement of key stakeholders/agencies to form strong partnerships that deliver sustainable change. Partners include local government, health authorities, police bodies, housing associations, business and chambers of commerce, education bodies, etc.

## Forms of activation and participation

Partnership boards have been established that are representative of the community, as far as is possible. For example, partnership boards have reserved places for ethnic and faith groups. Methods of getting people involved include community events and one-stop shops established to promote participation as well as to provide advice and consultation.

*"I think Bradford Trident is getting to the grass roots. I think word of mouth is very powerful and the word of mouth is what's getting people engaged in some of the programmes and, for me, that's the most effective thing that's happened."* (Quotation from resident attending National Audit Office facilitated Focus Group.)

## Goals of activation and participation

The aims of the New Deal for Communities participation approach are



to ensure that local service and neighbourhood improvements meet the needs of the community. The expectation is that the partnership boards will be in a position to deliver the New Deal for Communities programme. This will include responsibility for allocation of an average 10 year budget of £52 million:

*"I came here in 1964. I grew up here, my brother grew up here. It's the first time that we've had a little playground. The first time in 50-60 years now, I've seen in my life one playground. It's very good, you know."* (Quotation from resident attending National Audit Office facilitated Focus Group.)

### Experiences with activation and participation

The 39 partnerships were introduced in two rounds:

- 17 partnerships in 1998
- 22 partnerships in 1999

Activation and participation has varied for the partnerships, partly due to the phased launch. The 39 communities face a number of problems characteristic of deprived neighbourhoods. Dominant issues might include housing as a major problem in some areas; unemployment in those areas which have suffered a decline in major industry; and crime in other areas.

- Some partnerships started off with strong participation, but process and procedure requirements of the programme have limited opportunities for wider participation in the long-term.
- Partnerships that have used consultants extensively can inadvertently restrict opportunities for resident participation.
- Where there has been a strong history of community activity in an area, it can be difficult for other residents to find a way into the programme.

- Childcare is a problem in some areas, which restricts the opportunities for single parents to find work and a role in the programme. Similarly, the elderly may be restricted in taking part for mobility and/or limited transport reasons.
- Timings of meetings can limit the participation of those in work, particularly in the restaurant trade.
- The formal nature of meetings undoubtedly intimidates those residents who have no or limited experience.

residents and local bodies to achieve demonstrable and sustainable change in the shaping of local services and neighbourhoods.

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Sunderland Back on the Map partnership Education Working Group meeting.

Source: National Audit Office

A major positive has been the programme intention to promote inclusivity, specifically for ethnic minority groups and youth. Extensive surveys of the views of local residents are an important participation tool for the partnerships. The Government is committed to learn from the New Deal for Communities programme. The programme has to be seen in the light of the Government focus in identifying what works and what doesn't work in regeneration. By placing communities at the heart of the programme, the Government is providing an innovative opportunity for

# *Inhabitant Participation and “Politique de la ville” in France*

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Generally, inhabitant participation is a key dimension of integrated approaches for urban sustainable development, which flourished everywhere in European countries during the nineties. This is obviously true of the “Politique de la ville” in France, a policy which is more established than other European approaches, since it was initiated at the end of the seventies. Now, contracts (“contrats de ville”) have been signed between the State and 247 metropolitan areas; they concern approximately 1,500 neighbourhoods. Subsequent formulations have constantly regarded inhabitant participation as a priority and as a challenge to embrace, even if results have not lived up to ambitious objectives. In fact, this article wishes to focus less on the disparity between objectives and reality, a disparity which is unsurprising in politics, and instead to examine reasons for the permanence of this topic in this policy formulation, although it is regarded as its major failure.

Politique de la ville was initiated during the seventies under the name of “Habitat et vie sociale – HVS”. It arose when urban policies in France were reformulated, with the move away from peripheral space urbanization (construction of high-rise estates) and demolition of old, run-down districts (urban renewal) to an approach focusing on protecting historical heritage and restoring old districts on the one hand, and on refitting deprived high-rise estates where disadvantaged citizens (mostly migrants and the poor) increasingly congregate, on the other hand. This shift from “dictating to the city” to “working with the city”, from urban “hardware” to “software”,

thus requires a change of approach from urban players.

This change involves reconsidering the role of players and, particularly, inhabitants. It is unavoidable because it is impossible to refurbish a city and its districts without taking into account the people who live there, their needs and their desires. Technical reasons also play a role, because urban economic development is increasingly based on expansion of public services which must be used to survive. This inhabitant involvement, which is a natural consequence of this development, also has a particular dimension which takes into account sociological characteristics and changing territories related to these policies (people who often have less experience of political, trade-union and community involvement and, of course, of assuming responsibility).

Finally, this necessary co-operation with residents raises other, more political, concerns, prompted by the evolution of urban societies.

To understand this, it is necessary to refer to the political, democratic way of thinking which prevails in France and to the rejection of the concept of community. Like corporations, communities, as basic political organizations centred around specific local interests, were intended to be swept away by the winds of revolutionary change (Le Chapelier law of 1791). It is a strange paradox that, two centuries after this famous law, corporatists, the community and associative networks have weakened considerably (development of individualism, reduction of solidarity and social co-

hesion, backward flow of political commitment), and that the organization of social reproduction systems and even political regulation mechanisms clearly demonstrate that they are needed. At the same time, peripheral ethnic and religious communities and “gated communities” are increasing.

Inhabitant participation is the fruit of this paradox. It flourishes in the Politique de la ville, which targets precisely those districts where disadvantaged classes are concentrated. Reference to the issue of participative democracy in speeches has been all the more frequent ever since representative democracy has been in crisis, having lost its capacity to represent the diversity of social groups and their interests (abstention, corporatism and electoral clientelism).

One of the typical objectives of the Politique de la ville is to recreate this “representativeness” by implementing development strategies in areas in which residents could fully participate. To some extent, we can regard these strategies as “propaedeutics” of the construction of a new form of citizenship. This aim is fostered by steering committees uniting various players (including inhabitants, of course,) in charge of promoting projects planned by local communities. It is supported by professionals (project and development managers) whose mission is to help people and various resident groups implement their projects. Sometimes training schemes are organized to increase inhabitants’ ability to manage project development (empowerment) and at the same time to build a new political “elite”

from second and third-generation immigrants, for instance. In 2002, a new national law on local democracy and district councils was passed.

Results on this matter are ambiguous. On the one hand, it is difficult to swim against the tide of change and, in particular, to break with a culture of consumption and assistance in the face of a traditionally suspicious political approach to community development. In addition, professionals in charge of city management and urban government systems have not been generally prepared to share their skills with others and to co-produce services with inhabitants (democratic governance).

We can be optimistic about inhabitant participation because these changes do not just involve political goodwill (which politicians have conceded), but also concern the need now imposed by the central role that cities have to play in the globalization process and by radical changes within economies and urban societies. One of the major tasks is improving and expanding social capital in the cities to enlarge town capacities in complex self-management. The big challenge for participation strategy and, of course, for new urban policies is to give people, especially women, on whom social and political reproduction of our urban societies depends, more responsibility in their personal lives and in their communities. This need to “work with the city” forces local players to find new methods to conceive and implement one of the major and permanent tasks identified by Hannah Arendt within European cities: how to ‘exist and live together’.

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# Participation in Decision-making in the Netherlands: The Big Cities Policy in The Hague

In the Netherlands the four Big Cities submitted a special request to the central government to focus particularly on the problems of the cities. The central government has drawn the outline of the policy, and the cities have refined it to meet local needs. The central government provides funds for the cities. The goal of the Big Cities Policy, which runs in four-year covenant periods (starting in 1994, 1999, 2003), is to create a complete and lively city in which all its residents have a place. The policy is an area-based approach focusing on deprived areas.

Participation in decision-making is perceived within the Big Cities Policy primarily as a means of improving the situation of residents in deprived areas. It also recognizes that the various target groups themselves often know best what is good for them and how this can be achieved.

In practical terms, the change to a more participative approach in policy formation in the Netherlands is evident. Until about 1990 there was a strongly centralized government which allocated budgets and took decisions. The second Kok cabinet turned the new public administration insights into policy. In 1994 they introduced the Big Cities Policy. The cities were then expected to formulate their local priorities in long-term development programmes in cooperation with residents and private players.

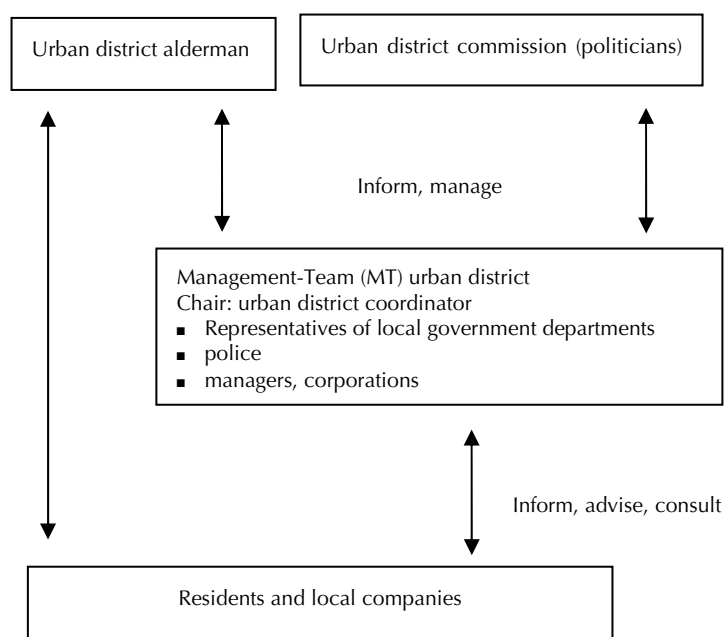
The policymakers regarded resident participation as an essential component of the Big Cities Policy. Policymakers can create good social and political conditions for resident participation by ensuring adequate institu-

tionalization of their status. In practice, for residents to be able to participate in decision-making processes, everyone must be in a position to take a decision, so residents must have access to information. Moreover, residents must have the opportunity to take decisions; they must acquire some power from other parties with influence. That parity can be achieved by taking measures to strengthen residents' position. Residents' organizations can be supported with funding, knowledge, and facilities. It is not the case that residents have everything their own way in urban governance. In the Netherlands politicians, as democratically elected representatives of the people, have a controlling and directive function and therefore always have the last word.

## Institutionalization of resident participation in The Hague

Each city, in consultation with all the parties involved, had to draw up a document setting out all the intentions for the covenant period by the start of the second phase of the Big Cities Policy (1999-2002/3). The Hague document is entitled: "The Strength of The Hague." Both the document and the interviews (23 interviews were held with policymakers for the UGIS programme in 2001) reveal that The Hague is proud of how it has dealt with residents' participation in policymaking. The local authority sees itself as an innovator in the area of urban governance. "The Strength of The Hague" states that the local authority attaches great importance to the participation of various

### Organigram of Participation in Management Teams in The Hague



Source: Interviews UGIS 2001



players and that public-private-resident cooperation is highly valued and ought to be intensified at urban district level.

The Big Cities Policy is an area-oriented approach, coordinating physical, social, and, wherever possible, economic measures in every district. Ideally, this coordination process should involve all parties: housing associations, business people, residents, the police, welfare services, all municipal services, schools, hospitals and so forth. For this purpose a Management Team (MT) is set up in each district, with residents fulfilling an advisory role. The chair of the team is the urban district coordinator, a local government officer from the local authority. Residents also have the right to bypass the MT associated with the district and respond directly to decisions proposed by the local council. To reduce the distance between the local council and the neighbourhood residents, every neighbourhood now has its own senior councillor who acts as their contact person. As well as representation by a local government officer, there is now political representation in each area.

In addition to residents' involvement, the openness of urban governance plays an important part in resident participation. The urban district coordinator is a key person in the participation process. In practice, policy formulated by the local council is elaborated at the urban district level. Interpretation of regulations "from above" by the urban district coordinators can vary widely and can consequently lead to different participation results.

To what extent does the policy of The Hague now meet the requirements of good urban governance? One characteristic of urban governance is that it favours more intensive cooperation with various parties, including resi-

dents and their organizations, to ensure clear agreements on responsibilities and contributions. Problems have arisen in The Hague in drawing up clear agreements and because of the lack of transparency regarding decision-making powers. The current form of organization leaves room for the interpretation of managers and the urban district coordinators in the Management Teams. It is in fact questionable whether the residents' contribution should be set down at all. If everything is fixed down to the last detail, no scope for any new initiatives remains.

It is also important for the government to support resident participation with funding, knowledge, and facilities. Residents' organizations do the groundwork for this. The problem here is that new residents, such as immigrants, find it difficult to join existing organizations and as a result have fewer opportunities to make themselves heard.

The accumulation of social capital can also be a problem. The composition of the population plays a vital role here; the great diversity of population groups in deprived areas impedes the establishment of networks which enable residents to become active. The knowledge and skills to organize in spite of diversity then becomes all the more important.

In summary, we can state that, while the local authority is making every effort to encourage residents to participate in decision-making trajectories during the decision-making process, it faces a difficult task. New, promising initiatives stand or fall by the quality of the organization. Good organization places high demands on the local authority and the residents. For participation to be successful, residents must be in a position to take part and act through the organizational structures that the local authority establishes.

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# Activation and Participation in Austria

Activation and participation are still comparatively rare in Austria. In the environment sector new approaches involving forms of conflict regulation (e.g. environmental mediation) are gradually replacing comparatively rigid negotiation procedures. This is opening a window of opportunity for citizens to contribute directly to decision-making processes. The *Strategische Umweltprüfung* (SUP) tool develops political approaches and programmes and plans for land management, transport, waste management, utilities and tourism at round-table discussions integrating all relevant interest groups. Local Agenda 21 processes also promote participation mechanisms. Taking Vienna's almost 30-year experience of "sensitive urban renewal" (so-called *Gebietsbe-treuungen*) as a basis, classic tasks such as informing and advising or "helping people to help themselves" have now been superseded by new participation models which integrate many elements of community organization.

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW) has initiated a participation strategy group under the leadership of the Austrian Society for Environment and Technology (ÖGUT) to promote participation processes. The group has developed general framework conditions and quality criteria to this end ([www.partizipation.at](http://www.partizipation.at)). As well as promoting cooperation, mediation and empowerment, it emphasizes the following basic principles:

- A prerequisite for participation is the backing of political and administrative decision-makers.
- All relevant interest groups must be equally represented in negotia-

tions, under consideration of the demands of gender mainstreaming.

- When dealing with the results of negotiations, participants' commitment and possibilities for exerting influence and taking action must be defined.
- Participation processes require the appropriate resources (data, funding).

The group has also formulated quality criteria for process control and design. It places particular value on harmonizing formal and informal processes, for example, organizing interfaces between mediation procedures and official processes.

and *Grätzelmanagement* (*Grätzel* is a term for district, neighbourhood or quarter) tend to be individual local government pilot projects. The City of Vienna in particular – with the extensive support of the City Planning and Transport Council – can look back on several successful urban development projects (e.g. the restructuring of Yppenplatz in Ottakring and the establishment of an Internet forum to accompany development of the Vienna high-rise building concept). The *Strategische Umweltprüfung zum Entwicklungsraum Nordosten Wiens* (Strategic Environmental Testing for the North Eastern Vienna Development Region or SUPer NOW) discusses fundamental questions on land



Participation forum in the Vienna town hall (source: Kollmann et al.)

Despite these advances at federal level, socially oriented urban development in Austria is not incorporated into a superordinate political approach like the German Federal and *Land* programme "Districts with Special Development Needs – the Socially Integrative City". Social urban renewal, Local Agenda 21 schemes

and transport development and associated environmental aspects with interest group representatives ([www.wien.at/stadtentwicklung/supernow](http://www.wien.at/stadtentwicklung/supernow)).

The drafts for Vienna's new urban development plan STEP05 are also to examine new citizen participation

approaches. The plan focuses on policy areas, tools and measures for socially oriented urban renewal. The *Grätzmanagement* pilot project is currently running in two districts (the Volkert and Alliierten quarter and the area around Wallensteinplatz). The project's main principle is utilization of inherent potential and resources to ensure sustainable urban development. In concrete terms this involves encouraging citizens to take an active role, providing information on possible structures and support of initiatives. The project team has set up a *Grätzforum* to improve intercultural communication and devised a survey to motivate citizens to participate in action groups working on various neighbourhood topics. Furthermore, the Volkert and Alliierten quarter has called on social institutions – particularly schools – as multipliers for *Grätzmanagement*. An initial positive result has been improved contact with people from immigrant families. Various institutions such as churches, a branch of the Vienna Integration Fund, a youth club and a women's centre have become important meeting places in the local network.

Graz is the second city to test social urban development. Its URBAN II Community initiative (UrbanGraz-West) has introduced participation procedures. All programme objectives are devised at an early stage, not only by experts, but also as part of a communication-oriented development process. The *Initiative Stadtteilentwicklung Graz-West* has headed a campaign to involve as many public and private social, economic and ecological interest groups as possible in communication and participation processes and in public planning and decision-making structures. To complement this, the city has set up the "Infopoint" as a central office in the district of Gries, and an Internet platform ([www.urban-link.at](http://www.urban-link.at)).

Population activation and participation is currently experiencing an upswing as far as urban development is concerned. This has resulted in more useful project findings since more information, knowledge and local player commitment are incorporated into actual planning. However, there is also a danger that participation may just be a mask, especially if participation offers are furnished with inadequate resources, or none at all. Often the most important resource – decision-making powers – is lacking.

The increased significance of activation and participation is reflected in the training of future decision-makers. For example, for two years Urban Planning and Architecture students at the Technical University in Vienna have been able to attend a course on Participation and Moderation, which focuses on mobilizing hard-to-activate sections of the population such as the homeless, the young and immigrants, among other topics.

In Austria, where all too often a "couldn't care less" attitude reigns, activation and participation of the population is crucial to strengthening local democracy and improve social and cultural integration.

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# Activation and Participation in Sweden

## Two initiatives to develop the outer city of Stockholm

In 1995 Stockholm City Council introduced the Outer City Initiative. It was designed to improve living conditions in 13 city districts that were identified as “lagging behind” the social, economic and physical development of the city as a whole. The initiative’s objectives and goals have shifted over the years, as have its organization and working methods. These shifts resulted mainly from political changes on the city council, but partly also from practical experiences. The different political parties on the city council are generally agreed on the overall purpose of the initiative – to enhance living conditions and democratic participation in the districts concerned. But they disagree on the means and methods that should be used. The initiative will run at least until 2006.

In 1998, the Swedish government decided to introduce an Urban Development Programme to promote development and to combat growing social gaps and problems in the three big city regions of Sweden – Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. The intention was to initiate a long-term Urban Development Policy, but an initial development period with government funding ran between 1999 and 2003. The programme targeted 24 urban districts in seven municipalities in the city regions. The programme is implemented mainly at the urban district level. In the City of Stockholm the programme targets five districts in the outer city. These five areas are also targeted by the Outer City Initiative.

The Urban Development Programme has two overall goals:

- to create conditions for long-term sustainable growth in the city regions
- to break down social, ethnic and discriminatory segregation in the city regions and to promote equality and comparable living conditions for city residents.

To achieve the goals, local development agreements were established between the state and the municipalities.

also seen as important goals in themselves. In the national urban development programme, participation and activation of inhabitants are even cited as two of the conditions for national co-funding of the local development programme.

The task of defining what is actually meant by activation and participation and to find working methods to reach the goals has been given to the city districts themselves. It has not been easy. The city districts, however, have



Market in the Kämpinge school, Tensta district (Photo: Malcolm Jacobson)

## The Stockholm experience

Activation and participation of the inhabitants in the city districts concerned is considered a strategic issue in both development initiatives in Stockholm. Both initiatives consider activation and participation two of the most important goals if long-term and sustainable development of Stockholm’s outer city districts is to succeed. Participation and activation are seen as important means to achieve goals such as better education and higher employment rates. But activation and participation are

tried to find new methods and ways to reach inhabitants, inform them and involve them practically in local development work.

Responsibility for activation has mainly been the task of the local city district administrations, especially during recent years. In the Outer City Initiative, work started in 1995 as a project outside the district administration, but later it was included as part of district administration to avoid work marginalization.



From the outset, activation activities mainly targeted the inhabitants of the areas. During implementation of the Urban Development Programme, activation activities also targeted other important local players such as housing associations, the local police, the social welfare office, the health service, schools and of course the local employment office and local enterprises.

Over the years many different forms of activation and participation have been used: local surveys of inhabitants, discussion forums, special local "future-planning conferences", small local working groups tackling questions of particular interest, political debate, special local decision forums for development project activities to give inhabitants a say in local decision-making, etc. Different kinds of information activities have, of course, been tried, such as exhibitions, pamphlets and articles in local newspapers. Some districts have also tried a system with special local "link workers" to reach different population groups. Other local players, such as enterprises, employment offices, etc., have been involved in local "steering committees" or "management groups" and also in different kinds of working groups.

#### Experiences with activation and participation to date

- In most of the city districts, successful cooperation has developed between important local players such as the district administration, local enterprises, housing associations, etc. At the moment there is ongoing discussion on how different players can pool their resources at the local level more effectively to reach common goals on local work. This is not easy due to different regulations, etc., but interesting steps have been taken in this direction.
- The participation of inhabitants in different issues has also sparked

interest in other local issues among those who have participated in working groups, local future seminars, etc.

- Awareness of the importance of communication between inhabitants and local authorities has developed during the whole working process.
- The city districts have been very much left alone to define activation and participation. Municipal and national governments have mainly left the task to local government.
- Only a minority of residents have participated in meetings, working groups, etc. They have rarely been representative of the district population.
- Many of the structurally important issues in developing a small city district are decided outside the district. Since central government has not been involved in activation activities, it has been difficult for inhabitants to increase their participation in more than very marginal local development issues. This has had a negative impact on motivation to participate in the long term.
- So far it has been difficult to really involve the central city level in development of the areas targeted by the development initiatives, for example. In cases where the central level has been involved, it has stated its own conditions.
- From the start of the Outer City Initiative, many great promises were made to inhabitants in the districts concerned. That led to many unrealistic and unrealizable wishes from inhabitants, which caused great disappointment among many.
- There has been some confusion about where activation should lead. Is activation a way of involving inhabitants in identifying the most important development questions in the district? Or is it a way to let inhabitants also find

and implement the solution to every issue? How can inhabitants and professionals find new ways to work together to solve local problems in a sustainable manner?

#### Challenges for the future

The City of Stockholm must continue to develop methods to integrate different kinds of "development initiatives" and development activities from many different central authorities into one integrated development scheme actually based on local conditions, but with scope for different central players to participate. This is a key challenge.

Local government must further develop communication between residents and local authorities, not only via special projects, but also through the day-to-day work in the city districts.

Both the authorities and many residents will have to change their attitudes, from expecting the authorities to provide a service to residents, as mere "consumers", to realizing that residents will have to take, and be given the opportunity to take, more responsibility for local development. This is a major challenge, not only for the areas that need special development programmes, but for society as a whole.

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