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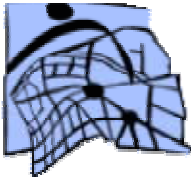
**Participation, integration and supporting research
as key elements of Urban Development**

Programmes and European cohesion policy

**Speech held at the EURA - Eurocities - MRI Conference "European urban
development, research and policy - the future of European cohesion policy",
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Participation, integration and supporting research as key elements of Urban Development Programmes and European cohesion policy

Dr. Rolf-Peter Löhr, German Institute of Urban Affairs, Berlin

Speech held at the EURA - Eurocities - MRI Conference "European urban development, research and policy - the future of European cohesion policy", Budapest, 28 - 30 August 2003

Bas Verkerk, the Vice Mayor of The Hague, in his speech introduced the aims and claims of Eurocities concerning the future EU structural and cohesion policy.⁽¹⁾ I can join him in nearly everything he said. Cities on the one hand are the engines for regional development and so crucial for the European development, too. On the other hand in cities the effects of the rapid changes in economic und social conditions are felt first and most strongly. Urban Development Programmes (UDPs) therefore must have a central position in the EU Structural Funds. It doesn't need me to repeat this.

But I want to add some issues he didn't mention, but which in my opinion are essential for success of UDPs. In so far I refer to the experience, the German Institute of Urban Affairs, in German short "Difu", gained since 1999 from its research on the German programme "Districts with special development needs - the socially integrative city".

1. This programme is one of Germany's responses to the profound structural change, I mentioned. It concentrates on disadvantaged districts where for many reasons primarily deprived people live (or have to live). Because there is not only a social polarization in society between the poor and the well-off but a growing spatial polarization, too, mainly caused by a loss of 2 Mio social rented flats in the last 20 years and at the same time an increase of unemployed of 2 Million people.

The core elements of the programme can be sketched as follows:

- The programme is to complement traditional urban development assistance and dovetail it with other policy areas relevant to urban development in a new,

integrated approach.

- The aim is to concentrate investment and non-investment measures from various programmes of the EU, the federal and Länder governments.
- The concept calls for ongoing, area-specific, and integrated urban-development action in the sense of a holistic improvement strategy.
- Residents, business and industry, clubs and associations, and other local players are to take on responsibility in developing and implementing local programmes.

The overriding aim of the programme is to counter the generation or consolidation of disadvantage and to promote the improvement of local living conditions. So it tries to make cities visible as a whole, not only certain sectors of them.

The following map with the towns and cities involved in the programme shows clearly that the tackled problems can be found all over Germany not only in certain parts of the country.



Federal/Länder Socially Integrative City programme and URBAN II cities

2. One of Difu's roles concerning this programme was that of a concomitant research. Federal, Länder- and local Governments shared the opinion, that it might be helpful, to support an advice to the towns and cities implementing the programme, and to mobilize and challenge them where necessary.

Federal research funds have therefore been invested in an interregional mediation, information and advice agency to boost implementation of the programme in the municipalities concerned. Difu has been commissioned with this task in its role as a predominantly privately founded research institute which also receives small support from the federal government and from 130 municipalities, a kind of solidarity fee.

The concomitant research focused to a large extent on three elements: promoting communication and sharing of findings among players, reinforcing and investigating programme implementation in one "pilot district" in each Land, called "onsite programme support", and conducting two nationwide surveys at the outset of the programme in 2000 and about two years later, in 2002. The following figure gives an overview of the elements of our activities.



Programme support elements

In the second survey we found certain types of success and a lot of problems still to tackle. Successes could primarily be found on the instrumental-strategic fields of activities, such as improved participation, activation of new population segments, better cooperation between different departments of the administration, esp. more neighbourhood-rapport of municipalities and politicians; and the mood in the districts could be improved as well as the image of these neighbourhoods. It's not too much, but 2 or 3 years is not a long period regarding the complexity of the problems. But the potentials of the people in these areas begin to be activated.

3. This is in very short the background of what I want to stress as necessary additional elements to what Bas Verkerk and Eurocities say.

What in the opinion of nearly all actors involved in the Socially integrative city-Programme is crucial for successes - and therefore should be part of the demands of EU Structural funds - are

- a) integrated action plans, tailored at the local situation,
- b) citizen participation, empowerment and coproduction of district development and
- c) concomitant research in the above mentioned sense.

4. Integration of actions and finances of other policy sectors is necessary not only for diverse building investments, but esp. for different economic, social and cultural measures. In Germany social measures are not addressed to certain areas. Such a sociospatial approach is called for from youth welfare and social researchers for a long time. It doesn't replace an individual approach in any case, but often it is more appropriate to kinds of problems and it might help prevent some severe problems of individuals.

A sociospatial approach allows and requires cooperation between the planning or renewal department and social departments, which up to now is quite unusual in Germany. The federal youth ministry therefore set up an own programme only for the districts in the socially integrative City-Programme and so enhanced cooperation in this field. In the meantime there are many examples of good results of such cooperation, because very often it is a win-win-situation. This often is the case in the cooperation with other sectors, esp. economic promotion, too. But there are not so many examples yet.

In any case: If the social problems as lack of labour, health care and many others, esp. a good school in the neighbourhood, are not solved, any UDP will fail. By the way: Resource pooling from different departments and employment of funds was more efficient when there was an integrated action plan.

5. Participation does not mean the classical way that government asks people for

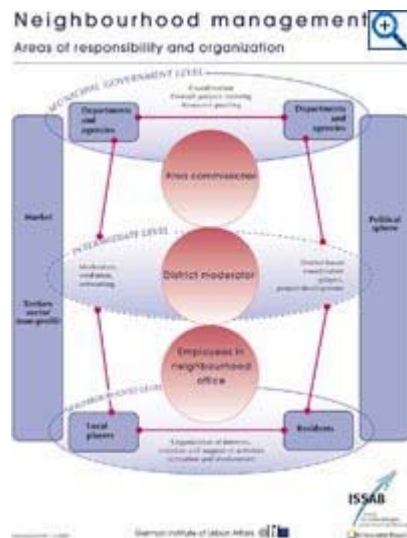
their opinion to more or less pre-decided measures or plans.

The programme aims not to do something for inhabitants in these districts, but to promote development there hand in hand with residents. This poses a challenge to many professional urban planners, social workers and youth welfare officers, who have learned and studied what is in people's best interests. They must relinquish some of their decision-making powers and be willing to engage in open dialogue with citizens.

However, residents are also challenged and expected to articulate their interests and realize them in cooperation with local government. To regard the authorities as a necessary partner in achieving their goals, often doesn't have a long tradition in such districts. Trust must be built up; this takes time, but it is necessary and possible.

Of course, local government cannot simply wait and see whether people wish to be involved in decision making. It must actively seek to mobilize and empower them. The state is therefore no longer a bureaucratic, service-performing institution, but one which mobilizes citizens, requires and facilitates their participation and encourages them to assume responsibility.

The programme strives to foster and reinforce this process by calling for the establishment of a three level neighbourhood management, incorporating the neighbourhood, local government and an intermediary.



Neighborhood management - Areas of responsibility and organisation

Neighbourhood management has the task of contacting people and establishing structures which comply with the requirements I just have listed. And of course it is not limited to citizens, but must involve local industry, shop keepers, restaurants etc. and Not-for-profit-organisations, too. The following figure shows the structure of such an neighbourhood management. It is based on the experience of Difu and the University of Essen and with more or less modifications can be found in most of the districts involved into the programme.

This requires within the administration the establishment of interdepartmental project groups and the introduction of decision-making processes which make citizens' involvement relevant. In the case of larger measures, it goes without saying that the final decision must lie with the elected local council. This ensures the commitment of

the whole municipality. Nevertheless, citizens themselves can take many smaller decisions and implement them by drawing on a free money-fund not earmarked for any specific purpose, for example. This is very important for activating people, building up self-confidence and trust.

It is understandable that local politicians are not always happy with such decision-making structures. But if they give innovations a change and get involved, as they do in many towns and cities, they do not lose their standing but improve contact with residents, gain influence and win trust. This effectively combats the political reluctance which can be observed in many areas, without causing "problems of democratic theory". On the contrary: Claude Jacquier, a researcher from Grenoble, points out that the reference to this topic of participative democracy "is all the more strong since representative democracy is then in crisis, having lost its capacity to represent diversity of social groups and involved interests (abstention, corporatism and electoral clientelism)".

6. The usefulness of a concomitant research for exchange of experience, stabilizing the actors inside and outside of local administration I already have pointed out. It of course doesn't replace an independent evaluation of the programme, but it can provide a lot of information and links for effective evaluation. In Germany an in between evaluation of the Socially integrative city programme just has started.

7. Let me come to the end. The Socially integrative city programme as all UDP's all over Europe cannot solve the severe problems coming out from economic and social change alone. But without such integrative programmes orientated at the special and complex problems and diverse potentials of people in disadvantaged areas, building up social capital, self confidence and a better image of these districts, people in these deprived neighbourhoods would remain disadvantaged, even if economic development would offer new chances. They wouldn't or they couldn't take advantage of it. So the EU should strongly support integrative and participatory UDP's and with this support researchers doing a good work for the disadvantaged in a concomitant research.

Reference

(1) The complete paper is to be found on the Eurocities homepage www.eurocities.org: EUROCITIES Position Paper on The Future of Cohesion Policy in Europe - Establishing a strong urban dimension in the future Structural Funds.
Published: 30/06/2003.