Realistic regeneration : housing contexts and social outcomes of neighbourhood interventions in Western European cities

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Abstract
Urban policies in Western Europe have increasingly taken a territorial focus in addressing social problems through area-based initiatives (ABI's). Policy discourses emphasise the role of the residential environment in the social economic deprivation. However, a territorial focus which tackles both place-based issues and people-based problems would only make sense either when a 'critical representation' of the target population resides in several areas in an already divided city, or when neighbourhood effects take place. In the European context, the existence of either scenario is not a matter of fact. Our overview of four urban policies reveals that even though the rhetoric makes multiple allusions to the existence of the two scenarios, there is no convincing evidence. Moreover, in some cases the evidence refutes policy assumptions. This means that the policies are merely tackling unrelated problems: people-based social economic deprivation and place-based liveability and housing issues. In addition, urban policies stand against a backdrop of social and cultural integration debates. It is unknown what the territorial focus will do for integration, but it is unlikely that ABI's will be successful in effectively tackling social economic deprivation in European societies.

2.1 Introduction

Since the 1990s, social exclusion and social economic deprivation has become a key urban policy issue in Western Europe (Andersen, 2001, Atkinson, 2000, Atkinson, 2008, Musterd, et al., 2006, Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998). The growing gap between the 'included' and 'excluded' is believed to be caused by social mechanisms that reinforce social exclusion, limits opportunities and ultimately traps individuals. An essential reinforcing mechanism is the spatial manifestation of social exclusion: segregation. As the excluded become segregated from the included in society, the assumption is that their social exclusion will perpetuate itself through neighbourhood effects associated with socialisation processes or other mechanisms (Massey and Denton, 1993). Hence, over the years, a range of policies have been designed to tackle the 'wicked problems' of social exclusion (Atkinson, et al., 2006). Social exclusion policies in Western Europe share several characteristics (Andersen, 2001). First, instead of sector-based policies, policy makers have increasingly favoured strategies that target a limited selection of 'unliveable' and 'most deprived' urban areas. These strategies are referred to as area-based initiatives (ABI's) to reduce social exclusion. Secondly, European urban policies aim to integrate different types of policy approaches in order to address a range of social economic deprivation

and liveability problems simultaneously and holistically. While integration may not always have been complete or satisfactory, the intention to integrate has brought social phenomena closer together in urban policy. Thirdly, the policies are typically designed and implemented through local governance structures.

This paper is mainly concerned with the first two points, where a connection is made between social economic deprivation of individuals and the residential environment. This connection is a result of the social exclusion discourse which has widened policy concerns from social economic dimensions such as poverty and unemployment to place-based liveability issues related with vandalism, anti-social behaviour, crime, safety, traffic, pollution and housing. In short, the assumption is that social problems of individuals, i.e. social exclusion, in Western European cities can – to quite some extent – be attributed to place-based characteristics of these individuals' neighbourhood. Or in other words, neighbourhood problems are assumed to be a source of sustained social economic deprivation. This assumption is a powerful advocate for the use of an area-based strategy to tackle social malaise.

The aim of this paper is to review area-based policies in Western Europe that address urban social problems through a territorial strategy. We will mainly focus on the problem statements and objectives of several ABI's in Western Europe and confront these with our theoretical assertions on ABI's and social exclusion. The main questions to be addressed are: Which social problems are urban territorial policies meant to tackle within the Western European context, and how far is the territorial focus applicable and justified in tackling these problems?

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we will give a short overview of the literature on area-based initiatives and social exclusion policies. The third section introduces two scenarios which would justify a territorial strategy to fight social exclusion. These scenarios link people-based deprivation-related problems and local-based liveability issues. We will argue that either the existence of neighbourhood effects or severe concentration of target groups truly justifies the choice for a territorial focus. In the fourth section we will give an overview of the problems and objectives of ABI's in 4 Western European countries. In the fifth section we will try to disentangle the problems ABI's are meant to tackle. Finally, we will round off with a concluding section.

2.2 Area-based initiatives and social exclusion

To tackle urban social problems, Western European policy makers are increasingly relying on so-called integrated, multi-sector, area-based initiatives (or policies) (Parkinson, 1998). Atkinson (2000) regards the use of ABI's as part of a wider European urban policy challenge to reduce poverty and social exclusion. The challenge arises from extensive economic, demographic and socio-cultural developments in the recent decades. In Western Europe these interrelated developments refer to changes in the economy and labour market structure, and to immigration, globalisation, and discrimination and racism (Musterd, et al., 2006).

The urban policy trend emerged in Western Europe in the 1980s, when the focus shifted from social welfare issues to a more pro-active stance concerned with economic restructuring. However, the reshaping and the demise of social-democratic welfare state arrangements in favour of neo-liberal ideology affected and altered social structures. The role of the state as a guarantor of social security and a level of equality was deemed economically ineffective and counterproductive. Instead, neo-liberal ideology pressed for the state to take a step back in favour of personal responsibility and to rely on the supposed benefits of the trickle down effect in a free market economy (Hacker, 2006; Harvey, 2005). As wealth does not seem to be trickling down to everyone everywhere,

the issues of social inequality and social polarisation returned to the academic agenda (Andersen, 2001). The political and ideological reaction to the contradiction between economic competitiveness and social wellbeing shifted away from 'Keynesian' macro-economic solutions of the past. Instead, governments favoured policies based on the advancement of work and competitiveness to reduce poverty in society (Finn, 2000, Harloe, 2001, Peck, 2002). The demise of social-democratic welfare state ideals has increasingly led to a shift in social policies from universalist and sectoral, towards rudimentary, integrated and spatially targeted (see Cochrane, 2007). The shift in social policy was also from state-dominated policies to a more local approach by employing ABI's and by emphasising the role of partnerships, local governance, resident participation and community empowerment (Atkinson, 1999, Geddes, 2000, Goodlad, et al., 2005). Cochrane (2007: p.147) argues that these notions of governance offer managers and policymakers hope to deal with the complexities and uncertainties of the urban through incremental negotiations and decentralisation of responsibilities.

While social economic deprivation and poverty feature prominently in the political discourse surrounding urban policies against social exclusion, ABI's are hardly ever confined to socio-economic issues such as access to work, education, social services and income. Policymakers also tend to take the residential environment into account, thereby also focusing on many other aspects of the locale. In other words, many integrated ABI's aim to simultaneously achieve people-based results as well as place-based changes (see Lawless, 2007). Typically, the integrated territorial interventions also include initiatives aimed at reducing crime and vandalism, renovating housing, reinvigorating public space, handling traffic issues, stimulating local community life, etc. Policy actions are often undertaken to improve the market position of a neighbourhood by improving its 'liveability', a subjective notion about the amenities, safety and appearance of a particular neighbourhood (Lawless, 2007, Visscher, et al., 2006). The place-based dimension of the social exclusion discourse will be examined further in the next section.

The use of a territorial strategy may be attractive for policy-makers because of several instrumental, managerial and political advantages. The territorial focus can be a starting point from where government and private actors can work to coordinate, integrate and improve their activities. Furthermore, the involvement of residents may benefit local interventions as well. When resources are too scarce for any meaningful domain or sector-based policy territorial re-distribution may be preferred. Although these efforts may improve local conditions, a substantial and satisfying outcome on a societal scale is doubtful, as the amount of resources are likely to be insufficient to target all areas in the country with individuals that suffer from social economic deprivation. This last point will be discussed further in the next paragraph. Furthermore, the use of ABI's may have political advantages. Politicians and policy makers can demonstrate their decisiveness through improving places and building new structures. The use of physical interventions as a lasting testimony of political greatness is a time-tested method since the Pyramids. However, these interventions may not necessarily yield the desired social change.

Some have criticised the use of ABI's to fight social exclusion and poverty and argue that the shift towards agency-based, bottom up social planning holds an ever-present risk of the pathologisation of the poverty problem. When local residents are expected to be the agents of regeneration, this could suggest that they are responsible for their own misfortunes, i.e. 'blaming the victim' (Alcock, 2004, Chatterton and Bradley, 2000). In addition, the focus on local solutions for local problems 'can suggest that such problems and solutions are locally based' (cf. Musterd, et al., 2000). In Sweden, for example, there are instances of city districts that have refused participation in ABI's out of concern for stigmatisation of the area and its residents (Andersson and Musterd, 2005).

2.3 Justification for ABI's: 'Critical representations' and neighbourhood effects

Atkinson et al. (2006) state that it is tempting to see urban policies as a form of 'sticking plaster' that deals with 'wicked problems' that society as a whole wishes to end, but, nevertheless, remains reluctant to tackle at the roots, i.e. through redistribution of wealth. However, they argue that in the British context the Labour government has displayed a genuine willingness to combat social problems. We propose two possible justifications to choose an integrated territorial strategy over domain or sector-based policies when the objective is not merely to impress voters, to manage the poor, or even to solely increase the liveability of an area but to ultimately reduce poverty. These are the existence of some degree of 'critical representation' of the target population, expressed as the dual or divided city (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991), or the existence of neighbourhood effects.

The first justification relates to the unequal distribution of social problems. The existence of concentrations of social problems in certain areas provides the opportunity to address the needs of a large group of disadvantaged people. In this case, ABI's may be cost effective. Furthermore, it creates the opportunity to implement integrated policies, and new partnerships can be developed to change an area with sufficient political commitment. ABI's speed up the responses of the state and the market to overcome a neighbourhood's problems (Rhodes, et al., 2005). These interventions might be regarded as effective when a clear social divide between neighbourhoods exists; where there are neighbourhoods with an overwhelming share of their population labelled as 'urban outcasts', as opposed to neighbourhoods with hardly any 'urban outcasts' residing there (cf. Wacquant, 2008). These strategies may also help where a limited number of clearly identifiable poverty neighbourhoods suffer from persistent stigmatisation.

However, the question remains what concentration of social problems justifies such an approach? Not all poor and socially excluded individuals live within targeted concentration areas and this is *a fortiori* true for most European cities. In addition, not all residents in concentration areas are socially excluded or live in poverty. As a result, some individuals may receive policy attention, while others elsewhere are neglected. Moreover, there is a risk that the focus on an area may result in an ecological fallacy whereby the problems of a number of residents become those of all residents in the area. This relates to the pathologisation argument above. In sum, when there is a substantial share of a target group residing in one area, i.e. a 'critical representation', and when there is a very clear social division between neighbourhoods, the use of a territorial strategy might be efficient and socially justified, albeit questionable still.

The second potential justification for ABI's is related to the notion that certain population compositions in an area have additional negative effects on individuals compared to other compositions. In other words, living in an area where a large share of the population is in a disadvantaged position in combination with other place-based conditions will also have negative effects on the life chances of all individuals in the vicinity (see Buck, 2001, Galster and Zobel, 1998). So-called social mixing policies, a type of area-based policy, are based on these assumptions. The idea originated from the US, but is also potently present in Western European policy making (Andersen, 2002, Andersson, 2006, Cole and Goodchild, 2001, Kleinhans, 2004, Musterd, et al., 2003). The neighbourhood effect on individuals is typically attributed to socialisation processes, failing local social networks, or stigmatisation effects. In terms of policymaking, the total amount of social problems of an area exceeds the sum of individual problems. However, both in the US and Western Europe, the idea has met with criticisms and scepticism with regards to the mechanisms of neighbourhood effects and the absence of convincing empirical support (see Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Ellen and Turner, 1997; Galster, 2007;

Musterd and Andersson, 2005; Ostendorf, et al., 2001).
However, neighbourhood effects are not unreal and when their presence is confirmed, the use of a territorial focus would be justified.

The next sections will give an overview of urban social policies in Sweden, the Netherlands, England, and Catalonia. We will focus on the social problems the policies aim to tackle and on how these relate to the rationales for employing an area-based strategy which simultaneously addresses people-based deprivation and place-based issues to tackle social exclusion. The problem definition and policy design should have a notion of the two scenarios above and, in light of academic scepticism, should be based on some evidence. In the last two sections we will disentangle the various problems which are being addressed, and reflect on the applicability, efficiency and justification of a territorial focus.

2.4 Urban policies in Western Europe

2.4.1 Sweden: Metropolitan Development Initiative

The Metropolitan Development Initiative (MDI) was introduced by the Swedish central government in 1999, representing the cornerstone of a new policy field in which urban problems were the key focus of attention (Burgers and Vranken, 2004). As such, the MDI signified a shift in housing and urban regeneration policies in Sweden from the physical sphere to the social. During most of the second half of the 20th century, policies were characterised by slum clearance, urban renewal, housing renewal, and 'cautious regeneration'(Andersson, 2006, Elander, 1999). However, in the late 1990s, the Social Democratic government shifted the focus towards social issues with the MDI, which was initiated in response to 'unacceptable social differences' within urban regions (Andersson, 2006).

The MDI has two objectives: 'to support development in urban areas towards long-term sustainable economic growth', and, more importantly, 'to break down social, ethnic and discriminatory segregation in these areas and work for equal opportunities on both individual and gender level'(CMA, 2007). Because an area-based strategy is only followed in relation to the second objective, the next paragraphs will primarily focus on the rationale to 'break segregation'.

The MDI emanates from the influx of immigrants into Sweden since the 1980s. Newly arrived immigrants have typically settled in large-scale housing estates on the urban fringes. In other words, selective migration has led to concentrations of immigrant in those areas where the housing market is most accessible, i.e. areas with a large share of cheap or public housing. Simultaneously, the native middle-class tends to avoid these areas (Bråmå, 2006). It should be noted that from the government standpoint ethnic segregation implies social or class segregation: 'class society has acquired an ethnic dimension' (CMA, 2007). The presumption is that immigrants are generally poorly integrated into society and the labour market. Furthermore, limited options on the housing market have led to concentrations of poverty in certain types of neighbourhoods, which suffer from other social problems as well (crime, unemployment, low political participation, etc.). The assumption is that in these areas social problems hinder the prospects of immigrants and socially excluded people (Andersson, 2006). In other words, segregation needs to be broken to include and integrate certain social groups in certain types of neighbourhood.

To 'break segregation' and to create equal conditions in the city, the MDI seeks to improve living conditions in these neighbourhoods. This is done by increasing employment, reducing benefit dependency, strengthening the position of the Swedish language, increasing school performance, raising the educational level of the adult population and providing educational opportunities for adults, making city neighbourhoods attractive and safe, and providing sound and healthy living environments, improving public health, and increasing democratic participation (CMA, 2007).

The Commission on Metropolitan Areas was set-up in 1999 to co-ordinate the new policy and represented the state in negotiating contracts (local development agreements (LDA's)) with the eligible municipalities in the metropolitan areas of Stockholm, Malmö and Gothenburg. 24 poor and immigrant-dense large housing estates were selected for intervention. While the state regulated the number of areas per municipality, the municipalities were free to make their own spatial selection. Furthermore, municipalities delineated the disadvantaged neighbourhood according to different strategies. Some included rather well-off adjacent neighbourhoods to be part of the supported area while others only selected the 'worst neighbourhoods'. In terms of indicators, the former strategy results – statistically – in relatively acceptable levels of unemployment, health etc., while the latter results in far worse deprivation scoring. On the other hand, the former type of selection includes rather well-off households which were expected to provide a positive (neighbourhood) effect to the interventions, whereas the latter was not.

The municipalities received about € 220 million in funding from the state. However, municipalities were expected to match this figure. Even though physical decay was not high on the central government's agenda, municipalities tended to emphasise physical improvements in the allocation of their own contribution to the MDI (Burgers and Vranken, 2004). The LDA's ended as late as 2005, but to continue the strategy some cities have started their own ABI's.

In sum, the rationales for the area-based approach are related to selective inward migration and subsequent ´entrapment´ of poor households while middle class households avoid these concentrations of the poor or move away. As result, it is assumed that these poor households suffer from neighbourhood effects in large housing estates. This rationale, however, is an assumption which has not been tested beforehand. A second rationale is the overrepresentation of immigrant and poor households. With respect to the latter, it was found that only 4.7% of all poor households live in the selected areas (Andersson and Musterd, 2005). This means that about 95% of all deprived households live outside the targeted 'exposed' or 'excluded' areas. We will return to the integration issue below.

2.4.2 England: National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

Since the 1960s, England has developed area-based urban policies. Throughout the years, these policies have been characterised by the emphasis on integrated approaches through multi-sectoral and public-private partnerships. However, over the years some urban policies favoured private actors to cooperate with while others focussed on locally organised residents. During the 1990s, it was realised that the market bypassed poor individuals who tended to live in the same neighbourhoods. The 'bricks and mortar' and physically deterministic approach of the 1980s slowly gave way to social considerations. The key policy problem became how to ensure that socially excluded communities benefit from policies. New governance structures and more coherent ABI's were seen as the answer (Atkinson, et al., 2006, Hall, et al., 2004).

When New Labour came to power in 1997, the emphasis in urban policy moved to the 'worst' areas, to those 'communities' which were unable to reap the benefits of economic

growth. To tackle the social and economic polarisation in England, the government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) developed the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR). The assumption is that previous efforts failed to focus on people, social capital, employment, the inadequacy of public services in some deprived areas, and failed to transfer best practices and look beyond the neighbourhood. The strategy is designed to overcome these shortcomings in three ways: local interventions to identify linkages and causeways between employment, housing, education, crime and health; rebuilding social capital through capacity-building initiatives; and the encouragement of 'joined-up' working such as better regional cooperation, local strategic partnerships and multi-departmental working structures (Hall, et al., 2004). The emphases tend to be more on managerial and process considerations and less on long-term impact (cf. Lawless, 2006).

The NSNR spawned several uncoordinated policy programmes of which the New Deal for Communities is the most significant area-based intervention. Furthermore, the strategy seeks to improve service provision through two mechanisms: Treasury Floor Targets that require departments and local partnerships to be evaluated on performance in most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, which provides subsidies to the most deprived areas for any activity that fits the NSNR objectives.

The area-based approach was adopted because the strategy's overall aim is to prevent people from 'losing out' due to where they live (on ward level). More specifically, area-based regeneration is based on the notion that in some areas, 'problems of economic, social and environmental dereliction combine to lock communities into a vicious cycle of exclusion. ABI's encourage a range of partners to work together, targeting their resources to improve quality of life in these areas' (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2007). Even if the problem definition is kept somewhat obscure, it is clear that liveability and social economic deprivation are important themes of English ABI's.

The Multiple Deprivation Index (MDI) reveals some of the importance of the different themes. The MDI is a small area level measure, which contains seven domains of deprivation, which are being used to assess whether a neighbourhood is eligible for funding (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2004). More than half of the domain weights of the indices relates to social economic deprivation (approximately 52%), and health deprivation (about 14%). However, although social economic deprivation is very important, place-based elements make up roughly a third of the MDI. The emphasis on people-based deprivation in the problem definition and the subsequent use of ABI's further reveals the belief in the negative effects of place-based issues on individuals.

2.4.3 The Netherlands: Big Cities Policy and the 40 Neighbourhoods Programme

The Netherlands has a long tradition of urban policies. Originally, these policies concentrated on improving housing conditions and on physical decay. However, these policies did have a social component as it was emphasised that improvements were mainly carried out for the poor. However, in the 1990s, the government introduced the first edition of the Big Cities Policy (BCP), an area-based programme which focused on (low) 'income neighbourhoods'. Fear of ghettoisation translated into a policy of restructuring the housing market by replacing low-income housing with more expensive accommodation to attract high-income households. The result would be an improved social mix. In later editions of the BCP the social mix strategy was maintained but the legitimatisation for restructuring slowly shifted from attracting high-income households to retaining socially mobile groups within the neighbourhood. Both strategies were pursued to attract a middle class that would function as a role model and bring social capital to the area (Musterd and Ostendorf, 2008).

When a new government came to power in early 2007, it announced its solemn intention to tackle the problem areas of the Netherlands with the 40 Neighbourhood Programme in addition to running the BCP III.

According to the government, the increasing gap between the selected neighbourhoods and the rest of the country represents a danger to Dutch society. The argument is that there would be a real risk that the gap will result in parallel societies, as the poor would become ever more disconnected and excluded from mainstream society (Vogelaar, 2007). Hence, the programme exclusively targets the 40 'worst' problem areas and seeks to 'reinvigorate' these into so-called 'powerful' neighbourhoods.

The area-based strategy is chosen because urban social problems would relate to the accumulation of liveability problems in certain neighbourhoods. More specifically, these liveability problems are supposed to be related to the existence of 'physical and socio-economic deprivation and problems' (ibid., 2007). The accumulation of problems would create the increasing gap. The programme is designed to counter the threat of a divide that will disconnect the poor from the rest of society and drive them towards social exclusion. The Programme aims to tackle two issues in the chosen areas; deprivation and liveability issues. The assumption is that there are localised accumulations of mutually reinforcing social processes and physical deterioration that create liveability problems and deprivation, or in the words of the Minister responsible: '…the addition of problems increases the gravity and urgency (of the situation in the selected neighbourhoods)'[7]. To produce 'liveable' neighbourhoods and social inclusion, the Programme employs a range of integrated measures. A significant component will likely continue to be restructuring. Other interventions relate to employment, education, safety, social integration and housing. Thereby, interventions are both place- and people-based, but people-based only as far as they are living in the selected neighbourhoods.

The 40 Neighbourhood Programme selected its neighbourhoods through 'objective indicators' which reveal some of the assumptions of the government concerning the type of problems it will address. Even though the rhetoric and justification for the Programme is based on assumptions of neighbourhood effects and social justice, the selection is mostly based on liveability issues and then on housing considerations. Only 13% of the selection is based on shares of low-income households, low education and employment rates (Brouwer and Willems, 2007: 19).

Additional analyses have shown that, in contrast with assumptions that underpin the policies, liveability issues and social economic deprivation are unrelated phenomena in Dutch neighbourhoods (see Van Gent, et al., 2007a, Van Gent, et al., 2007b). In other words, there are neighbourhoods with many poor and low-income households who do not experience liveability issues, and there are affluent areas which do experience liveability issues. However, a relatively small group of neighbourhoods do experience both phenomena. For these areas, there is the possibility that the problems not only stack up but also interrelate. For instance, crime rates could seriously damage economic and educational opportunities, as well as mobility. However, we want to stress that the policy presented no evidence of the existence of neighbourhood effects. Thus, the core assumption of the programme justification was in no way tested, and the actual programme is more concerned with liveability issues than with deprivation. This is further illustrated by the fact that little over 8% of the target population lives within the selected neighbourhoods; 92% of those suffering from social economic deprivation live outside the targeted areas (Van Gent, et al., 2007b).

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7   Vogelaar, Ella (2007) Answer to parliamentary inquiries into the selection of neighbourhoods, The Hague, VROM Ministry, Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal; aanhangsel van de handelingen, vergaderjaar 2007-2008, nr 116, kamervragen nr 29532.

2.4.4 Catalonia: Neighbourhood Law

The regional government of Catalonia introduced the Neighbourhood Law (*Llei de Barris*) in 2004. It was one of the first laws issued when the Social Democratic Catalan party was elected to regional government. The law is based on the European Union's URBAN project and the French Loi Solidarité et Renouvellement Urban (Loi SRV). It meant the creation of a fund for neighbourhood regeneration in Catalonia (see Generalitat de Catalunya, 2006).

The fund is intended to encourage and drive local integrated programmes aimed at renovating and promoting urban areas that require particular attention. The issues that it focuses on are poor quality of housing, lack of public (green) space, overrepresentation of immigrants, demographic decline, and social and economic problems such as unemployment and low education. As such, the Neighbourhood Law is targeted at three types of neighbourhoods: old town centres, housing estates planned in the 1960s, and unplanned marginal housing districts (former shantytowns).

Like its French example, the Catalan ABI has a contract model where local governments have to make a bid according to central guidelines and principles and have to commit to funding half of the expenditures. The selection criteria are urban regression, shortfalls in amenities and services, demographic, social and environmental problems, social and urban deficits, and local development problems. Nevertheless, there is a high degree of flexibility by regional government to decide on the selection of areas. Municipalities are obliged to take action in eight fields:

- Improving public areas and providing green zones
- Communal areas in buildings, renovation and facilities
- Providing amenities for collective use
- Introducing information technologies to the buildings
- Encouraging sustainability in urban development
- Gender equality
- Programmes for social, town planning and economic improvement
- Accessibility

While regional authorities provide a manual with tools and methods for policy actions, municipalities have some discretion in placing emphases and can expand the fields of action. In addition, municipalities have to match regional funding for a period of four years. This serves internal objectives of: improving cooperation between levels of government as well as stimulating municipal action in deprived areas. Bidding was done in four rounds and about 70 projects were awarded funding throughout Catalonia.

The programmes are mainly focused on the neighbourhoods and less on their residents and the majority of the funds are spent on physical interventions. Furthermore, the philosophy of regeneration is strongly tied to the housing market. The funds are regarded by the policymakers as investments to improve market conditions. The expected outcome is that after 4 years of investing in public spaces, civic centres, amenities, buildings, etc., the prices will have risen sufficiently and the neighbourhood will attract new, more affluent, residents. This also implies the displacement of poor (often immigrant) households. To take care of this group in terms of housing, the government relies on the budding development of social housing in Catalonia. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a social agenda within the programme is relatively novel for Catalan and Spanish urban regeneration policies. A rationale for the programme is that 50% of the districts chosen have a high percentage of the population facing a risk of social exclusion (personal communication with a policy maker, 2007). This implies that with regards to its social activities, the programme is less concerned with neighbourhood effects than with social justice.

Table 1. Neighbourhood problems [8]

	Metropolitan Development Initiative	National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal	40 Neighbourhood Programme	Llei de Barris
People-based				
Social economic deprivation	●●◖	●●●●●	●◖	●
Health deprivation and disability	●◖	●◖	-	-
Place-based				
Crime, traffic, public space, and liveability issues	●●◖	●◖	●●●●●◖	●●●●●
Adequate provision of services	●◖	●	-	◖
Housing and housing market issues	●●	●	●●●	●●●◖

2.5 Disentangling neighbourhood problems

All policies discussed above contain notions of neighbourhood effects and 'critical' representation of weak social groups. However, with regard to the notion of neighbourhood effects policies fail to provide any convincing evidence of their existence. Moreover, none of the discussed policies specifically identify the assumed causal mechanism(s). With regard to the second notion we have seen that the Dutch and Swedish target areas comprise less than ten per cent of all the socially deprived, which is hard to regard as a 'critical representation'. This leads us to be wary of any claims in the British and Catalan cases.

So, if there is no convincing justification for a territorial strategy, the question is what in fact are the objects of the ABI's? Despite propagating a strong social exclusion agenda, policymakers are in fact more concerned with place-based liveability and housing issues than with tackling people-based social economic deprivation. Table 1 summarises the actual objects of policy of the four cases based on selection criteria or spending pattern.

While the Dutch programme mentions social divides and deprivation, its selection is heavily based on place-based characteristics. Likewise, the Swedish state emphasised social deprivation, but the municipalities chose to focus on place. The place-based problem definition is even more apparent in the Catalan policy, which aims to influence the housing market. However, the problem definition in the English Multiple Deprivation Index has the most emphasis on social economic deprivation. This implies a great deal

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8   The table is based on problem emphases in policy documents (CMA, 2007), the Multiple Deprivation Index (see Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2004, for exact domain weights), on the indicator weights in the 40 Neighbourhood selection in Brouwer and Willems (2007), and on expenditures after three bidding rounds for *Llei de Barris* funds, reflecting the discretion of the *Generalitat*. For the last three cases, a black circle (●) represents 10% and half a circle (◖) 5% of total domain weight or total expenditure. For the Swedish case ten ● were distributed based on policy documents and mentioned secondary literature.

of faith in its area-based strategy which also focuses on place-based issues. It is doubtful whether this has led to the desired social change. An evaluation of the effect of New Deal for Communities has shown that placed-based change was more evident than people-based outcomes such as improved health and more jobs (Lawless, 2007).

Finally, besides deprivation, housing markets and liveability, there is another 'problem' which ABI's are concerned with, which is the social and cultural integration of an immigrant or minority population into mainstream society. Indeed, the ethnic or racial component has been important in triggering area-based urban policies in both the US and in several Western European Countries (see De Decker, et al., 2003). Although only the Swedish policy mentions this explicitly, all policies should be seen as part of wider integration debates. This is even true for Catalonia, where Spain's new status as an immigrant-receiving country has resulted in some spatial concentrations of non-Western immigrant communities in poor urban neighbourhoods (Fullaondo, 2003). Despite the long history of immigration, the English have recently been warned of their 'sleepwalking to segregation' (Philips, 2005). The synthesis of integration debates and neighbourhood regeneration is perhaps best illustrated by the new Dutch ministerial post of Housing, Neighbourhoods, and Integration. The rationale for ABI's could then also be the mere existence of deprived and/ or immigrant neighbourhoods (cf. Andersson and Musterd, 2005). High concentrations make poverty more visible and concentrations of immigrants are seen by some as a result of failing integration policies. Many ABI's aim to increase civic and labour participation of immigrant communities and individuals in poor neighbourhoods either directly through social participatory activities (see Uitermark and Duyvendak, 2008), or by exposing them to a middle class presence within the neighbourhood. Thus, the assumption is that integration will come through employment and positive role models, which ABI's will supply. Hence, poor urban neighbourhoods have become 'battlegrounds' of integration.

2.6 Conclusion

Even though plenty of lip service is being paid to addressing social economic deprivation and poverty through neighbourhood targeting, there is no evidence that the territorial focus is more efficient than domain or sector-based policies. To be sure, an area-based intervention could be a logical and efficient way to solve local-specific problems and issues or to boost the market position of unpopular neighbourhoods in high-demand regions. However, to fight social economic deprivation and poverty, the focus on neighbourhood makes little sense (see also Andersson, 2006) unless the city is already divided and a critical representation of the target population is present, or neighbourhood effects are found. When this is not the case, the unnecessary entanglement creates a risk that policies become self-defeating (cf. Sieber, 1981). Social economic deprivation is better tackled at higher scales of intervention. What is more, the insistence on place as both concentrations and causes of poverty runs the risk of unjustly stigmatising residents and pathologising the poverty problem (cf. Alcock, 2004). As for integration, it is unsure what an area-based focus can accomplish. Studies have shown that social contacts between middle-class and lower-class households in the same neighbourhood tend to be limited (Cole and Goodchild, 2001). Furthermore, area-based programmes may even produce social conflict rather than social integration when there is increased competition between various population-categories within the neighbourhood for the resources, support and funds. The risk of social 'disintegration' would be particularly high when residents grow resentful because they feel that their own category is not treated as fairly as others. In addition, a similar reaction may come from the population in low-income neighbourhoods that are not selected by area-based programmes and are denied access to additional

resources. In these cases, the feeling of not being treated equally would be even more obvious. For instance in the Netherlands, as indicated above, 92% of those suffering from social economic deprivation live outside the targeted areas (Van Gent, et al., 2007b). The result may be feelings of being neglected or even discriminated against, and of resentment towards social and ethnic groups that are perceived to be overly favoured.

So, we conclude that urban social policies in Western Europe are questionable with regard to their capacity for social improvement. The question then remains why these policies continue to be implemented. Possible explanations would have to mention political interests and hegemonies, welfare state change, the potential gains for developers, housing associations and home occupiers through housing market restructuring and modernisation, coping strategies of managers, and the sincere wish for social change (see e.g. Cochrane, 2007, Sieber, 1981). We are unable to discuss these points in this article. However, we would like to offer one other explanation.

To fight poverty in the developing world, the World Bank has been relying on large capital investments in the form of aid and foreign direct investments. Trillions of US dollars have been spent to give countries the 'big push' out of the poverty trap. However, the economic theory behind the 'big push' is fundamentally flawed and the investments only bring about transient rather than sustainable growth and poverty remains rampant. Despite the evidence the World Bank has not changed its strategy. The reluctance to change and shift away from the glaring mistakes has been attributed to the 'Something Is Being Done' (SIBD) syndrome. The World Bank only needs to maintain good publicity and fulfil the desire of the general public that something is being done. The World Bank does something by throwing money at it (Vira, 2007).

Western European urban social policies seem to be affected by the SIBD syndrome as well. The policies claim to abolish social exclusion and put an end to (urban) poverty. The policies contain multiple assertions and allusions to the existence of neighbourhood effects or of 'critical' representations of the socially excluded. However, these main theoretical assumptions are untested or questionable.

Furthermore, other problems are at stake which are not necessarily related to poverty. The discourse of social exclusion, as opposed to social inequality, has shifted problem definitions from structural social economic causes of poverty to locally specific causes. This has opened the door to physical and housing, i.e. place-based, interventions as means to tackle social problems. While ABI's which engage in social mixing may achieve a social change at the neighbourhood level and increase manageability there, it remains unsure whether they reduce poverty or when and where in the city the social problems will reappear. In addition to the social exclusion discourse, the integration dimension in ABI's is the product of the societal context and debates, which policy-makers and politicians are expected to act upon. Also, to meet the public demand for action, liveability and housing interventions are more attractive to politicians because people-based outcomes tend to emerge slowly, while environmental change may come more quickly (cf. Lawless, 2007).

Lastly, despite our critical attitude we remain confident in the accountability of government in Western European societies, especially compared to the World Bank. However, to help hold policy-makers accountable, we wish to stress that the research agenda should remain focused on deprivation and the deprived neighbourhood questions in the interest of improving policy and tackling poverty in European cities.

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