

What is the Special Purpose of Area Based Initiatives? How to Understand Deprived Urban Neighbourhoods

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Abstract

Research on the effects of area based initiatives in deprived urban areas in Europe come to very different conclusions on the purpose and effects of such programmes. One reason is disagreement on how to understand the nature of deprived areas. It is argued in the paper that an understanding of these as just 'spatial bounded pockets of poverty' is inadequate to explain the dynamic processes of segregation and decay taking place in such areas. Instead they should be seen as 'excluded places' – areas that increasingly diverge from the rest of the city and influence processes of migration and segregation.

Area based initiatives should therefore not be regarded as just locally bounded efforts against social exclusion. Instead the main purpose of these initiatives should be to stop exclusion of places and change these areas in a way that make them more suitable as living places for other citizens than the socially excluded.

Introduction – the trend towards area-based initiatives in Europe

Most European countries have had experiences with special problems that have emerged in certain more or less well-defined parts of the cities called deprived or depressed urban neighbourhoods. Earlier these problems were found in the oldest urban areas with the lowest housing quality. Since the beginning of the 1980s they have in Europe also emerged in newer social housing estates outside the centre of the cities.

Many European governments have initiated programmes with area based initiatives to fight against problems in deprived urban areas. But there has in the research literature been much disagreement on the effects of these programmes, where some researchers are of the opinion that the purposes of such initiatives are questionable and the effects doubtful. One of the main reasons for this disagreement is that there have been different conceptions of the purposes of the programmes and of the urban problems they try to solve.

A going through of some of the available recent literature¹ in the field – mainly based on British experiences - show that the following kinds of efforts have been done:

- physical renovation and embellishment

¹ Taylor 1998, Morrison 1999, Mumford and Lupton 1999, Parkinson 1998, Power 1997, Kürpick and Weck 1998, Cameron 1998, Evans 1998, Hall 1997 and Vestergaard 1999

- improving management and housing service for residents
- active marketing and attempts to counteract bad press and bad reputation
- change of tenure or extended disposal of dwellings
- support for private service facilities
- special efforts against crime – co-operation with police and other local institutions
- mobilisation and empowerment of residents and communities
- direct social support for socially weak groups – integration measures for immigrants
- attempts to attract new private firms and workplaces to the neighbourhood
- education, job training and other attempts to get employment to residents

These area-based initiatives seldom seem to have been chosen in connection with a clear strategy. Attempts to classify the efforts and their purposes are also seldom found in the literature. Hall (1997) distinguishes between 'Inward-looking' and 'Outward-looking' approaches. This division is based on an understanding of the problems of the estates as either 'internal' or 'external'. Internal problems are seen as related to the nature of the estate, while external problems are related to 'structural factors' and to the relationship between the estate and the city. Hall argues that regeneration policies have tended to focus on solving internal problems and therefore have been inward looking. He calls for outward-looking approaches, which seek to overcome physical and social isolation directly, improve access to employment, and place more emphasis on strategic, city-wide or linked partnerships.

Cameron (1998) also argues for a division of initiatives into 'looking in' (community development and empowerment) and 'looking out' approaches (jobs and training etc) and finds that the policies of the 1990s – in opposition to those of the 1980s – contain both approaches.

Parkinson (1998), who has looked at programmes in five countries, concludes that all countries increasingly use area-based approaches. He describes the general development in the initiatives as shifts from physical approaches in the 1980s to what he calls 'welfare approaches' - in recent years with more emphasis on economic dimensions and employment. He also stresses the great differences between the countries

Experiences with area-based efforts

As programmes and efforts applied have been very diverse so have also experiences with and evaluations of initiatives varied. In Parkinson's (1998) study of experiences from five European countries is said that there are '*considerable disagreement about the merits of area-based approaches*'. In his opinion one of the causes is faulty knowledge about the effects of area-based initiatives.

Parkinson has a positive evaluation of some of the English initiatives – especially the City Challenge Programme and finds that the UK has had more success with its initiatives than any other country. But he also states that it has been '*difficult to find conclusive evidence yet in any country of identifiable improvements in the economic and social circumstances of these areas*'. Also some other judgements have been quite negative. The British Governments 'Social Exclusion Unit' (1998) thus has concluded that none of the English initiatives have '*really succeeded in setting in motion a virtuous circle of regeneration*' and '*only for a few areas improvements have lasted. Most areas have either not improved or worsened*'. Also Taylor (1998) is quite negative in her appraisal of initiatives in difficult-to-let estates. She states that '*successive regeneration initiatives appear to have made little impact on the most difficult to let estates*'.

Powers (1997) has been more positive in her evaluation of the initiatives in twenty estates in five countries. One of the reasons could be that she had other objectives and expectations concerning the effects. The studied estates had very serious problems. They underwent a rapid decline and several of them were to some extent given up by the local authorities. The positive conclusion from Powers were on this background that *'the patchwork approach that addresses physical, organisational, financial and social problems together has prevented .. precarious communities from continuing on their downward trajectory, arresting decay and re-stabilising conditions'*. But she found that there are still unsolved questions on the estates and it is a question whether the achieved stability will last. Evans (1998) in his evaluation of the English 'Housing Plus' programme, which combines physical, financial and social measures, finds that the combined effect of the HP initiatives was *'impressive'*. There was *'a dramatic turnaround'* in the resident's confidence to the estates and a sharp decrease in the share of residents who wanted to move. And there was a good connection between extent of the efforts and growth in community confidence. His critique of the programme was, however, that there had been a quite modest scale of initiatives in relation to the severity of problems, which made *'the overall response quite patchy'*.

Some of the more negative evaluations have concerned initiatives that have been too narrow in their scope. It is a general conclusion (Social Exclusion Unit 1998, Hall 1997, Musterd et al. 1999, Parkinson 1998, Christiansen et al. 1993) that physical improvements alone are unsustainable.

There is also evidence that isolated efforts to combat social exclusion by trying to get residents back in employment only have a limited effect on the general problems of an area. Special initiatives to create jobs for people living in deprived estates are costly and difficult to operate. If they are carried through without other measures to improve the quality of the estates they will just lead to that people move away if they get jobs (Taylor 1998, Hall 1998), and the estate is left with empty apartments or new households without employment will move in. Isolated efforts to create work places in the neighbourhood in construction work or by getting new firms to locate there have thus proved to be of little effect to the estates as a whole (Cameron 1998, Hall 1998).

Another general conclusion is that effects of initiatives are time dependent. It takes a long time to create the partnerships and community involvement that are essential to success (Taylor 1998). Residents need time and are often brought into the process far too late. Short time initiatives are therefore doomed to failure. There is a danger that these kinds of initiatives just will lead to a public focus on the failures of the estates that will increase stigmatisation and bad reputation (Marsh and Mullins 1998, Taylor 1998) without having noticeable positive effects.

Critique of the theoretical basis of area-based initiatives

The main stream European research on deprived urban areas seems to be dominated by the view that their existence is directly linked to and explained by general processes of segregation and social exclusion and poverisation in the cities. Deprived or depressed urban areas are mainly seen as *'pockets of poverty'* – spatial concentrations of poor and excluded people (see Lee and Murie 1999, Madanipour 1998, Cars et. al. 1998, Social Exclusion Unit 1998). In this understanding the main reason for the development of problem areas is the general processes that create inequality and poverty in the cities, namely global and local economic restructuring processes and defective welfare policies (Musterd et al 1999, Parkinson 1998). Deprived urban areas

are understood as just another aspect of deprivation stemming from the general *exclusion of people* in globalised cities.

In this theoretical context the crucial question is if the spatial concentration of poor people in itself results in an increase in the poverty and social exclusion of the residents – the so-called social neighbourhood effects. If these effects are substantial there are good reasons to consider spatial pockets of poverty as a special problem that should be encountered by public measures. If social neighbourhood effects are small, however, it is difficult to argue for special area based initiatives. Instead other and more general measures, that in general reduce poverty and social exclusion, should be used.

Some researchers in this field (Friedrichs 1997, Musterd and Ostendorf 1998) conclude that some neighbourhood effects can be found, but that they tend to be small in Europe compared to the American experience. Musterd et al. (1999) therefore conclude that *'in an European context there are good reasons not to identify automatically social spatial inequality as such with 'problems'*. Not surprisingly these researchers are critical to the area-based approaches used in many countries to solve problems in deprived neighbourhoods. Van Kempen and Primus (1999) for example conclude that *'The battle against segregation and concentration is fought on the basis of ideas that are questionable in the Dutch situation, and probably in other European countries as well'* (van Kempen and Primus, 1999, p. 655).

What is the actual connection between neighbourhood deprivation and general social polarisation in cities?

Research with this theoretical basis often concentrates on the connection between deprivation of neighbourhoods and general tendencies in Western societies that tend to increase economic and social polarisation. A lot of literature² in recent years has discussed the spatial consequences of globalisation and changes in the labour market and tried to connect this to deprived housing. It has, however, been difficult to identify a clear connection between these phenomena, and often the literature has been quite speculative.

Signs of that segregation in general and deprivation of certain places are not just explained by globalisation and social exclusion, are that there does not seem to be a direct connection between these phenomena and general social and economic changes at the national or regional level. There is plenty of evidence of that segregation and deprivation of neighbourhoods continue in situations where the national or local economy booms and social inequality is decreasing.

In a national context Denmark and Finland are examples of countries with increasing employment and decreasing social inequality at the same time as segregation increases and new problem estates appear (Skifter Andersen and Ærø 1997, Andersen H. T. 1999, Hjarnø 1996, Kortteinen and Vaato-vaara 1999). It is also an experience from United States that the growth of the slums in the big cities has been most extensive in the periods with the fastest growth in employment and incomes (Skifter Andersen 1995).

Concerning the regional and local level Mumford and Lupton (1999) conclude from their mapping of low demand for housing in problem estates in England: *'there is no straightforward link between city and neighbourhood fortunes.... Leeds has one of the fastest growing economies in Britain, but its poorest wards have not stopped declining'*. Gibb et al. (1999) point to that *'explanations for low demand do not all lie in issues of population loss, income and employment... in regions with buoyant economies low demand will remain a problem of particular property types and particular neighbourhoods'*. Hall (1997) stresses that *'external factors cannot explain why particular estates are impacted upon more severely than others'*.

² Examples are Sassen 1994, Hamnet 1994, Jargowsky 1997, Wacquant 1997 and Allen 1998

Urban decay is connected to social segregation, which tend to concentrate the poor in the least attractive parts of a city. But it is not always obvious why some neighbourhoods have initiated a process of decline and others have not. There is a higher probability of deprivation and decay for neighbourhoods dominated by certain types of tenures and building types in poorer cities with economic decline. But some of such areas have done fine while some other types of neighbourhoods have had problems.

These facts point to that there is an incomplete understanding of why deprived urban areas appear and also of what is the purpose of area-based initiatives. In the following a new way to perceive these areas will be presented. The text is a summary of arguments from a forthcoming book on this subject (Skifter Andersen 2001), which aims at contributing to a deeper understanding of why such neighbourhoods come into existence and what their impacts are on cities.

Urban decay is a result of the interaction between social, economic and physical changes in the cities, but it can be argued that deprived neighbourhoods also constitute a very important element of and contribution to this interaction. These areas are not just a simple result of social inequality and segregational forces, they are also by themselves creating new segregation and inequality. In these neighbourhoods strong self-perpetuating processes have been started that by complicated mechanisms pull them into a downward spiral from which they seldom come up again by themselves. Hereby forces have been created that also have an impact on the rest of the city. The areas can be seen as magnetic poles that attract poverty and social problems, and repel people and economic resources in a way that have an influence on other parts of the urban space. They are the visible signs of that cities are subject to special socio-spatial forces that create social and physical inequality, unstable conditions and sometimes destruction – most clearly observed in the slums of big American cities.

The socio-spatial dialectic of cities

It has been a common notion that urban decay and the creation of deprived neighbourhoods can be understood as a more or less simple consequence of segregation. The relationship between these phenomena is, however, more complex and the connection also, to some extent, works the other way around in the sense that urban decay creates segregation.

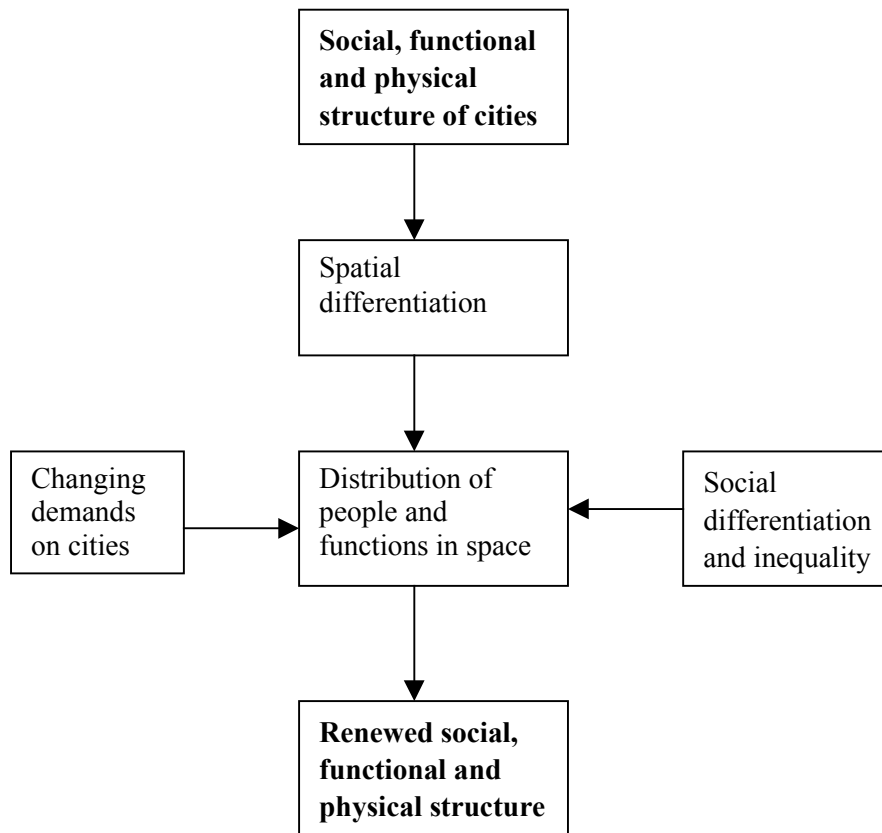
The development of cities has occurred as interplay between social and physical changes. Someone has called it a socio-spatial dialectic (Soja 1980), a continuous two-way process, in which people create and modify urban spaces while at the same time being conditioned in various ways by these changes. The places, in which people prefer to live and work, or have access to, be continuously changed at the same time as their economic resources, and preferences for and affiliation to places, are changing. As a result the social and physical structure of cities have undergone pronounced changes during the course of time. The growth of every town can be seen as a *'twin process of outward extension and internal reorganisation'* (Knox 1995). At the same time as cities have been extended with new estates on the suburban fringe, existing urban areas have been subject to functional and physical changes; they have sometimes been converted to new uses. In some of them existent physical structures has become obsolescent and deteriorated.

The distribution of people in space is a product of both social differentiation and of the fact that cities consist of many different places that have very different qualities. This spatial differentiation is a product of the social, physical and functional structure of the city, a structure that is continuously changed by economic investments and disinvestments as a consequence of

that people and functions are redistributed in space. It results in that cities are divided into identifiable areas, which can be relatively homogeneous, but exhibit distinctive characteristics that are very different from other neighbourhoods. The preferences for living in different kinds of neighbourhoods can vary between households with different needs and lifestyles, but there will always be some common values among people that results in that some neighbourhoods are highly estimated among the majority, while others are looked at as very unattractive.

In Figure 1 is illustrated how these changes occur in cities.

Figure 1. The interplay between changes in social and spatial differentiation in cities



What the Figure tries to illustrate is that distribution of people in space is a product of both social differentiation and what I have called spatial differentiation. This spatial differentiation is a product of the social, physical and functional structure of the city, a structure that is continuously changing by economic investments and disinvestments as a consequence of that people and functions are redistributed in space. It results in that cities are divided into identifiable areas, which can be relatively homogeneous, but exhibit distinctive characteristics that are very different from other neighbourhoods. Such areas differ not only by virtue of different physical qualities, like housing stock, architecture, natural beauties, and access to transport facilities and service supply but also by more indefinite qualities like social image and status and security. As an example a study (Paccione 1982) showed that the most important factors for residents perception of their neighbourhood was: Traffic problems, street cleanliness and maintenance, accessibility to open spaces, frequency of antisocial activity (vandalism, violence etc.), accessibility within the city as a whole, social interaction and landscaping. The preferences for living in different kinds of neighbourhoods can vary between households with different needs and lifestyles, but there will always be some common values among people that results in that some neighbourhoods are highly estimated among the majority, while others are looked at as very unattractive.

The main point I would like to stress is that *segregation is not a simple consequence of social inequality, but is a product of both social and spatial differentiation*. Segregation, therefore, is very much influenced by the development of spatial differentiation in the cities, and perhaps this is more important than the development in social inequality and social exclusion. Segregation and increasing spatial inequality are mutual self-perpetuating proc-

esses because status and cultural identity of urban areas are determined by the composition of people living there. Spatial differentiation leads to segregation at the same time as segregation is creating spatial differences.

Vicious circles in deprived neighbourhoods

The jumping-off point for a different comprehension of what are the causes of deprived urban areas is the concept of 'vicious circles' that are found in such areas. In Denmark the understanding of deprived housing estates has early been based on a perception of these estates as neighbourhoods where negative self-perpetuating social, economic and physical processes took place (Kirkegård 1985, Vestergård 1998, Skifter Andersen 1999a). Other researchers have written about '*the cycle of labelling and exclusion*' (Taylor 1998, Costa Pinho 2000), '*independent neighbourhood effects to do with cumulative decline*' (Gibb et al. 1999), '*spiral of decline in which underlying problems.. are perpetuated and compounded over a period*' (Morrison 1999), '*downward spirals and dynamics*' (Lee and Murie 1999), '*mutually reinforcing social, building and organisational problems*' (Power and Tunstall 1995) and '*self and/or mutually reinforcing tendencies ... 'vicious' or 'downward' cycles*' (Hall 1997).

All these statements refer to how different factors inside and outside the affected urban areas reinforce each other in a negative direction creating increased deprivation, stigmatisation and decay. Taylor is concerned with the connection between changes in the image of estates and changes in the composition of residents, where increasing bad reputation leads to that middle class people move away and are replaced by poor and excluded families. Costa Pinho has studied the mechanisms leading to the creation of negative social identities and public image. Morrison sees the main problem associated with problems of drugs, anti-social behaviour, violence, crime and prostitution creating a poor reputation. Gibb et al. find that one of the main reasons for abandonment and low demand for housing in these areas is that decaying environment leads to a high turnover of residents and failing interest from house hunters. Mumford and Lupton (1999) focus on that instability and a disorderly neighbourhood environment cause highly localised low demand. Power and Tunstall (1995) points to high turnover and vacancies resulting in damage to buildings, loss of social cohesion and a breakdown in controls, which generate serious management problems, poorer conditions, deteriorating services and eventual chaos.

Danish studies of processes of deprivation

Based on earlier work with evaluation of efforts to improve deprived social housing areas (Kirkegård 1984, Christiansen et. al. 1993) a model (Figure 2) was constructed as a basis for studies of processes of decay in social housing estates in Denmark.

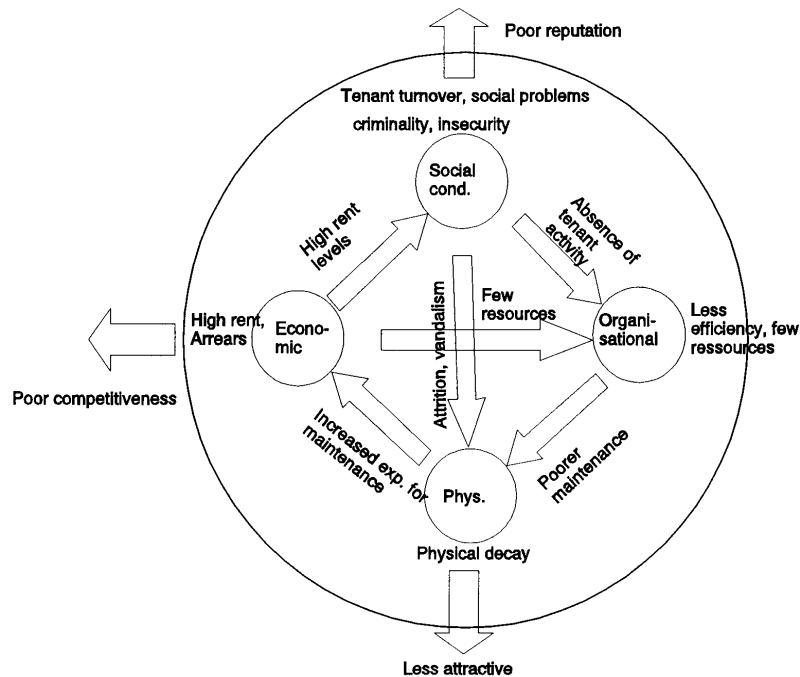


Figure 2. Model of processes of deprivation in Danish social housing estates.

The model contains four elements that interact with each other and with the city outside the estates: respectively the social, economic, physical and organisational conditions of the estates. The organisational conditions are things like the efficiency of the administration of the estate, the amount of resources that residents make available and the quality of their organisation. Concerning the economic conditions the main problems often are relatively high rents compared to the market value of the dwellings combined with a bad economy because of rent arrears, empty dwellings and excessive costs for maintenance and administration.

The model highlights some of the problems frequently found in Danish problem estates (Vestergård 1998). The social physical and financial conditions give these estates a poor reputation, make them less physical attractive and less competitive on the housing market. The result of this is that the composition of residents changes towards more unemployed and people with smaller economic and social resources. This results in worse organisational conditions and faster deterioration of the physical appearance of the estate because of vandalism and careless use. Also the financial conditions are affected directly and indirectly, which again affect the resources available. Together these changes make the estates even less attractive and accelerate the process of residential succession.

A newer Danish study, based on empirical evidence from 500 Danish social housing estates (Skifter Andersen 1999, Skifter Andersen 2001), has thrown more light on the nature of self-perpetuating processes of deprivation and decay that take place in vulnerable housing estates in Denmark.

Based on the earlier Danish research a model for processes of deprivation was formulated. It presumed how social problems, problems connected to immigrants, social activity of residents, mobility rates and social composition of in-movers were connected to the social composition of residents, the physical conditions of the estates and the conditions on the local housing market.

The statistical analyses in the study showed that relationships between these factors exist in such a way that the conditions on the estates tend to worsen over time. A socially distorted composition of residents increases social problems and – if there are many immigrants – special problems connected to integration. Together these problems result in a worse reputation of the estates and increase mobility rates among the employed residents.

Moreover the poorer reputation has an effect on the composition of newcomers, so that fewer people in employment and with social resources move in and are replaced by more newcomers who are outside the labour market. Together these changes in mobility rates and the composition of newcomers result in a change towards an even more distorted composition of residents which again has an effect on social problems and reputation and a vicious circle is established.

As the model above suggests one can to some extent distinguish between interior and exterior processes of deprivation and decay. The exterior processes have to do with how the changes in the image and attraction of the estate influence the relations to the rest of the city and the composition of newcomers to the estates. The interior processes concern the changes in conditions inside the estate, where negative social, physical, organisational and financial changes reinforce each other. These two kinds of processes influence each other as the interior processes changes the image and attraction of the estates, while the exterior processes create changes in the composition of residents on the estates and in the living conditions for people living there.

Interior processes of deprivation

Interior processes of deprivation in neighbourhoods can mainly be connected to the assumption that social norms, self-perception and behaviour among residents undergo changes and simultaneously influence the physical, social, organisational and economic conditions in a neighbourhood, which again affects residents' norms and behaviour. In the research literature different kinds of negative interior processes have been described.

Evolution of different norms concerning family and work in deprived neighbourhoods

Some of the theoretical discussions on this subject go back to the work of Massey (1994) and Wilson (1987), who formulated the hypothesis that people are influenced by the norms and behaviour that are dominating in the neighbourhoods where they live. One of his central propositions was that living in a poor neighbourhood leads to social isolation of the residents and to other norms than is normally found in society. When the share of the residents having deviant norms reaches a certain level these deviant norms will spread to other people in the neighbourhood. He referred to several studies of poor neighbourhoods in the U.S. that showed higher incidents of: school dropouts, teenage pregnancy, out of wedlock births, resignation in search for employment, deviance from norms of mainstream society, deviant behaviour and physical run-down of buildings (see also Ellen and Turner 1997). He argued that these conditions have led to that deviant norms increasingly have become accepted in the neighbourhood leading to resignation among residents, reduced search for employment and an increased social isolation.

Wacquant (1993) and Friedrichs (1997) have pointed to that it is difficult to transfer the American findings to the conditions in European cities. Friedrichs draws our attention to that these effects are very much dependent on to what extent residents are spatially restricted, e.g. if their action space and social network are bounded to the neighbourhood. This is only the case for certain social groups. Moreover Friedrichs points to that the mechanisms by which people are influenced by their surroundings are far from clear. Some authors (Erbring and Young 1979) believes in that social interaction is the main mechanism, while others (Skogan 1990) points to that also neighbourhood characteristics in general has an impact on attitudes and behaviour of residents. Friederichs describes a mechanism called "normative adjustment" by which certain types of behaviour, which are seen as anti-social or stigmatised, are spreading in a local community. He refers to a study made by Hirschl and Rank (1991) that found a positive correlation between the density in a community and the rate of welfare participants and explained it by that a "culture of poverty" existed in such areas. They assume that the

observation of poverty and deviant types of behaviour in a neighbourhood tend to influence the normative level of all residents and result in that poverty and deviant behaviour will become more legitimate. Friedrichs, however, stresses that more thorough research on these assumptions is needed. He also points to that different studies in poverty areas have shown that the residents here are a very inhomogeneous group and their social network seldom is limited to the neighbourhood. Moreover, there is often a high turnover of residents, which means that new residents with other norms could arrive continuously.

The interaction between physical decay and norms

Friedrichs (1997) also refers to some American research showing that a deterioration of the visibility of a neighbourhood, such as litter, attrition, graffiti and vandalism, has an impact on the attitude and behaviour of residents (Skogan 1990). The implication of this is that residents can get used to a lower visible quality of their neighbourhood where they accept disorder and ugliness and after a while change their own behaviour taking less care of the environment. This can create a self-perpetuating process that accelerates negative behaviour and decay leading to increasing expenses for maintenance. This development is parallel to the experience from areas in decay in the U. S. A. as described in chapter 4. A result of this process is therefore also increasing strain on the economy of the landlords, who can choose between increasing expenses or further deterioration of their properties.

A Danish study (Christensen and Benjaminsen 1999) have looked at the statistical connection between variables describing different kinds of social problems and conditions and observed physical problems in 250 deprived housing estates. The study showed that the incidence of different physical problems was correlated with the social composition of residents. Things like vandalism, graffiti, litter and run-down open spaces and entrances were much more frequently found in housing estates with a high share of people on public support. There was also found a strong correlation between these physical problems and different social problems in the estates like crime, noisy residents, drug abuse and special problems with young people.

Spirals of social conflicts in fragmented neighbourhoods

In some of the literature on effects of segregation it is claimed that segregation often leads to more homogenous neighbourhoods with better possibilities for social interaction. Especially in relation to concentration of ethnic groups it is assumed that they will be better suited to preserve their culture and identity (van Kempen and Ösükren 1998).

In the European situation, however, deprived urban areas are seldom dominated by a single homogenous group (Friedrichs 1997). On the contrary they are mostly inhabited by a great variety of different marginalised ethnic and social groups, who have very little in common. Some of these people have a culture or behaviour that deviates from general norms or have less regard for the comfort of their neighbours, making noise and other annoying activities. Moreover, they are often less suited to handle situations of conflicts.

Modig (1985) compared the social interaction among residents in some parts of deprived housing estates with other housing areas. He found significantly higher incidences of nuisances from neighbours and social conflicts in places with many problem households. He also found that these households in the deprived estates had fewer contacts to other residents and a less sense of community. For residents as a whole was found that the social network increased with the length of time they had stayed there, but paradoxically the sense of community was lower and the number of conflicts increased with the number of years they had stayed. This could have two explanations: 1. The general conditions in the estates had worsened over time,

or 2. In the course of time residents established an increasing number of conflicts with some of their neighbours and felt less affiliation to the neighbourhood. This is in sharp contrast to a large number of studies on peoples relations to their home (see e.g. Hurtig 1995), which has shown that people normally establish more affiliation to their surroundings the longer time they stay there.

Costa Pinho (2000) has, in her study of five deprived housing estates in Portugal, shown that strong conflicts appeared in the areas connected to the specific character of the ethnic and social composition of the residents. She found three main kinds of conflicts in the areas: 1. Conflicts related to drug abuse, 2. General conflicts between neighbours and 3. Conflicts between ethnic groups. The first kind was seen as the most serious conflict on all estates. The second was seen as generally less serious but more damaging for the local co-operation and network. This type of conflict was usually expressed in forms of arguments, insults and fights between neighbours, often also over more general matters as the use and management of common areas and buildings. The last kind of conflicts was less visible but penetrated social life in a way that weakened social relations and affiliation to the neighbourhood.

In an EU project report on case studies of deprived housing estates in eight European countries (Cars 2000) is also pointed to that tensions exist between different ethnic groups. It also identifies, however, conflicts between new and old residents. It is especially the case in areas that have undergone rapid changes from being more ordinary housing estates to being places for marginalised groups. This has resulted in a clash between different norms connected to differences in age and in attitudes to the neighbourhood. Some of the most serious conflicts are taking place between elderly and young people.

There are therefore reasons to believe that deprived neighbourhoods are relatively more subject to different kinds of conflicts between residents than other neighbourhoods and that these conflicts tend to be self-perpetuating. This seems to have a connection with other processes of self-perception and stigmatisation in the areas.

Processes of conflicts, crime, insecurity and withdrawal

In Costa Pinhos (2000) study certain types of conflicts led to that residents felt insecure. In this way conflicts have a fundamental importance for how the neighbourhood is perceived by the residents. However, the study also showed that other conditions like crime and drug abuse was more important in creating insecurity.

Different kinds of criminal behaviour are often found in deprived housing estates and Hirschfield and Bowers (1997) has in a study of disadvantaged areas shown a significant relationship between different variables representing social cohesion and levels of certain types of crime. This study point to that the probability of crime is much higher in areas which a fragmented population.

Insecurity has several important consequences for the neighbourhoods. Safety is of fundamental importance for if people can identify with their neighbourhood and participate in local affairs. Insecurity often can lead to isolation. Costa Pinhos study showed that people who felt insecure often preferred to stay at home, especially at night where they felt most insecure. In this way conflicts, crime and insecurity can lead to that residents are more reluctant to participate in social life and organisational matters of the neighbourhoods. Moreover the study of Deans and Hastings (2000) showed, that friends and family living outside the neighbourhood were more reluctant to visit residents when crime had been reported there.

Internal and external stigmatisation

It is a well-known fact that most people staying in the same place for a longer time more or less are going to identify themselves with the neighbourhood (Knox 1995). That is one of the reasons why only few people express dissatisfaction with their home and neighbourhood when asked. This is also often the case when residents in deprived areas are asked (See e.g. Kearns et. al. 2000, Gottschalk et. al. 2000). Often there are no straight-ahead connection between the problems found in an area and the expressed dissatisfaction. Only in areas with big problems with crime and insecurity expressed satisfaction is considerably lower.

The consequence of this identification with the neighbourhood is that the image and problems of the neighbourhood often influence the self-understanding of residents. Costa Pinho (2000) identified in her study in Portugal how important the image of the neighbourhood was for the self-identity and self-understanding of the residents. She found that problems in the areas like conflicts, crime and bad external image were internalised in the residents perception of their own identity so that a process of self-stigmatisation took place. People tended to blame themselves for the problems of their neighbourhood and the resulting negative self images affected their ability to be socially active. Pinho concludes that this process of self-stigmatisation seems to favour a defensive life strategy where people are less active in job seeking and less inclined to participate in social life in the neighbourhood. Also in a study of three deprived housing estates in England made by Dean and Hastings (2000) residents testified to the fact that their lives were impoverished economically, socially and emotionally by the tenacity of the estates problem reputation.

There is some evidence that this stigma of a neighbourhood transferred to residents also have severe consequences for their connections to the outside world. Among the residents interviewed by Dean and Hastings some of them expressed that they had felt discrimination. It was more difficult for them to get insurance and bank credits and they also claimed that employers lost interest in their application for jobs when they heard of where they came from. They also felt that family, friends and colleagues were critical to the estate and that they always had to defend the place where they lived. They tried to avoid telling people their address.

Reduced possibilities of social cohesion and participation in management

Studies (referred in Hirschfield and Bowers 1997) has shown that deprived housing areas are more likely to have a weaker organisational base and thereby a greater risk of social disorganisation.

It is a general experience from deprived social housing estates that social cohesion and participation in the affairs of the neighbourhood are lower than in many other places (Cars 2000). Musterd and Ostendorf (1998) also have conducted a study of deprived areas in the Netherlands that showed a clear connection between the degree of concentration of poverty and reduced social participation. The main explanation for this is of course that poor people in general are less socially active, but Pinhos study also has pointed to that self-stigmatisation and insecurity has separate importance in reducing social activity. Moreover, as described above, social fragmentation in the areas – the fact that many of them are inhabited by many different social and cultural groups - and the involved conflicts, also reduces the incentives to social co-operation in the neighbourhood.

The possibilities to mobilise residents to contribute to improvements and management are thus relatively worse in deprived neighbourhoods. This is not only a simple consequence of segregation but might also be attributed to special social and mental processes taking place among residents in the areas.

School problems

Especially in American studies of deprived neighbourhoods, but also in some European, are pointed to the special problems that emerge in local schools (Massey 1994, Saltman 1991, Friedrichs 1997). Children coming from poor and stressed families often have a problematic behaviour and deviating norms. Schools that are dominated by such children therefore tend to be less attractive places with less effective teaching. It is more difficult to attract good teachers to such schools (Hjärne 1991), which further reduces the quality of teaching and some of the more active parents try to move their children to other schools, private or public. Especially in school with many children coming from immigrant families there is a high stress on the schools because of language problems.

These school problems are self-perpetuating and have an influence on the attractiveness on the whole neighbourhood. When families with children are looking for a new home they will pay much attention to the quality of schools in the neighbourhood.

Reduced private services

Private services follow the market and will be available where there are a sufficient demand. When residents in a neighbourhood are replaced by people with lower incomes the demand for many services will decrease and perhaps change. As a result of this the supply of service facilities like shops, banks, cafés and cinemas will disappear (Cars 2000). In some cases also public facilities will be missing because the residents in the area are not very capable of standing up for themselves and let their needs be known (van Kempen and Özüken 1998). The study of Deans and Hastings also showed that residents in some depressed housing estates were very unsatisfied with both public and private services and also felt that they paid higher prices than elsewhere.

In this way a reduction of incomes not only affects the individual families but also the whole neighbourhood. The deterioration of services will reduce the attractiveness of the neighbourhood and contribute to the further deprivation of the area.

Deprived urban areas understood as excluded places

The referred studies of deprived neighbourhoods – and the experience from slums the United States (see Skifter Andersen 1995) – point to that a revision of the understanding of the nature of deprived housing estates, as just pockets of poverty, is needed. What we should be most concerned about is not as much the actual status of the areas as the dynamic processes of deprivation and decay in work. The important thing is in what direction they move and at what speed.

The perception of places is constructed from a subjective point of view and different people give them different meanings. Especially the understanding of a place differs between people living there and outsiders (Knox 1995). Outsiders do not have the same knowledge of and affiliation to a neighbourhood as residents. The image of a place among outsiders – especially of deprived neighbourhoods – is with the words of Bourdieu (1993) *'more based on ghostly figments of the imagination nourished by emotional experiences than on knowledge of realities'*. Research on peoples preferences for living in different parts of a city (reviewed in Knox 1995) shows that these are not a simple function of physical qualities and location but also are very much dependent on how the social and cultural content of places are perceived.

When visible signs of social and physical decay appear in neighbourhoods, and especially if they get a bad press, a rapid change will occur in

how the places are perceived by outsiders. It is therefore reasonable to talk about that these places get *excluded* from the mental maps of possible living environments for the majority of the urban population. We could talk about an exclusion of these places

Exclusion of places creates segregation

To realise the importance of this exclusion of places it is necessary to look at the fundamental causes of segregation as described above. It was here argued that *segregation is not a simple consequence of social inequality, but is a product of both social and spatial differentiation.*

Segregation is in the first place created as a consequence of decisions taken by individual households. In their search for location people choose between places that have different perceived qualities regarding housing, physical and social environment, access to transport, jobs, services and natural beauties, and status and cultural identity. When these qualities are more unevenly distributed in space, which means that differences between 'bad' and 'good' or 'ordinary' areas are more obvious, segregation will tend to become stronger because the incentives for house hunters to choose or drop certain urban areas will be increased.

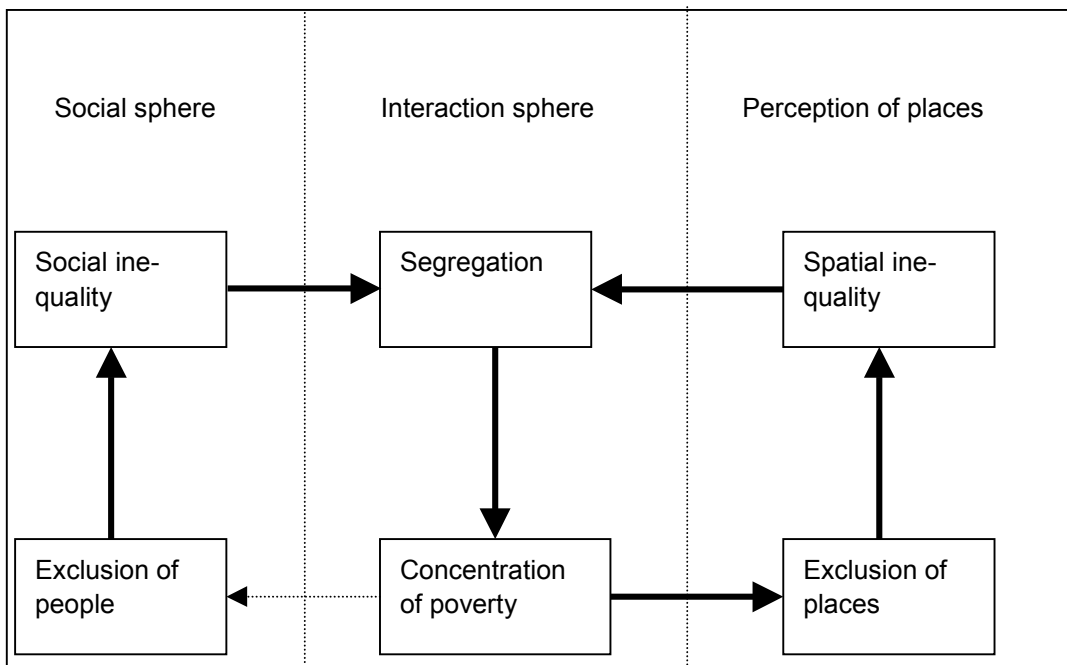


Figure 6.1 Model of the connection between segregation and deprived neighbourhoods.

Segregation is therefore very much influenced by the development of spatial differentiation in the cities, and perhaps this is more important than the development in social inequality and social exclusion. Segregation and increasing spatial inequality are mutual self-perpetuating processes because status and cultural identity of urban areas are determined by the composition of people living there. Spatial differentiation leads to segregation but at the same time segregation is creating spatial differences. The above-described self-perpetuating processes of physical and social decay in urban areas at the bottom of the urban hierarchy thus make a special contribution to an increase in the qualitative differences between these areas and the rest of the city and thus to segregation.

Figure 6.1 is an attempt to illustrate these considerations. The model does not include the basic causes for social and spatial inequality but only looks at the connection between segregation and deprivation of neighbourhoods.

Segregation is taking place as an interaction between social and spatial differentiation and leads to concentration of poor and excluded people – or special ethnic groups – in certain parts of the cities. This concentration

leads, as concluded above, to changes in the qualities of the neighbourhoods and to an exclusion of the places as possible living areas. This exclusion of places then further adds to spatial differentiation in the cities and increases segregation.

Another self-perpetuating process is suggested in the left side of the figure saying that living in deprived housing estates could lead to further social exclusion of people staying there, which again tend to increase social inequality. This has actually been the main point of discussion, as described in the introduction, among researchers considering deprived housing areas as synonymous with spatial pockets of poverty.

The need for a new way to understand neighbourhood decay

The conclusion from this discussion is that problems of deprived areas should not just be considered as spatially concentrated pockets of poverty arisen as a simple product of social inequality and segregation. For several reasons this view is a dead end. First it is static and does not involve the dynamic processes taking place in these areas – the so-called vicious circles – that tend to worsen their situation over time. Second it does not take into account the relationship between the areas and the rest of the cities. And third it leads to a view on the problems on the estates where the consequences for residents are underestimated. Finally the potential purposes of area based efforts cannot be identified correctly and the effects of them can be misinterpreted. One of the main reasons for disagreement on the effects of area based initiatives is thus an inadequate understanding of the nature of these urban areas.

An alternative understanding is to see segregation as a product of both social and spatial inequality and deprived urban areas as ‘excluded places’, which themselves contribute to an increasing spatial inequality and segregation. This exclusion of places is caused by social, cultural, economic and physical changes in the areas, which increasingly make them diverge from the rest of the city. The development in these areas tends to make ‘ordinary’ people flee to other parts of the cities making room for an increasing concentration of low-income and socially excluded groups and thus increasing the spatial division of social groups. This effect is even more serious when looking at the segregation of ethnic minorities where the forces in work are much stronger.

The exclusion of a place is a dynamic process that can be fast, be slow, be stopped or sometimes be reversed. But in most cases there are strong forces that, when the process has reached a certain point, tend to speed up the process no matter what is the general development in the city concerning economic growth and social inequality. That is why increased deprivation of urban areas also takes place in many cities where incomes in general are rising or inequality among citizens is reduced.

What is the special purpose of area-based initiatives?

It was an important point of the discussion of European experiences in the section above that one of the main reasons for disagreement on the effects of area based initiatives is an inadequate understanding of the nature of deprived urban areas. As described in the introduction, deprived neighbourhoods have in much of the literature been interpreted as ‘pockets of poverty’ – a spatial concentration of poor people in parts of the cities caused by social inequality and segregation. This kind of understanding has led to that the potential purposes of area based efforts have been seen as limited and the effects of them to some extent been misinterpreted. An alternative understanding has been proposed in this book where segregation is seen as a product of both social and spatial inequality and deprived urban areas un-

derstood as 'excluded places', which themselves contribute to spatial inequality and segregation.

Measures to save these housing estates should therefore also concentrate on fighting against an exclusion of places more than exclusion of people. Social exclusion should mainly be combated by general policies and only for special reasons by area based measures.

With a starting point in the discussion above on how to understand deprived urban areas I will argue that the division of initiatives in inward- and outward-looking approaches is not adequate. This concept reflects a static view on the estates where the dynamics of segregation and population changes are not taken into consideration.

Instead I will propose three other *types of strategies*:

1. *Efforts against exclusion of neighbourhoods*: Initiatives that focus on how to stop and reverse the self-perpetuating processes in the areas that make them increasingly stigmatised and unattractive compared to the rest of the city.
2. *Area based efforts against social exclusion*: As a supplement to general welfare policies it can sometimes be relevant to have efforts concentrated in deprived urban areas for two reasons: 1. to combat special effects produced by area deprivation that tend to increase social exclusion and 2. because local private resources perhaps could be mobilised to support public efforts
3. *General efforts against segregation*: Initiatives that attack conditions, which tend to increase segregation. It could e.g. be differences between tenures or rules for allocation of dwellings in social housing.

This way to structure the efforts runs transversely to the division in inward- and outward-looking initiatives. Some of the outward-looking initiatives, like job training, belong to the second type of strategy, while others, e.g. changing the physical relationship between the estate and the city, could be a part of the first one. Some initiatives could be parts of both types of strategies. For instance community development and empowerment could have the purpose of both to support residents individually and the neighbourhood in general. At the same time the strategies support each other. Improvement of neighbourhoods also benefits people living there and thus can reduce social exclusion. Efforts against social exclusion can lead to an improvement of the image of a neighbourhood.

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