On the 23rd of April 2009, Nicis Institute organized a meeting on European Communities and Neighbourhood Approach, which was held at theatre 'de Meervaart' in Amsterdam.

The meeting was opened by our moderator, **Mart Grisel**, who is program head of the International/EUKN department of Nicis Institute. After welcoming our speakers and guests, Grisel explained that the theatre is located in one of the "from problem district to show district" areas that are part of the Dutch 40 districts approach. Grisel described the meeting as a great opportunity for Dutch policy makers and practitioners to be "a nosy neighbour", to learn from what's happening outside the Netherlands. All the speakers come from countries that deal with comparable problems as the Netherlands, and we could all learn from the way they have handled and are handling these problems.

The first presentation was given by **Professor Paul Lawless**, Director of the National Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities Programme at the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research of Sheffield Hallam University. Lawless starts his lecture by pointing out that England has a long tradition of deprived areas: some say that this year it's the 50th birthday of Area Based Initiatives, also called ABIs. These ABIs are designed to improve places and outcomes for people in defined urban localities, and usually have short time horizons: most ABIs comprise rarely more than 3 to 5 years. New Deal for Communities is one of the most ambitious ABIs in England: NDC is a 10 year programme which puts the community at the 'heart' and has developed partnerships with several agencies such as the police.

Six outcomes have been chosen on which the partnerships had to focus. These outcomes are:

- Three place-based outcomes: community, housing and environment, crime.
- Three people-based outcomes: health, education, jobs.

There are 39 NDC partnerships, which all have their own organization. These new organizations are separate from the government and all have a partnership board, with a majority of locally elected people. Virtually most big cities in England have at least 1 NDC area and most areas have 10.000 inhabitants, which compared to other ABIs is quite a small number. Per NDC around 80 million Euros was available, most of which was spend on housing and environment. The programme was largely project driven: more than 150 projects were initiated, both large and small in scale.

In 2001, the Centre for Regional Economic And Social Research of Sheffield Hallam University was asked to start a large scale evaluation of NDC. The evaluation is a major evidence based project: more than 300 interviews were carried out in each NDC area, and the researchers have compared different data from several years in order to make change – or the lack of change – visible. The numbers for 2008 are not yet released, but a comparison between a survey carried out in 2001/2 and 2006/7 shows that virtually all indicators are moving in the 'right' direction. However, it seems that more change is occurring in place/area based indicators than in people based indicators. As the data (which you can find in the Powerpoint Presentation which is added on the website of Nicis Institute) shows, the main changes are around the attitudes towards the area, the NDC Board and around crime and the fear of crime. People are more positive about the area, and trust their NDC Boards more than their local government. As Lawless further points out, the actual crime number is usually lower than expected, but it's the fear of crime that decides whether people feel safe in their area and how

satisfied they are with their environment. This fear of crime has diminished. Furthermore, crime and the fear of crime were mentioned as main priorities by citizens, and since the NDC Boards have a majority of elected citizens these topics became a high priority. A higher appreciation of the area has however not changed the will to move from the area - which remains high - and house prices have also not risen significantly. Lawless suspects that people want to leave because of the housing environment: when they can afford to move, they will seek other housing more fitting with their needs. The people-based indicators show less change than place-based indicators: there haven't been significant changes on education, health and employment. This is partly due to the fact that these changes are difficult to monitor in data, and some changes occur slowly.

The NDC areas have also been compared to national levels, which show us that for 40 or so indicators the NDC are on the same level as national numbers but that for many others there aren't that many differences. The fear of crime is however lower in the NDC areas than nationwide. Compared against similarly deprived areas, that haven't received NDC attention but benefit from regular approaches, the NDC areas again don't show that much difference: for 25 out of the 31 indicators the differences in rate of change are 2% or less. Some place-based indicators however show some larger change, such as the indicator ''thinking area improved in last 2 years'.

Lawless concludes that overall there haven't been many changes in the NDC areas: the areas that are most deprived make the most changes, but one would've expected more change compared to the national level and the areas in which the NDC areas are located. Lawless: 'NDC has not transformed the areas!' The main question is why these changes haven't occurred as much as expected. Lawless mentions several problems within the NDC programme: too many targets and outcome areas were chosen, especially since some NDC Boards focussed themselves on only a few targets (crime) whilst the government had broader ambitions. Some boards worked against their local government, and additional agency funding was critical: some organizations were consistently supportive such as the police, but others asked why they should fund the NDC areas and not other areas. Furthermore, a 10 year Programme is useful, but the world moves on with new policy agendas and funding streams. Lawless also wonders how much the community should be involved, since the NDC Boards have shown that this might cause tension.

When discussing the need to evaluate programmes, Lawless states that people-based indicators are hard to show in general evaluations, since they are strongly individual. Lawless has heard of many individual success stories, but these aren't visible in the general numbers of change. These individual stories have however learned him 3 things:

1. Employment: What works are intensive "hand-held" projects in which people who need constant help are kept in programmes, even after they get a job.

2. Education: We need to support teachers who are working in the most deprived areas.

3. Health: People seem to underestimate that their health level is much lower than the national level. We should monitor at the start, during and after a project, and take in consideration that it might take a long time to see change. These changes must also be shown in costs and benefits to mark the importance of these projects: how much money is saved when someone quits smoking?

Lawless finishes his presentation by giving some lessons from the NDC programme and English ABIs:

- Area regeneration is complex: it is easy to be over-ambitious
- ABIs achieve more in the way of place not people based outcomes…and that might make sense because deprived areas will see considerable demographic change..place based benefits remain
- There are costs in creating separate deliver agencies such as NDC Boards…are these worth it?
- Not all agencies such as schools are interested in 'area improvements'..
- Involving the community needs careful thought… don't simply assume that involving local residents more will improve outcomes
- Evaluation is critical! 10% of programme should ideally be spend on it… why do things if you can't learn from them?

The presentation of Lawless evoked a lot of questions from the audience. Some wanted to know whether projects would have started without NDC funding, and Lawless confirms that most wouldn't have started without the extra financing. As a reaction to this, Evert Kroes (Ministry of Sweden) mentioned that the Swedish government banned all projects and intend to focus on changing the regular means. Lawless aggress that this is ideal, but in the NDC Programme, agencies had to show were the money went. Project money was used as leverage as well towards other agencies ("if you pay for this, we will pay for that"). Now the NDC Programme is finished, there are problems with continuing funding. Lawless states that if you want to change areas, it's not about the extra funding but about improving the quality of what is done with the regular input.

The second presentation was given by **Wolf-Christian Strauss** of Difu, Germany. The German Institute for Urban Affairs was founded in 1973 and is a non-profit „intermediate" institute which is funded by BMVBS (Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs), Land Berlin and several other members. Difu is involved with monitoring the Social City Programme (which was called the Social Integrative City Programme before) since its launch in 1999. Before the Social City Programme, there were several other approaches in Germany. In the 90's, 3 areas started with programs, extended by a research programme in 10 areas. In 1999 the central government decided that this research programme should become mainstream, adding more than 100 programmes.

The Social City Programme consists of integrative urban district policies and focuses on disadvantaged neighbourhoods, hereby combining a holistic and areabased approach. In 2007 more than 500 neighbourhoods participated, and this number grows with about 50 a year. In total, between 1999 en 2007 more than 2 billion Euros were allocated. This, as Strauss remarks, is the same amount as the NDC Programme in England, but for far more communities in Germany.

The government also wanted to retract money from other sources, and it is interesting that only a small amount of money was allowed to be spend on non-fysical projects. Two different social programmes were therefore initiated outside the Social City Programme.

The programme is dominated by two types of neighbourhoods: the inner city late-19th-century (working class) neighbourhoods and high-rising housing estates of the 1960's and 1970's. In 1999, 162 districts in 124 towns/cities were part of the programme; in 2007 this number has risen to 498 districts in 318 towns/cities. According to Strauss this is the top of the iceberg, and he expects that there are many more deprived areas. The smallest district had 120 inhabitants, the largest 140.000. The districts are experiencing problems with town planning, infrastructure, environment and local economy. They also have socio-economic and community problems and suffer from a negative image.

The overall aim of the Social City programme is:

- „Halting the downward spiral"
- Improvement of living conditions
- Counteracting growing social-spatial polarization
- Upgrading and stabilizing deprived neighbourhoods

The time scheme of the programme is not defined because it takes time to change these areas, at least 15 to 20 years depending on the problems that occur in the area. The programme is implemented on 3 levels, largely dependant on the general German Government system. The first level is that of the Federal Government, which provides the „philosophy" and the framework. They also provide the finances, but aren't allowed to tell the Länder which policies they have to carry out. The autonomous Länder, the second level of implementation, provide the programme regulations. The third level is that of the Municipalities which provide the specifications and implement the programme. The Länder and the Federal Government annually renew their contracts, so that continuation of the Programme is guaranteed, even when the political situation changes. When asked by a participant about the selection of the areas, Strauss explained that each Länder gets a part of the total budget, which they have to use. Some Länder with no distinct deprived areas therefore chose districts that aren't really deprived areas when compared to other Länder.

The 4 most important elements (further explained in the Powerpoint Presentation which is added on the website of Nicis Institute) of the programme are:

- Pooling of resources, cooperation
- Activation/empowerment and participation of local players/inhabitants
- Establishment of new managerial and organisational structures
- Area-based focus

One of the tools that districts are using within the Social City Programme is Neighbourhood Management. Local Neighbourhood Offices were initiated to network with different partners and to do outreaching work towards the community. Qualified staff and suitable facilities are of key importance for the Neighbourhood Offices but are a major problem since the Offices rely on 1 year funding and therefore cannot offer more-year contracts to their employees. Interdepartmental cooperation was also of great importance, but lots of municipalities seem to lack this. Strauss states that the best case scenario is to nominate an area representative and to make this person responsible for the projects and partnerships in the neighbourhood.

To close his presentation, Strauss gives several positive impacts the programme had, and some areas where there is room for improvement. According to Strauss it helps as well that there is consensus in the government that stopping the downward spiral is most important right now. It would be great if change has occured but for now it is enough to stop the deterioration. According to Strauss, it is clear that the programme so far has been unable to solve overriding structural problems, e.g. unemployment and the resulting low income.

Positive impact:

- downward spiral is stopped
- improved living conditions (sense of optimism)
- improved cooperation within municipal governments
- improved cooperation between municipal and neighbourhood levels
- improved neighbourhood image
- expanding opportunities for participation and empowerment
- design of living environments
- quality of housing
- provision of socio-cultural infrastructure

Room for improvement:

- Rivalries between different departments
- Migrants, local entrepreneurs hardly reached
- Integration of migrants
- Education/schools
- Local economy/labour market
- Sustainment strategies
- Monitoring systems and evaluation

After the two main presentations, four interactive **workshops** were held.

The first workshop was given by **Paul Lawless**, who wanted to let participants think actively about how to monitor and evaluate projects by letting them discuss the NDC programme. The participants were divided in small groups, which acted as project groups in the process of creating ABI's. Before the "mini-workshops" as Lawless called them, he gave further details about some of the outcome of the evaluation of NDC (this information can be found in the hand-out which is posted on the website of Nicis Institute).

The rate of change has slowed down: most change was perceived in the first year of the programme, but this process slowed down. Also, most change is perceived in place-based outcome and less in people-based outcomes.

Workshop 1: What outcomes should area based initiatives address?
You have been commissioned to introduce changes to a relatively poor district. In the light of evidence of change in the NDC Programme, what outcomes or objectives would you prioritise? Why? Would you want to adopt both place and people based outcomes?

Most groups wanted to focus on both place and people based initiatives, since they felt this would generate the most result. The groups were interested in how Lawless dealt with continuity in the research population since a lot of people left the NDC area. He explained that people who could leave the area do this so they can facilitate in their housing needs. Most people in a social housing estate don't have the possibility to move onto a higher step on the social housing ladder, since there aren't enough large, family homes – especially in the London area. The people who leave the area don't necessarily do so because they have found a job and therefore are able to leave. Most unemployed who find a job don't make sufficient money to leave the area. Those who do leave, leave to buy instead of rent or seek different housing than the area offers. And most of the time, elderly people leave and not the young.

Workshop 2: Who should oversee area based renewal? And what role should the community play?
Someone has to direct and plan for change.
(1) Who should that be: municipalities? new agencies?
(ii) And whatever approach is adopted, what role should the local community play? Why?
What drawbacks might there be in 'giving power to local residents'?

Most groups feel it's very important to include communities so that their opinions and ideas can be used to transform the area. Lawless warns them that community involvement could also lead to tension, and that not every citizen is interested to participate.

At the end of the workshop, Lawless made a few remarks that can help Dutch policy makers and practitioners with the district approach. He experienced that the most successful projects to help the unemployed offer psycho-social guidance during and after the programme. People face different problems, and it can help to have psychological assistance ready for them, also when they've found a job since finding isn't the seem as keeping a job. Evaluation has shown that there is a strong link between mental health and having a positive feeling about the area. It therefore could be concluded that people with better mental health are more likely to be happy within the area.

Evert Kroes, desk officer for the Swedish government, gave the second workshop on neighbourhood development through successful partnerships. Kroes was born in Friesland (the Netherlands) and has been living and working in Sweden for the past 14 years.

As a start, it's important to know that municipalities and government are equal partners in Sweden. The municipalities levy income tax and have a lot more control over allocation of money than Dutch municipalities. The urban development policy in Sweden falls under the Ministry of Integration and Emancipation. Two years ago, the urban development policy was extensively analyzed and evaluated. The purpose of this evaluation was 'to keep what is functional and to abandon the parts that aren't in order to make additions to make a complete and working policy'. The objective of the new policy was to achieve sustainable development of the districts, as articulated in the mainstream approach. The policy focuses on four fields: education, employment, security and growth.

The starting point of development is that the effects should be obtained through general policies without extra project resources. This is due to the conclusion of the aforementioned analysis that projects rarely give out the desired effect: if you weigh up projects against regular policies they don't measure up, both in terms of money and effects. As a result of mainstreaming the urban development policy, an important component of the policy is forming local partnerships between community, government, industry, associations and residents.

Agencies that, as part of their ordinary tasks, are already active in the fields of employment, education, security and growth, will have opportunities to reshape their activities to meet local needs and to actively participate in the local partnerships. These local partnerships have the task of putting together 'district strategic plans' for the districts where the municipality and the government agree on a plan for development. All parties involved have to analyse the problems in the district and formulate a joint objective. The government recognizes and respects that this is an intensive and often difficult trajectory.

The added value for municipalities in subscribing the new urban development policy lies in the fact that they have a much more direct line with the state government as well as being able to allocate resources more efficiently.

After this introduction in Swedish urban policies Evert Kroes invited the participants to split up in small groups and make a 'strategic district plan' on the basis of a handout Evert (which can be found at www.nicis.nl) gave to the participants.
After 25 minutes the different groups were asked what the lessons were that they learned during the workshop and by making a 'strategic district plan'. These remarks were heard:

- Nobody listens to each other. Every stakeholder defends only his own interests.
- No joint analysis.
- By focussing on what really needs to be done and by stepping out of character (of the stakeholder) it is possible to reach a joint conclusion.
- It's important that all people involved have the same mandate.
- By appointing an impartial process manager everybody got to say what he wanted and were able to form vital coalitions without a lot of problems.
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The overall conclusion was that it is vital to look further then your own task and institute. Participation will end if people are unwilling to empathize with other point of views.

The third workshop was given by **Hendrik Wagenaar and Maurice Specht** of Leiden University, the Netherlands. During this workshop a specific case was handled which shows us what happens within civil initiatives. The case, of the fictitious Pentonville, was based on the outcome of the research

Specht performed within the STIP research project, in which he followed several civil initiatives, both in the Netherlands and abroad. The results are going to be published by Nicis Institute in the fall of 2009.

First of all, the context of citizen initiatieves was pictured by Wagenaar and Specht. The city is a chaotic, complex entity, which consists of many different parties who are involved in the different fields of city administration. These parties are loosely tied together, but aren't coordinated which makes it difficult to work together – especially concerning problems in different sectors. Civil administrators often seem to run away from this chaos. Today, there is a strong call from cities for democracy and legitimacy. Cities want to involve their citizens in policies and practice. But what happens when citizens are involved? Science often looks at the way citizens are "pulled in" by their administrators, but there is less research on initiatives that citizens chose themselves. These initiatives can be interesting, since administrators can learn from them. The question isn't how to involve citizens in city administration, but how city administrators can be involved with civil initiatives.

The Pentonville case consisted of three rounds. In each round, the participants were asked what they would do if they were in this situation.

Round 1: You work as a district manager in a city and you're approached by people living in your district You are approached to participate in a resident meeting about antisocial behavior of local youth in a large housing project. Recently, a Turkish-Dutch boy was stabbed by a Dutch boy. During the meeting it will be discussed whether this was a case of discrimination, and what can be done about it. Will you accept the invitation? How do you prepare? What is your role in the meeting?

Some participants would go to the meeting, since they meeting could give them a sense of how big the problem is and/or is experienced by the neighbourhood. Others would decline the invitation in favour of a local politician or alderman. Some expressed that would want to know what is expected of them during the meeting, and stated that they would want to know more of the context of this neighbourhood in order to prepare themselves. Wagenaar reacted that most citizens don't know what they want from you, but that they do expect action and not simply a show of solidarity or nice words. They expect that the meeting will be used to solve problems, and often the problem is defined differently by citizens than administrators. The participants agreed that it's important to think beforehand who could help solving the problems, but also let citizens come up with their own ideas – which asks of a open mind from the administrator.

Round 2: After the meeting, some citizens propose that the problem should be explored more widely and that more meetings are necessary. The Turkish community offers to hold a meeting at their own neighbourhood organisation. Others however, propose to take more direct action and want to place metal detectors at the entrance of the school. How would you react to this development? How would you develop ideas and what should be the role of the different groups?

The participants agree that both parties should be heard and praise both the Turkish community and the action oriented citizens. Some however would opt for the meetings, whilst others want to work with both ideas. Wagenaar then asked the question who should take the lead in all this: the citizens or the city administration? Some feel that the citizens should be directors of solutions, others feel that the citizens usually look towards the administration for help, and that it should also be prevented that only certain groups will visit the meetings. Wagenaar states that one should also think about the broader problems concerning these youth and seek participation with new parties such as local businesses. It takes a lot of creativity and imagination to solve these problems, and though a lot is happening citizens are still often disappointed.

Round 3: The before mentioned district also has a problem with street prostitution, and citizens feel that the city doesn't listen to them. You've heard about a meeting on this subject, but you're not invited yourself. However, your alderman is scared for his/her reputation and wants you to go. What will you do?

Some participants wouldn't go or first call a local police officer to ask about the situation, but others would go and tell the visitors that they are shocked by the situation. Wagenaar states that it's important to be open to and involved with all parties, and that they style of communication towards citizens can be essentieel – especially since the coordination between different departments can be lacking.

At the end of the workshop, Wagenaar gave several important lessons for city administrators and politicians:

- Listen to what citizens have to say, and be open and involved.
- Don't make promises that don't have meaning. Take action together with citizens and don't try to deal with problems after things have happens.
- Make sure you know what the (different) expectations of citizens are.
- Investigate the context and history of the area and the problem.
- Search for the right partners and bring them together. Don't act too much like a director.
- Think about problems and their possible implications. Be creative and use your imagination when looking for solutions.

The fourth workshop was given by **William LeGoff** of ANRU, the French Agency for Urban Renewal. During the workshop LeGoff spoke about the French 'politique de la ville and French urban renewal'. LeGoff started the workshop of with a short historic overview of the French urban policy and the need from the 70's onwards for a firm policy steering the urban areas. Results from programmes up to 2003 showed that these programmes didn't work because there were several financial resources with different approaches and their own rules and because subsidies were given on annual basis with no long term commitment. Furthermore, there was no real or precise commitment from local communities – even tough contracts were signed. There was too little coordination between the various operations to be conducted on the same area and a lack of leadership halted urban reorganization. And finally, housing owners and local communities were facing poor financial situations.

After these policies with mixed results, the government decided that it was time for a comprehensive new policy towards deprived urban neighbourhoods. This decision resulted in the national urban renewal program which was adopted in 2003. The main principles of this program are:

- Create a partnership between the various national entities with the support of one single entity (Agence Nationale pour la Rénovation Urbaine) and under one single set of rules
- Guarantee financial support on a consistent and ambitious project (regrouping several operations) on a long term (5 years) basis
- Sufficient budget to start urban renewal projects on the 200 priority sites
- A detailed contract between the partners which specifies the program (work involved), finances, timeline (5 years) and the expected social outcomes
- An evaluation at the end of the contract

The project areas had to be reconstructed along different lines, not just physical but also socio-economical. Circulation (streets, public transportation …) needed to be constructed and private housing programs were to be developed to attract middle-class citizens. The existing urban design was proposed to change by diversifying the type of buildings, clarify land use and property and economic activities were to be developed.

In order to reach these changes, the government provided subsidies to:

- social housing entities to build, reshape, renew or demolish buildings
- local authorities to create or renew streets and public places
- local authorities to build new public equipment
- private or public entities to develop economic activities and commercial spaces
- individuals as incentive to buy houses in these neighbourhoods

In 2008, the national urban renewal program consisted of 330 projects in more then 430 areas with a total of more then 3 million inhabitants. At this moment, 129 000 building units have been demolished, 122 000 units have been built and 273 000 units have been renewed. The first realizations showed

spectacular results. However, some projects are facing difficulties, for which a new mission was created within the agency to guarantee implementation. This agency, called ACSé, focuses on the more socio-economic side of urban renewal, covering topics such as employment (with specific employment programs for the inhabitants of the deprived areas) and economic development, housing and public spaces improvement (through building maintenance and site management), citizenship and crime prevention, health and education. A second program of the 'politique de la ville' is currently discussed in the parliament.

After discussing the general policies of French urban renewal, LeGoff focused on one specific area in France which was faced with the need of urban renewal. One of the more successful projects of the these 330 projects is Seine-Saint-Denis. Through numerous renovations, demolitions and through building new houses, the physical and the social outlook of the neighbourhood has improved significantly. However, the project also shows us the shortcomings of the 'French approach'. The focus of the French program lies predominantly upon the physical outlook of deprived neighbourhoods and to a lesser extent the economic outlook of these neighbourhoods. The social factor, however, is almost not looked upon. This is LeGoff main critique and advice: don't forget the socio-economic aspects when facing urban deprivation.

After the workshops, the participants gathered to share their **experiences** and talk about what they've learned during the meeting. Expectation-management was mentioned by several people. Some said that we should be satisfied with small steps forwards, since change is a slow process. Someone even mentioned that it's an utopia to expect that a 10 year plan will make deprived communities flourish, especially since it's difficult to create a programme that will last through different political cycles. Others felt that, though it's good to be realistic, we shouldn't lower our expectations since setting goals and having ambitions can also generate good energy. We shouldn't be focussed just on the output, but on working together and on showing what happens at community level. Good practices can be shown to prove that change is occurring, even when a large outcome monitor doesn't show it. Policies should be placed in context of what is happening at a neighbourhood level, and we shouldn't be afraid to learn from our mistakes.

More information?

For more information on European neighbourhood programmes and the meeting, you can contact Daphne Schelling at Nicis Institute at 070 3440970 or send an email.

Links:

Nicis Institute

New Deal for Communities National Evaluation

Agence National pour le Rénovation Urbaine ANRU

Deutsches Institut für Urbanistiek DIFU

Government of Sweden or EUKN

Wagenaar en Specht, onderzoek naar stedelijk burgerbestuur als bestuurlijk arrangement