

MINUTES EUKN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 22-23 SEPTEMBER 2008

Monday 22 September 2008

The EUKN international conference was officially opened by **Mr. Wim Hafkamp**, scientific director of Nicis Institute.

His opening words were followed by a speech by **Mr. Ivo Opstelten**, mayor of Rotterdam. He expressed he was very proud that EUKN had chosen Rotterdam to host its conference. According to Mr. Opstelten, cities and regions are key to socio-economic development. In order to improve cities, the exchange of knowledge is important, especially in socio-economic affairs. Every city is dealing with the same sets of problems, he said. The city of Rotterdam especially faces immigration and integration issues, which are therefore high on the city's policy agenda. 46% of Rotterdam's inhabitants are of non-Dutch origin. Ethnic diversity is important, Mr. Opstelten stated, but Rotterdam is now also trying to create a unity in this diversity, by focusing on 'city citizenship'. "Everybody is a 'Rotterdammer', and as 'Rotterdammers' we should be proud of, responsible for and actively engaged in our city."

Mr. Hafkamp added to Mr. Opstelten's words by stating that cities have always been centres of upward mobility. After all, people have been attracted to cities to secure a better life for centuries. However, Mr. Hafkamp stated that this 'lift function' of cities is not always smooth. Upward mobility is not simple or self-evident. Newcomers to a city sometimes cannot find a connection to their new city, and cities can be hostile to new people too. This issue provides a context for the EUKN international conference. Mr. Hafkamp explained that the main reason why this particular conference takes place is because it is important for cities, regions and national governments to gain and share knowledge. "It is time for countries to look up from their national programmes and practices, to other countries," he said. Rotterdam has been chosen as the host of the conference because it has long functioned as a living laboratory for several urban initiatives and policies.

The first key-note speech of the EUKN conference was given by **Ms. Elly van Kooten**, Programme Director Strong Neighbourhoods Action Programme at the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment in the Netherlands. In her presentation she illustrated the Dutch national neighbourhood strategy; the Strong Communities Approach. At the end of 2006, the former Minister of Housing, Mr. Pieter Winsemius, had observed that some neighbourhoods in The Netherlands are suffering from severe problems, such as deprivation and crime. Problems often accumulated, resulting in even worse situations. To fix this

situation, it was decided to focus on a select number of neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods (forty in total) were selected on the basis of 18 liveability indicators under 4 themes:

- Socio-economic disadvantages
- Liveability
- Physical shortcomings in the housing stock
- Physical shortcomings observed by residents

The goal of the 'Strong Communities Approach' is to transform these 40 communities in an 8-10 year period of time. To reach this target, community action plans were formulated by local stakeholders, and charters were drawn up by local and central government, which included the main aims to be of the local strategies.

The funding of the 'Strong Communities Approach' comes from various sources:

- Housing corporations (250 million Euros over a 10 year period)
- The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) & individual municipalities
- National government (300 million for 2009-2011, for caretakers, social workers and 500 additional neighbourhood policemen)

The national alliance of 'Strong Communities' includes more than 50 public institutions and organisations to improve neighbourhoods.

An innovative element of the 'Strong Communities' approach is the so-called voucher system, which allows residents to receive funding from local governments to start their own local projects. They can receive vouchers worth up to 5000 Euros. The idea behind this initiative is that residents should have more power. The 31 municipalities under the 'Strong Communities' approach have received a resident budget of 300.000 Euros to implement the voucher system.

Ms. Van Kooten then illustrated the role of central government in the implementation of the Strong Communities Approach.

- Monitoring progress; e.g. through Statistics Netherlands' liveability monitor and the minister's yearly visits to the neighbourhoods concerned
- Promoting an integrated approach and tackling compartmentalisation
- Disseminating knowledge
- Engaging external partners

Ms. van Kooten's speech was followed by that of **Mr. Christer Hallerby**, the Swedish State-Secretary of the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality. He first expressed his contentment with the fact that Sweden had recently joined the EUKN network. He then moved on to explaining why he thinks cities are of great importance today and what kinds of opportunities they can create. Mr. Hallerby referred to Richard Florida and his stress on the necessity for cities to have an open and tolerant attitude, because diversity attracts economic activity. Cities that are free of discrimination and promote tolerance will become the most competitive Mr. Hallerby thinks. According to him, effective integration policies are therefore important to develop the competitive strength of cities. He stressed that diversity does not

only include immigrants, but also women. In Sweden, there are more women than men moving to cities for job opportunities.

The goal of the Swedish government is to combat exclusion when it comes to employment, social benefits and skills. Sweden has had a national urban policy for ten years. During the first years, a project-based approach was chosen, which mainly focused on big cities and their most deprived districts. However, this approach did not have lasting impacts according to Mr. Hallerby. Deprivation was not reduced. Sometimes the opposite even occurred. Today, Sweden has started using a different approach. The government is now mainstreaming urban policy with other policies.

Mr. Hallerby expressed the hope that participants would intensively discuss an integrated approach towards urban issues during the EUKN conference. He also stressed the importance of the Leipzig Charter in this respect. Mr. Hallerby welcomed the approach of the French presidency, and stated that the Swedish presidency will also continue gathering knowledge in this field. Sweden will host a high-level conference on urban sustainability.

Question Mr. Hafkamp: What is the Swedish national approach now that it is not project-based anymore?

Mr. Hallerby: The national authorities are now put in a local framework. There is an employment board, a policy board and a social inclusion board for example.

After a short coffee break, **Mr. Yves-Laurent Sapoval**, interministerial delegate in charge of urban and social development at the Ministry for Housing and Urban Social Development in France, gave his key-note speech.

He started his presentation by stating that there already is a consensus that we should make a success of the city. The main question that remains is whether we will succeed. France is dealing with one issue in particular, namely that of urban segregation. Five million people live in deprived urban areas in France, which is not a marginal part.

There is no public office that could tackle this issue alone. However, because of the hierarchical structure of France, nobody reaches full efficiency. That is why the country has agreed on collective action in the form of a common project for the future of deprived neighbourhoods. This project will be realised by interministerial policies, such as regeneration policy, in which 40 billion euros will be invested over the next 10 years.

For the French presidency of the EU, urban issues are also of great importance. During this presidency, France will attempt to draw up a common system of reference and look at the question how such a system can be implemented locally, and how it can be integrated at every different level. In December France will organise the 'Forum of Cities' in Montpellier.

During this international EUKN conference, participants have a great responsibility, Mr. Sapoval stated. According to him, the conference forms an opportunity to exchange knowledge among peers. "What we do here at this conference, should however also have an effect on the urban reality", he stressed.

Mr. Sapoval explained that France is dealing with two important issues at the moment:

- The fact that structural developments also influence neighbourhoods
- The evaluation of policy. How should policy be evaluated if there is not (always) a linear relation between expenditure and results?

“In France, we have to convince departments to work intercommunally and closer to the people,” Mr. Sapoval stated. “On the other hand, we should also act through consensus. Not just national consensus, but also European. The Leipzig Charter is important in this respect, because it is the start of such a consensus. The challenge we face is to implement it.”

Question from the audience: What is the role of inhabitants in this consensus?

Mr. Sapoval answered by saying that French policies are for everyone in France. The country has strong associational structures and citizen bodies, especially in local neighbourhoods. There are 3600 local governments in France. The main difficulty is how to involve them, and ask them their opinion on projects. In the end it's really about participation and creating a democratic base according to Sapoval.

After Mr. Sapoval's presentation conference delegates were able to join five different on-site visits in Rotterdam:

- Restructuring Hoogvliet – successful urban regeneration
- Pendrecht University
- City ports
- Economic Opportunity Zones
- Intervention Teams

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Mr. Hafkamp opened the second and final day of the conference by asking an important question. We are always talking about applying an integrated approach, but how do we actually reach that?

This was one of the issues addressed by **Ms. Ditty Blom**, programme manager of the Rotterdam South Pact. The South Pact is a major project that will receive 1 billion Euros of funding over the next ten years. There are 190.000 inhabitants in the Southern part of Rotterdam. Everything looks quite okay in the area, but if you look beyond the surface, you see there is high unemployment, unattractive housing and there are many early school leavers. A survey by housing corporations in the area has produced troubling findings in the past. They found that the general climate in the South of the city is negative. There was a lack of facilities and services, and a lack of socio-economic opportunities, especially in comparison to the Northern part of the city.

In the fall of 2006 the South Pact was launched. The projects that fall under the Pact come on top of the usual activities and projects for the area. The main objective of the pact is to lift the area to the same level as the Northern part of Rotterdam.

Many different parties are involved in the South Pact:

- 4 housing corporations
- 3 city districts

- City of Rotterdam

The South Pact contains three main elements:

- Strong South (e.g. the sports stadium)
- Powerful neighbourhoods (e.g. jobs, health, multifunctional centres)
- Attractive neighbourhoods (e.g. single family houses added, existing houses renovated and public space improved)

In order to guarantee good results, the involvement of residents and entrepreneurs is essential in the South Pact. Three examples of resident involvement include:

- The stadium park
- The creative factory (initiated by a local businessman)
- Fix-up houses (starters can buy very cheap houses in hotspots in Southern Rotterdam if they guarantee they will renovate them and stay for a least two years)

According to Ms. Blom, the most important lesson learned from the South Pact so far is that the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods is not a bureaucratic process. It should be a democratic process involving all residents and entrepreneurs.

Ms. Blom's presentation, which went into an interesting urban practice, was followed by a critical speech by **Mr. Patrick Le Galès**. He started his presentation in a controversial way, namely by stating that when it comes to urban policy, everything already seems to be known. Professionals all know they should apply an integrated approach, involve residents, be sustainable etc. However, the question remains how this should be implemented. Also scientists seem lost and unsure when it comes to urban issues.

“We have a pessimistic view of urban policy”, Mr. Le Galès stated. Often it is only limited to questions of competitiveness. Urban policy is also often marginalised and sidelined on the national level. Small initiatives aimed at improving urban areas frequently do not have long-term effects, and cities appear to be dominated by questions of security and control.

The classic view of the city is that of urban crisis. The urban world is often considered to be too complicated, and many developments *are* actually beyond the urban scope, such as social mobility. Urban professionals want to be active and do things, but finance departments regularly refuse because they do not see the necessity. Even though there is European activity in the field of urban policy, it is still completely sidelined in the EU.

Mr. Le Galès stated there is a gap between classic urban policy and real transformations in cities that we do not understand very well. We tend to govern the things we can measure or have an effect on, even when they are (slightly) irrelevant. Urban policies are mainly focused on problems and complications. Because of that, policy is often only aimed towards deprived urban areas. Focusing on problems also produces yoyo policies that only respond to crisis.

Mr. Le Galès believes that policy should increasingly focus on the interdependence between neighbourhoods, not just at individual neighbourhoods. After all, he says, what happens in neighbourhoods depends on higher layers. The different layers should be more integrated Mr. Le Galès feels. Policies that only target the neighbourhood cannot go anywhere. Policy should be focused on linking areas and encouraging mobility between them.

Cities are a source of diversity and dynamism. Policies should combine these diverse elements of the city. The problem is not diversity, it is the people who are trying to avoid the diversity of the city. This is really a question of the middle class and social mixing. In the end, people like to be at a 'safe distance' from others. The middle class wants to be close to poverty up to a certain extent, but at the same time they want to be far away from it as well. People want to be together sometimes, not all the time. This is a challenge. For example in France, the more mixed a school is, the more parents care about who hangs out with whom after school. In the United Kingdom it is the opposite. There, a high barrier to attend certain schools exists, but once you're in, you're in.

Mr. Le Galès concluded his presentation by given the following recommendations:

- Focus on the level of the individual
- Focus on basic provisions and services
- Too many initiatives are now focused on problems of one single area, instead of on the dynamics of the city
- Stop setting up too many initiatives but focus on just a few of them for 10 years
- Go back to basics
- The city is made collectively. We should focus on the question how to encourage people to make certain choices.

A panel discussion directly linked in to Mr. Le Galès' presentation. The panel consisted of:

- Ms. Hella Dunger-Löper, State Secretary, Senate Department for Urban Development, Federal State, Berlin
- Mr. Vicente Domenech, Head of the Regional Planning Department of the Regional Ministry for Environment, Region of Valencia, Spain
- Mr. Paul Hildreth, Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures (SURF), University of Salford, United Kingdom
- Mr. Asger Munk, Head of the Danish National Urban Regeneration Programme, Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Urban Affairs, Denmark

The panel discussion was led by Mr. Hafkamp. He kicked off the discussion by asking what the role of central government is in urban policy.

Ms. Dunger-Löper indicated that in Germany urban policy is now included in the national level. In the UK, Mr. Hildreth said, the national government is also involved in urban policy, but it treats neighbourhoods as isolated islands. The relations between and within cities are not considered. The UK also has a fragmented approach.

Mr. Hafkamp reacted by asking whether national government can even play a role in urban policy. According to Ms. Dunger-Löper it can, especially in controlling and coaching the effects of urban policy. Also Mr. Domenech applauded assistance from the national government. He said that in Spain, any help from the central government would be welcome. Ms. Hella-Löper confirmed this and illustrated her argument by saying that national governments have the possibility to provide money for pilots and set certain standards for policy.

Aren't we getting stuck in project and pilots? Mr. Hafkamp asked.

According to Mr. Munk, this all depends on the situation. Mr. Hildreth however stressed the importance of long term policies, a stable mayoral system (such as in Manchester & London), a joined-up approach and an increased focus on individuals.

Mr. Hafkamp then addressed a different issue. He asked the panel why the best people are often not in the right places when it comes to public services. For example, the best teachers are often teaching in the best schools, and not in schools facing many problems.

In Denmark certain ‘magnet schools’ have been created to solve this issue, Mr. Munk replied. Also in Germany, the government is trying to create the best working conditions in these kinds of problem areas. According to Mr. Hildreth, the general standards of public should be raised.

Fleur Boulogne (audience/EUKN) wondered whether this means that basic provisions should be improved first. She asked the panel whether they think a more sectoral perspective should be promoted before applying an integrated approach.

Mr. Munk replied to this question by stating that for example health has nothing to do with providing doctors, but with more general elements such as food, addiction and housing. By improving services you are not going to solve such health issues.

Mr. Hafkamp then moved on to ask the panel about their opinions on people in cities facing problems, but who are difficult to reach.

All the panel members agreed that a one-to-one approach, involving direct contact in people’s direct environment is vital in this case. According to Ms. Dunger-Löper people can be activated more when (local)governments focus on fast results, speed, secure successes and fun. The involvement of residents should be fun.

After this lively panel discussion, all participants were able to enjoy lunch. The conference was consequently officially closed by Mr. Hafkamp and some final words of Mr. Grisel, head of the EUKN secretariat.

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