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National metropolitan policy in Sweden

The increasingly evident tendencies during the 1990s towards greater social and ethnic segregation in the big cities led to the development of an integrated metropolitan policy in Sweden, and since 1998 the government has pursued a national metropolitan policy. The overall goals of the policy are to support development in the urban areas towards long-term sustainable economic growth and to break down social, ethnic and discriminatory segregation in these areas.

At the same time local development agreements were introduced as an instrument for implementing the new policy. By linking together national metropolitan policy goals with locally produced goals, it is aimed to achieve relevant long-term measures based on a bottom-up perspective and collaboration. Seven municipalities with altogether 24 housing areas have been covered by the agreements. Evaluation is an important part of this work to monitor and critically review the experiences that have resulted from this work. Evaluators from universities have been used as part of the programme on a local level. A national evaluation commission at the Swedish Integrations Board later on completed the local evaluations.

Eight important goal areas were presented in the Government Bill as a direction for the work with the local development agreements:

- Employment should be raised for both men and women,
- Benefit dependency should be reduced,
- The position of the Swedish language should be strengthened,
- School students should be given opportunity to reach secondary school attainment levels,
- The educational level of the adult population should be raised,
- All city neighbourhoods should be experienced as attractive and safe,
- Public health should be improved,
- Democratic participation should increase in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

The metropolitan work is based on four major principles:

- A bottom-up perspective
All measures should make the inhabitants' interests and participation their first priority.



- Management by objectives
Each measure taken should relate to a given objective and be a part of a major plan.
- Co-operation
Measures should - as far as possible - involve cross-sector activities.
- Long-term work
The development process should extend over a long period of time.

Within the framework of the local development agreements, hundreds of measures have been carried out in the housing areas considered to be the socio-economically and ethnically most segregated in the metropolitan areas in Sweden. The conditions for this work have differed from area to area, including varying size (between 3,500 and just over 24 000 inhabitants) and the local goals for the work. However, the differing local goals are inherent in the basic conditions since, according to the Government Bill, the overall objectives were to be adapted to and rooted in local needs.

Portuguese measures under peer review

Social network for development

The social network for development seems to have similar points of departure as the network created within the local development agreements in Sweden, where for example cooperation with various actors and the participation of local actors – a bottom-up perspective – are believed to be essential for making progress. However, in order to create opportunities for a sustainable development it is also necessary to link the measures taken at the local level to a national policy, since area-based welfare work has no prospects of being able to achieve the overall goal of enhancing social and community development. An interesting question in this perspective is the correspondence between national and local objectives.

Another interesting aspect is how the local stakeholders manage to share their views on what actually should be done within the local social network. There are reasons to believe that this is of particular concern when adopting a bottom-up perspective. Experience shows that a successful bottom-up perspective requires a clear definition. A clear definition is also crucial for a



successful management by objectives in contrast to legislation. With a lack of clarity the various players may be uncertain of the concept and this may lead to unsuitable methods in relation to goals. It is also interesting to reflect on the participation of the inhabitants. Even if promoting democracy and increasing participation from the inhabitants have become a task for the administration, it may be questioned to what extent the inhabitants receive real influence. According to a recent evaluation in Sweden there seems to be a lack of interest in building up new sustainable democratic structures.

Social and community development

A long-term approach is often underlined as one of the basic prerequisites for success with social and community development. This can be a challenge when the activity connected with community development is run by delimited projects in contrast to ordinary activity run by the public sector. Area-based measures often run a certain risk of being included in a permanent project activity alongside of the ordinary activity, according to evaluations carried out in Sweden. The advantages of the project form, the relative experimental freedom outside a bureaucratic structure, must be weighed against disadvantages such as a short-term approach and uncertainty about whether experiences obtained are made use of and incorporated in ordinary activities. One way of dealing with this can be to reflect over the governmental management in relation to local areas. A higher degree of management by overall objectives instead of more detailed instructions related to specific projects, may be a better way to connect to local conditions, which in turn may strengthen a sustainable development.

Further more, a sustainable development requires an organisation that is able to adapt to the work of change. For this reason it is important that the measures taken are constantly quality-assured. From a Swedish point of view there is a lack of clarity of whether measures are primarily aimed at the individual or the housing area in the context of both measures and evaluation. The individual perspective can sometimes be in direct contradiction to the area perspective. What can be regarded as stabilising and reinforcement for the area (committed residents, residents who remain in the area) can thus be counteracted by the fact that individuals who have been strengthened get an opportunity to move away from the area. It can never be regarded as negative that an individual develops or, for instance, moves up the housing ladder, as little in these areas as elsewhere in the community. To foster area development and a strong



common identity can in these cases paradoxically develop in the direction of confirming the segregation that efforts are being made to stop. At the same time, it is important not to underestimate the effects of the movements that continually affect the resident base and which create a constant in- and out-flow. In other words, the situation is complex.

Relevance and transferability of the Portuguese measure

As far as potential transferability is concerned, it can be stated that efforts to enhance social and community development in disadvantaged communities are full of nuances. There are similarities in the approach as well as differences. Decentralizing combined with managing by objectives are for example some of the distinctive traits in the Swedish national metropolitan policy. A common challenge seems to be how a long-term perspective can be implemented in the community development efforts.

The main goal of the Portuguese policy measures under peer review: to enhance social and community development in depressed areas, could contribute to reduce long-term dependence on social assistance, which is one of the measures described in Sweden's report on measures to prevent poverty and social exclusion (June 2005). The Swedish government appointed a commission of inquiry in February 2005 for the purpose of reviewing public interventions to help people of working age who are dependent on social assistance to find work. The commission is to propose measures that will facilitate the transition from dependency on social assistance to self-support by work. Since long-term dependency on social assistance is more frequent in depressed areas, a local approach is of great value in this context.