

‘Social Mixing’ and the Management of Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods: The Dutch Policy of Urban Restructuring Revisited

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Summary. The Dutch government currently pursues a comprehensive and ambitious policy of ‘social mixing’ in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The second section of this paper suggests that it has as yet not been adequately explained why the Dutch government pursues this so-called restructuring policy. The third section develops an approach derived from regulation theory that potentially helps to decipher the forces behind the Dutch restructuring policy. It is argued that planning practices and discourses should be analysed in relation to the dynamics of the regulatory framework in which they are embedded. The remainder of the paper uses this approach to give an alternative account of the Dutch restructuring policy, suggesting that it represents an attempt to facilitate the social management of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Thus, it serves to mitigate the social effects of the problematic integration of ethnic minorities and facilitates a national city-oriented growth strategy.

1. Introduction

The composition of the population in disadvantaged neighbourhoods has often been the object of public intervention (Sarkissian, 1976). It is frequently suggested, by planners and politicians alike, that a policy that promotes ‘social mixing’ could strengthen the social tissue of a disadvantaged neighbourhood, thus saving its inhabitants from living in an environment that allegedly inhibits social and economic integration. As social mixing is more often and more intensively pursued throughout Europe, the debate on the composition of neighbourhoods and the possibilities for public intervention has recently been re-invigorated (Galster, 2002; Musterd and de Winter, 1998). While a number of

studies question the effectiveness and desirability of ‘social mixing’ in the European context, I maintain that it has as yet not been adequately explained *why* policy-makers pursue social mixing *where* and *when* they do so. Exactly because there seem so many good reasons for *not* pursuing socially mixed neighbourhoods, these questions of origin and differences over time and space seem to be of key importance in political and academic debates on disadvantaged neighbourhoods generally and social mixing specifically. This seems to be particularly true for the Netherlands, the country with probably the most ambitious and well-funded social mixing policy (see Ministerie

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Table 1. Tenure change in designated post-war neighbourhoods, 2000–10 (percentages)

Tenure type	Before restructuring (<i>N</i> = 445 900 dwellings)	After restructuring (<i>N</i> = 465 000 dwellings)
Social rented	65	42
Privately rented	17	13
Owner-occupied	18	45
Total	100	100

Source: Ministerie van VROM (1997, p. 92).

van VROM, 1997). Some attempts have been made to explain why this so-called restructuring policy has been conceived. The second section of this paper, however, argues that the conventional accounts of the restructuring policy exhibit some important shortcomings. The third section therefore suggests an alternative approach, which is then used to guide the analysis of the restructuring policy in the remainder of the paper. It is explained that the implementation of a city-oriented national growth strategy made the social management of disadvantaged neighbourhoods a political priority and it is shown how social mixing was construed as an indispensable instrument for the social management of disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

2. Conventional Accounts of the Restructuring Policy

2.1 *Some Key Features of the Restructuring Policy*

The white paper that describes the restructuring policy stresses that there is an urgent need to intervene in the housing stock of Dutch cities. It talks about high levels of unemployment, the out-migration of businesses and an unattractive living environment. The document stresses that these negative trends reinforce each other in particular neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods are (about to be) caught up in a 'downward spiral' that needs reversing. The document argues that the large quantity of

social housing weakens the position of these neighbourhoods and it suggests that 'restructuring' the housing stock would be an appropriate way to prevent (further) decline. Restructuring basically means that the quality of the living environment is enhanced and, most importantly, that the share of owner-occupied housing is increased (see Table 1). It is hoped that the availability of owner-occupied houses will encourage upwardly mobile households to stay in the neighbourhood and/or attract (relatively) affluent households. The policy thus aims to stabilise the socioeconomic status of the designated neighbourhoods by ensuring the presence of a minimum number of affluent households. No less than 170 neighbourhoods will be restructured, of which approximately two-thirds have been built in the post-war period. Approximately 750 000 households or 12 per cent of all Dutch households live in the designated areas (Ministerie van VROM, 1997, p. 128). The number of low-cost social housing units will reduce by 94 000.

The restructuring policy is not meant to function in isolation. When the restructuring policy was introduced, numerous other policies that sought to enhance the socioeconomic development of the largest cities in the Netherlands were already in place. To a large extent, these policies are part of the Big Cities Policy (BCP) that was introduced in 1994, three years before the restructuring policy. Shortly after its inception, the restructuring policy became an integral part of the BCP.¹

2.2 *Two Lines of Interpretation*

It is far from clear how the restructuring policy should be interpreted. Every attempt to create some order in the wide range of responses will, of course, obscure substantial differences between individual positions. However, it is possible to distinguish two different interpretations, each with a significant number of proponents.

The first interpretation is highly critical of the restructuring policy for at least two reasons. First, it is argued that there is no *need* to take draconian measures to restructure the housing stock. The readiness to invest large sums of money allegedly originates from fear of US-style ghettos (Musterd, 2000). This fear is unfounded since income inequality is relatively low in the Netherlands and consequently there are no large concentrations of poverty (Deurloo and Musterd, 1998). Hence, although there is as yet no conclusive evidence, limited negative neighbourhood effects are anticipated (see Ostendorf *et al.*, 2001). Secondly, the restructuring policy allegedly shows that policy-makers mistakenly assume that social mixing will automatically lead to social interaction. Kleinhans *et al.* (1999) even argue that restructuring is likely to produce negative rather than positive types of interaction among neighbourhood residents. If anything, the restructuring policy could undermine social networks that often provide disadvantaged groups with social contacts as well as access to resources (see Kesteloot, 1998).

Thus, according to this interpretation, policy-makers have chosen to pursue a policy that is not supported by empirical evidence. How is this explained? Planners may be driven by fear of US-style ghettos. In addition, it is suggested that those responsible for the policy share with generations of planners an outdated view of neighbourhood communities. In contrast to what planners think, transforming the housing stock cannot change the fact that people choose to associate themselves with like-minded people. It is thus argued that the restructuring policy is based on stubborn 'myths' about heteroge-

neous neighbourhoods (Smakman and Musterd, 1999).

This interpretation—that 'blames' the planner—is unsatisfying for at least two important reasons. First, it does not explain the significant historical shifts in planning ideology and accompanying discourse that have taken place during recent decades (see Vermeijden, 2001). Secondly, the literal text of the policy document does not talk about ghettos and only incidentally hints at a relationship between neighbourhood characteristics and the social mobility of neighbourhood residents. Some authors suggest that the "aim of the policy of urban restructuring is to mix the housing stock in order to improve conditions for upward social mobility" (Ostendorf *et al.*, 2001, p. 378).² But it is assumed rather than proven that the social mobility of neighbourhood residents plays an important role in the consideration of planners—an assumption that can only be maintained if restructuring has no other potential effects apart from promoting the upward mobility of neighbourhood residents. However, restructuring has a multiplicity of effects for a variety of actors. Some of these effects will be elaborated below because this can help us to understand why the Dutch government takes action at a time when the effects discussed by proponents of this interpretation do not seem to provide a basis for intervention.

The second interpretation proceeds more cautiously. Authors who support this interpretation (see Priemus and van Kempen, 1998, 1999) state, in accordance with the policy document, that restructuring serves three goals: managing the housing stock, strengthening the economic base of big cities and promoting socially mixed neighbourhoods.

With regard to the first objective, Priemus and van Kempen (1999) emphasise that the government subsidies will not cover all the anticipated expenses. Thus, it is anticipated that other parties will play an active role in realising policy goals. In particular, housing corporations are regarded as potential partners, since they own the largest share of housing in the designated areas. The second

objective also plays an important role in the BCP. Through restructuring, the government hopes to transform neighbourhoods that would otherwise be unattractive for affluent households into neighbourhoods with a competitive position in the housing market. This is of more importance now because there is taking place a massive construction of quasi-suburban housing on the so-called Vinex-locations. Priemus and van Kempen (1998, 1999; van Kempen and Priemus, 1999, 2002) see the active pursuit of socially mixed neighbourhoods as the most important policy goal. Although they suggest that social mixing can have a positive impact for the realisation of the two former objectives, they doubt whether it will benefit residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Like authors who favour the first interpretation, they point out that, in the Dutch context, there is not a great deal of evidence for negative neighbourhood effects and that some people may benefit from living among people with a similar ethnic background or socioeconomic status.

Priemus and van Kempen deal with the restructuring policy in a rather straightforward fashion—they simply evaluate how realistic and desirable the policy goals are. In doing so, they acknowledge some of the effects that were overlooked by authors who favour the first line of interpretation. But Priemus and van Kempen also leave some questions unanswered. First, they do not explain the policy's scale of action. Construction will take place in individual neighbourhoods with some 1 500–10 000 inhabitants, which means that newly built housing will be scattered across cities. Other commentators have suggested that such a strategy is not particularly efficient; they say that it would be more appropriate to target action at large urban zones and maybe the city as a whole (for example, Vrom-raad, 1999, p. 75). Moreover, Priemus and van Kempen restrict themselves to describing and evaluating the policy document. To achieve a more complete understanding of the restructuring policy, it seems to be necessary to address the social and political processes that

determine the policy context. Paying attention to these processes could potentially resolve one ambiguity of the analysis by Priemus and van Kempen: while they are enthusiastic about the restructuring policy, they indicate that it could have adverse effects for some of the people who are supposed to be helped by it. Their analysis should thus, at the least, be complemented by an analysis that looks not at the feasibility and desirability of the (stated) objectives, but also at the way in which these objectives became important for policy-makers in the first place.

3. An Alternative Approach

This section develops an approach derived from regulation theory that could help to decipher the forces behind the restructuring policy. By using the word 'approach', it is not meant to suggest that a comprehensive and coherent theory of state action will be developed. Instead, a set of general notions will serve as handles for the analysis of the restructuring policy in the following sections.

Conventional approaches towards the restructuring policy share with conventional planning theory the implicit assumption that spatial planning is

independent of any wider structuring process, and imposed from the outside, as it were, upon existing social and urban patterns (Scott, 1980, p. 175).

In contrast, the approach suggested here sees planning practices as part of a broader set of institutions that regulate social life—the 'regulatory framework' as it is called here. As regulationists have argued, such institutions differ importantly between countries (Verhagen, 1993). Here the term regulatory framework is preferred, rather than the traditional term 'mode of regulation' (MOR) because particular attention will be paid to the way in which social, cultural and economic forms of regulation are overlapping and intertwined with each other. The interpretation of regulation favoured here is thus close to recent contributions in regulation theory that, in

dissolving the distinction between economic and extra-economic spheres, are considerably more 'sociological' than traditional regulation research (see Moulaert, 2000; Dijck, 2000). While the latter literature has always propagated the inclusion of norms and values and discursive constructs into the analysis, these less tangible forms of regulation now come to take a more central role, thereby broadening the scope for regulation research (MacLeod, 1997, p. 546).

3.1 Regulatory Frameworks, Interdependencies and Discourse

Regulatory frameworks consist of inter-related institutions that form a more or less coherent whole at a specific moment in time. However, because the relation between institutions is dynamic, regulatory frameworks are characterised by a constant and gradual process of change as well as by occasional crises. Actors actively try to (re)organise themselves in such a way that their actions meet the requirements of the changing institutional context and become compatible with the logic of the regulatory framework in which they are embedded (Collinge, 1999; Jessop, 1995). Many of these strategies are developed in relation to the state. As a result of its focus on the process of policy formulation, this paper will pay close attention to the ways in which these political strategies crystallise into state policy. In this way

the introduction and operation of the new institutions of urban and regional governance, can be positioned within a wider set of social and political forces (MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999, pp. 515–516).

The restructuring policy is such a new institution and the goal here is to investigate the social forces that have enabled its emergence. Of particular importance in this context is the interrelationship between the state apparatus and the institutional actors it cooperates with, which together form the 'integral state'. Arguably it is now even more important than before to analyse the state in its integral form, since the transfer of respon-

sibilities from the public to the private sphere—the much-quoted shift from *government* to *governance*—has made it necessary to focus not only on centres of public power but also on the public–private coalitions that are responsible for the execution (and sometimes the formulation) of policies. A rescaling process whereby responsibilities (though not necessarily power) are transferred from the national scale to a variety of other spatial scales is closely associated with these developments, since devolution makes sub-national governance structures increasingly important (Brenner, 1999; Imrie and Raco, 1999). As will become clear, the emergence of an ambitious social mixing policy in the Netherlands can possibly be seen as one of the manifestations of these processes of state restructuring. In particular, it will be argued that the restructuring policy is supposed to improve the functioning of neighbourhood governance networks that have become more salient as a result of recent processes or rescaling (Uitermark, 2002).

The structure of the integral state, in turn, can be analysed against the background of the dynamics of the regulatory framework in which it is embedded. Each regulatory framework has its own constellation of power relationships, the qualities of which are determined by the intensity, character and nature of the interdependencies between social groups, the state apparatus and other institutional actors (see Théret, 1994). These latter qualities to a large extent determine the orientation of the state and the orientation of actors towards the state. Thus, Jessop argues that

[The state] can be analysed as a system of *strategic selectivity*, i.e. as a system whose structure and *modus operandi* are more open to some types of political strategy than others. Thus, a given type of state, a given state form, a given form of regime, will be more accessible to some forces than others according to the strategies they adopt to gain state power (Jessop, 1990, p. 240; emphasis in the original).

The goal, therefore, is to map the interdepen-

dencies within a certain regulatory framework in order to understand why the state facilitates the political strategies of some actors instead of others. For example, the capability of an institutional actor to command government policies is likely to be relatively large if it occupies a central position within national governance networks. One of the main arguments that will be developed is that the Dutch government has been particularly attentive to demands of institutional actors in disadvantaged neighbourhoods due to recent changes in the Dutch regulatory framework and that this bias to a large extent explains the form—and indeed the existence—of the restructuring policy.

Shifts in the configuration of interdependencies, however, do not automatically and mechanically lead to a change in policy measures. Before such a change can take place, the policy discourse itself has to be adapted. In this context, it is important to recognise that discourses are ‘relatively autonomous’ from other social practices (see Fairclough, 2001).³ While a study of shifting power relationships may reveal why some actors instead of others succeed in getting the ear of the state and other powerful actors, this tells us little about the actual origins of certain discourses. In addition to studying shifting power relationships, we thus need to pay attention to the way in which ‘problems’ are constructed and the way in which actors (re)define their own interests. Two separate but interrelated issues are relevant in this regard.

First, we should study the material and institutional conditions that allow discourse to develop in ‘local centres’ of a specific discourse (see Foucault, 1990, p. 98). The play of forces between different actors around these centres makes possible the development of a discourse. Disadvantaged neighbourhoods can be seen as local centres for the development of a (policy) discourse and it thus becomes important to investigate the social and institutional conditions within these neighbourhoods. So far, regulation theory has not paid much attention to these micro-physics of power on a local (neigh-

bourhood) level (MacLeod, 2001, p. 822). But, as will be demonstrated below, an understanding of the *local* circumstances in which institutional actors have to operate is crucial for understanding how they try to command *national* policies.

A second issue is the nature of the reaction to these local circumstances by (powerful) actors. This is a separate step since institutional and material conditions merely delineate the possibilities for existence of a certain discourse; they do not determine discourse (Kendall and Wickham, 1999). With regard to policy, the typical question here is: how and when was the object of a policy defined and how did the representations of that object (for example, the way it should be dealt with) change over time?

In sum, in order to understand why a certain discourse (on disadvantaged neighbourhoods in this case) becomes dominant and is accompanied by state action (social mixing in this case), we need to answer two interrelated questions. First, how, when and why do actors identify certain problems and develop a reaction to these problems (see van Dijk, 1997)? And, secondly, how does their position within a dynamic regulatory framework allow them to make their discourse dominant and to mobilise the state apparatus? This dual task is carried out by first providing some information on the particularities of the Dutch regulatory framework and its recent development.⁴ In the following section, it is explained how the issue of disadvantaged neighbourhoods came on the political agenda: who the actors were and under what conditions their conceptualisation of ‘the problem’ with these neighbourhoods changed.

4. The Dutch Regulatory Framework

After the Second World War, the Netherlands entered a period of continued economic growth. In that period, which ran roughly from 1945 until the early 1970s, Dutch society was divided in different ideological and religious sub-cultures. Each group had representatives at the national level. Resources

that were shared at this level were distributed through municipalities and the respective organisational infrastructures, the so-called pillars (*zuilen*). During this period, central government guaranteed equal service provision for all minorities. One important side-effect of this arrangement was that central government gradually assumed responsibility over local service provision.⁵ As a consequence, the central state became, in the last resort, responsible for the financial position of municipalities—which explains its traditional commitment to promoting the economic position of cities (Terhorst and van de Ven, 1998, p. 472).

In the post-war period, potential conflicts arising from cultural and religious diversity were thus pacified through negotiation at the level of the central state. Although there has been, concomitant with a process of secularisation, a process of ‘depillarisation’ since the late 1960s, political events in the Netherlands can only be understood against the background of this history of corporatism (Lijphart, 1982, p. 8).

Recently, the traditions of corporatist negotiation and pacification have been re-invented in the shape of the so-called polder model. The polder model is, in fact, not a model that can be implemented at will, but an institutional structure that has gradually evolved over time (Terhorst and van de Ven, 1998, p. 469). The contours of this ‘model’ first became apparent during the rule of a coalition between Social Democrats and Christian Democrats that came into power in 1990. After the neo-liberal reforms of the welfare state in the 1980s under the leadership of right-wing Liberals and Christian Democrats, it was now felt that processes of economic restructuring should be closely regulated by the state. This goal was pursued more explicitly by the ‘Purple’ government (a coalition between Social Democrats, right-wing Liberals and progressive Liberals) that came into power in 1994. The polder model, a term that came into vogue during this period, reflects the continued commitment of social groups to ‘pacify’ conflicts through co-operation and compromise. The polder

model can be characterised as a system of organised solidarity that is underlaid by a culture of co-operation (Delfsen, 2000, p. 169). Threats to this delicate system of regulation could include long-term inequalities between different groups, the high costs of public involvement and the exclusion from negotiation of large segments of the population (Terhorst and van de Ven, 1995).

4.1 Threats to the Dutch Regulatory Framework

All these threats are particularly evident with respect to the position of ethnic minorities within the Netherlands and the problematic integration of ethnic minorities as a threat to the Dutch regulatory framework is of direct importance for understanding the restructuring policy. However, it is not to be inferred that this is the only issue that is relevant. Although the majority of ethnic minorities live in the designated areas (RMO, 1997, p. 5), many of these neighbourhoods do not contain a large share of minorities. Moreover, the issue of integration is obviously also of importance for those who are not labelled as ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, the position of minorities will be discussed for three reasons. First, because the issue of integration is high on the political agenda. It is identified as a key problem for Dutch society by the public as well as by politicians—the political ascendancy of the now-deceased Pim Fortuyn and the extremely tough stance on integration issues taken by the new right-of-the-centre cabinet being only the most recent expressions of a process that has been underway for at least a decade (see Fermin, 1997). Secondly, this discussion about integration clearly illustrates how a welfare state under restructuring is seeking for new ways to regulate social relations. Thirdly, there is a connection between the lack of sufficient opportunities for integration at the national scale and the variety of governance initiatives that are being developed at the neighbourhood level.

4.2 *The Position of Ethnic Minorities in the Netherlands*

The issue of integration has challenged the Dutch regulatory system in the past and it will do even more so in the future. This is particularly true for immigrants from Mediterranean countries (Morocco, Turkey) because these groups display low levels of upward social mobility as well as high population growth. There are some signs that an ethnic 'underclass' is in the making (Roelandt, 1994; Dagevos, 2001a). A process of underclass formation, even if it is only in its formative phase, could erode the foundations of the Dutch regulatory framework because the integration of all groups of considerable size is a prerequisite for its reproduction (Terhorst and van de Ven, 1995). Although there is as yet no reason to suppose that the socioeconomic disadvantages of minority groups are permanent (see Dagevos, 2001b), recent debates within Dutch society indicate that there is a growing concern that the institutions of the Dutch regulatory framework will need to be adapted to deal with the integration of minorities (ten Hooven, 2001).

Central to the debate on integration has been the question of whether ethnic minorities should be given the opportunity to establish their own 'pillar', with their own schools, cultural facilities and places of worship. This question was answered affirmatively in the (early) 1980s: it was believed that socialisation within ethnic communities would eventually lead to economic and social emancipation. Some form of 'ethnic corporatism' was never established, however. Representatives from ethnic minorities were consulted, but not recognised as partners for negotiation. In addition, it was generally recognised that the integration of ethnic minorities would require far more funds than were made available.

In the 1990s, there was a change of discourse (Fermin, 1997). In the *Contourennota Allochtonenbeleid*, the Second Chamber (1993/94) said that it would reduce its attempts to stimulate the cultural emancipation of minorities, since this was now seen as a

strategy that hindered rather than promoted emancipation. And it was stated that the government should acknowledge the link between, on the one hand, ethnicity and, on the other hand, the interconnections between 'liveability', criminality and unemployment. In this new philosophy, there was going to be an emphasis on the rights and duties of universal 'citizenship'—ethnic minorities should be required to make use of the opportunities to integrate. These new philosophies and policy goals had to be given shape in a new institutional context. Central government declared itself unfit to orchestrate a policy of top-down integration while at the same time self-governance of ethnic groups was now considered less desirable than before. The (new) funds that were made available thus had to be channelled in new ways. The solution to this 'institutional vacuum', as envisaged by the government, was to engage in partnerships on each geographical and administrative level. The 'social renewal policy', which is described below, is a good example of a policy designed along these lines.

In sum, there are growing tensions that result from, on the one hand, the persistent weak, socioeconomic position of certain (ethnic) groups and, on the other hand, growing concerns about the feasibility of the polder model. Due to the fact that ethnic minorities are not distributed evenly across space, tensions manifest themselves earlier and more intensely in some areas than in others. As will be shown below, it is of particular importance that many of the neighbourhoods that are designated by the restructuring policy contain a relatively high share of ethnic minorities.

5. **Contextualising the Restructuring Policy**

This section discusses, against the background of the general discussion of the Dutch regulatory framework, two developments that are of key importance for understanding the popularity of the restructuring policy. First, processes of institutional reconfigur-

ation that increase the interdependency between institutional actors in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and actors operating at a national scale are identified. Secondly, the processes that confronted institutional actors operating at a neighbourhood scale are discussed and an explanation is given of how the neighbourhood population came to be regarded as an object for intervention in policy discourses.

5.1 *The Big Cities Policy*

The period from 1982 onwards witnessed a host of neo-liberal reforms that further marginalised disadvantaged groups. As a result, while the economy recovered, the situation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods worsened (see, for example, van Kempen *et al.*, 1992). The trend of malign neglect came to a stop in the early 1990s. In line with the ambition of the newly elected coalition of Christian Democrats and Labour to pay more attention to social problems, a policy of 'social renewal' was started in 1990. The social renewal programme was designed to induce a sense of shared responsibility among the inhabitants of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and to promote social interaction between different social and, especially, ethnic groups (Beaumont, 2003, p. 4).

In a sense, the period when the Christian Democrats and the Labour Party were in office and when the social renewal policy was conceived, can be regarded as a transition phase for urban policy. In contrast to earlier periods, there was a strong emphasis on local autonomy (local actors had to decide what exact shape the policy would take, while central government provided funds and guidelines) and on co-operation (government agencies were required to co-operate with segments of civil society in newly established governance networks). Another shift is associated with the proliferation of a discourse on 'revitalisation' (Vermeijden, 2001, p. 218): since the important 'Montijn Report' (ECGS, 1989), social and economic measures to 'revitalise' cities and disadvantaged neighbourhoods had been

considered at least as important as physical regeneration.

Several major policy changes, however, would only take place after the election of the Purple coalition in 1994. This coalition had more of an 'urban orientation' than previous governments, not least because the Christian Democrats traded places with the right-wing Liberal Party VVD and the progressive liberals of D'66 (Priemus *et al.*, 1997, p. 679). This shift of orientation, however, should not be equated with a growing concern for the fate of the urban poor. We need to focus, instead, on the institutions that operated in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, since it was these actors that put 'urban problems' on the political agenda. In fact, the mayors of the four largest cities, in the cry for help from which the BCP sprang, demanded from central government that it should strengthen the position of relatively poor cities and neighbourhoods, not (or at least not primarily) that it should improve the material situation of disadvantaged groups (Amsterdam *et al.*, 1994). This explains why the 'solutions' of the BCP often have indirect and sometimes adverse, rather than direct and beneficial, consequences for disadvantaged groups.

With the BCP, the discourse on revitalisation is consolidated and given a more explicitly economic connotation. But while the goals—'vital' neighbourhoods—remain roughly the same, the means change somewhat. First, some extra funds are made available to promote 'liveability'. Secondly, there is an increased emphasis on the integration of different policies. The revitalisation of disadvantaged neighbourhoods is now considered to be an integral part of a comprehensive *national* development strategy. With the BCP, the coalition between urban municipalities and central government—which has, in different shapes and to different degrees, characterised the Dutch regulatory framework for the past seven or eight decades (see Terhorst and van de Ven, 1998)—has been re-invented and re-inforced. The most important goal of the BCP is to reduce the burden on urban institutions and to give them

Table 2. Relationship between the presence of minorities and the chances of becoming a victim of various forms of crime (percentages, rounded figures)

Percentage of ethnic minorities	Vandalism	Burglary	Violence
0–5	21	12	3
5–10	22	14	4
10–20	24	13	4
20–30	26	14	5
> 30	30	22	7

Source: SCP (1995, p. 334).

a new role as creators of wealth. In policy discourse, the socioeconomic development of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and that of the nation as a whole became closely inter-related, increasing the interdependency between institutional actors in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and actors at the national scale. As a result of this development, a variety of governance initiatives have been developed at the neighbourhood level. Some of these schemes have specific goals—such as increasing social control or promoting social interaction—but many have more general ambitions, most often associated with the social management of the neighbourhood's public space

In a concerted effort, the state and local authorities will try to reconquer the public domain. This will require greater efforts on the part of the state and the mobilisation of citizens, civil organisations and the private sector (Priemus *et al.*, 1997, p. 682).

But while there was a greater need to cooperate with other parties, including residents, in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in order to facilitate the social management of those neighbourhoods, demographic and social developments rendered such a strategy increasingly problematic. The changing role and character of the neighbourhood population were key in this regard.

5.2 Liveability and the Social Management of Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods

A turning-point in the thinking on disadvan-

taged neighbourhoods seems to have been in 1993 when the government published the *Contourennota* (Second Chamber, 1993/94). This report, unlike its predecessor of 1983, paid a great deal of attention to 'concentration neighbourhoods' (neighbourhoods with a relatively high share of minorities). The Social and Cultural Planning Agency (SCP) confirmed that 'concentration neighbourhoods' were plagued by higher levels of crime and vandalism (Table 2), while at the same time noting that it was statistically impossible to separate the context effect of the presence of minorities from the presence of poor households, which is indicative of the extent to which 'concentration neighbourhoods' overlap with 'income neighbourhoods' (SCP, 1995, pp. 334–335). The mere presence of minority groups, however, increased feelings of unsafety among the neighbourhood residents and gave those residents the impression that the neighbourhood was deteriorating (SCP, 1995, pp. 352, 511).

In this light, it was stated that these neighbourhoods required urgent attention, in part because 'liveability' had now become an important issue for integration policies. It was argued that the liberalisation of the housing sector (see Priemus, 1997) contributed to the emergence of concentration neighbourhoods, as it was expected to increase segregation (SCP, 1994). Right after the link between the housing market and the condition of urban neighbourhoods was made, influential politicians argued for a policy that would prevent the formation of 'income neighbourhoods', which had now become, even more in discourse than in practice, equated with 'con-

Table 3. The share of ethnic minorities in the three largest Dutch cities (percentages)

	1980	1986	1992	1995
Amsterdam	11	16	27	32
Rotterdam	10	14	25	29
The Hague	9	14	22	n.k.
The Netherlands (average)	3.2	4.3	6.9	n.k.

Source: SCP, (1995, p. 56).

centration neighbourhoods' (see, for example, Duivestijn, 1996). The political turbulence during this period is all the more remarkable when one knows that the 'residualisation' (see Malpass, 1990) of social housing as well as processes of segregation were characteristic of the 1980s and came to a virtual stop afterwards (van Kempen *et al.*, 2000; Bolt and van Kempen, 2001). To understand this paradox, it needs to be noted that, while processes of segregation stagnated, 'concentration neighbourhoods' *did* become more prevalent during this period due to the substantial absolute increase of ethnic minorities (Table 3). Indeed, it seems to make much more sense, if we want to trace the origins of the concern over 'income neighbourhoods', to focus on the share of ethnic minorities in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, rather than on processes of segregation. Concentration neighbourhoods are from the 1990s onwards mentioned in one sentence with a 'lack of liveability'. A closer look at this concept can help us to understand why institutional actors in neighbourhoods (and in turn, policy-makers and politicians) could come to consider the composition of the neighbourhood population as a problem.

'Liveability' is a slippery concept. It can refer to practically every element of the living environment. In the author's view, using this concept is a particular way to code the aggregate result of individual behaviours. A direct connection has been made between the socioeconomic status of the inhabitants of neighbourhoods and the degree of liveability, as evidenced by the opening lines of a report

sponsored by the association of housing corporations

Among housing corporations as well as many others, there exists a growing concern over the quality of the living climate in the Netherlands' neighbourhoods. It is feared that the building of new housing on *vinex*-sites, among other things, will facilitate a more rapid outflow of high-income households from neighbourhoods that were built before and right after the war. As a consequence, the fragile balance that now still exists within many neighbourhoods could then be disturbed, which could lead to a downward spiral (Camstra *et al.*, 1996, p. 3).

Typically, this report does not only calculate the degree of liveability by measuring the chances of traffic accidents, crime levels and so on. Alongside these neighbourhood characteristics, it also uses the socioeconomic status and ethnic background of the neighbourhood residents themselves as indicators of 'liveability' (Camstra *et al.*, 1996, p. 25). One of the reasons for this might be that 'liveability', or the condition of the neighbourhood generally, is from the social renewal policy onwards regarded as the shared responsibility of the state, other institutional actors (mainly housing corporations) and residents themselves. The proliferation of new neighbourhood governance institutions is consistent with a new institutional context that is, as said, characterised by a new role of the state that now seeks to control the whole of its territory and population through direct co-operation with actors at all geographical

Table 4. Individual and neighbourhood effects on the social integration of minorities, as measured by the extent to which heads of households ($N = 5122$) have contact with native Dutch and consider such contacts desirable: partial representation of the results of a multilevel analysis

Characteristics	Non-standardised coefficients
<i>Level of education (versus no formal education/elementary school)</i>	
Low-level vocational school/medium-level high school	0.1
Medium-level vocational school/high-level high school	0.21
High-level vocational school/academic	0.25
<i>Position on the job market (versus inactive)</i>	
Unemployed for longer than two years	0.15
Unemployed for less than two years	0.33
Elementary professional level	0.04
Low professional level	0.13
Medium professional level	0.15
High/academic professional	0.19
<i>Percentage share of minorities in the neighbourhood (versus 0–10 per cent)</i>	
10–20	– 0.14
20–30	– 0.29
More than 30	– 0.43

Note: All results are significant ($p > 0.01$), except that expressed in italics.
Source: SCP (2002, p. 160).

and administrative levels. In this new role, it is confronted with logistical problems in disadvantaged neighbourhoods that largely result from the problematic integration of minorities into Dutch society.

The social distance between minorities and the host society is relatively large in concentration neighbourhoods. In fact, the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood has a large, *independent* negative effect on the degree to which minorities have contact with indigenous Dutch people (Table 4). The actual social and cultural distance between minorities and native Dutch in concentration neighbourhoods is even greater than the figures in Table 4 suggest since this neighbourhood effect is reinforced by effects from other variables; minorities in concentration neighbourhoods generally have a relatively low level of education and socioeconomic position, which also reduces the chance of them having (frequent) contact with native Dutch people (Dagevos, 2001a). These figures are indicative of the extent to which a parallel social structure has developed within concentration neighbourhoods. The distance

between formal institutions and residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods is further reinforced by the relatively high levels distrust of politicians and the government. Again, although on this issue only exploratory research is available, there seems to be a neighbourhood effect that is reinforced by other variables (SCP, 2002, pp. 209–211). In sum, formal institutions are confronted with relatively closed social and informal institutional structures. This reduces the potential for co-operation between formal organisations and residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and shows that authorities will have difficulties if they try to exercise control *through* these social and institutional networks.⁶ Experience indeed shows that popular involvement, which was supposed to be a crucial element of the institutions established by the BCP, was very limited in practice—ethnic minorities in particular were hardly reached (Beaumont, 1999).

In reaction to these developments, local governments and other institutional actors increased their efforts to reach disadvantaged and ethnic groups; increasing the opportuni-

ties for participation and other forms of governmental reform were still considered useful and necessary policy measures. These actors also started to envisage other solutions, however. It became more common to see the neighbourhood population itself as a governance problem. Reijndorp, for example, noted in 1996 that

Nowadays liveability is more and more often associated with social segregation and the emergence of concentrations of households with low life chances. In this view, attempts to promote liveability should include measures to counter such concentrations (quoted in Buys *et al.*, 1997, p. 7).

A lack of liveability means for 'neighbourhood managers' (i.e. institutional actors responsible for disadvantaged neighbourhoods, such as local politicians, housing corporations, social workers, etc.) that they have difficulties in carrying out their key tasks; the problem of liveability, for them, is primarily a problem of the social management of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. At some point between 1990 and 1994, it was no longer deemed as attainable as before to capitalise on the latent civic and social responsibility of the neighbourhood residents in order to facilitate the proper social management of neighbourhoods—a shift that is related to the changing ethnic composition of the population in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and the resultant lack of opportunities to include residents in governance strategies.

At the same time, however, processes of concentration (or at least the existence of 'concentration neighbourhoods') were largely regarded as given. The SCP (1995, p. 488), for example, stressed that the government needed to accept that 'concentration neighbourhoods' were prevalent in Dutch cities and would become even more so in the future. The only realistic way to combat concentrations would be to build luxurious apartments in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with state subsidies. But such a policy, according to the SCP, should be con-

sidered undesirable because it would create 'islands of wealth' which would be of little importance for the current inhabitants. However, the interests of poor households cannot be equated with the interests of those who seek to 'revitalise' the neighbourhoods where these poor households reside. For urban politicians, housing corporations, the police and a host of other organisations that actively sought to maintain order in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, an influx of affluent households would mean a change for the better because it would increase the manageability of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Thus, measures to interfere with processes of concentration and segregation were from the early 1990s onwards increasingly seen as a necessary and integral part of measures to promote 'liveability'.

During the social renewal period, local actors started experimenting, often with support from the central state, with policies to promote social mixing at a local level (Terhorst and Drontmann, 1991; Ministerie van VROM, 1997, p. 51). The restructuring policy, which facilitates such measures on a large scale, however, would be implemented only after it was recognised that channelling investments into disadvantaged neighbourhoods should be a national priority. Here two factors identified by Priemus and van Kempen played a decisive role. First, with the BCP the government had once more committed the country as a whole to a city-oriented socioeconomic development strategy. It was widely recognised that the remuneration of the stock of private and public investments in urban areas would suffer if the weak competitive position of the cities' housing stock was not addressed. Secondly, the recent round of neo-liberal policies confronted the housing corporations—which have traditionally functioned as a key element of the Dutch regulatory framework (see, for example, Thrift, 1994)—with a tough challenge. It was clear that traditional urban renewal schemes were no longer considered appropriate for the new challenges facing housing corporations. One reason was that there was greater demand for owner-occupied housing; another was that

the housing corporations would, in the absence of sufficient government subsidies, have to sell some of their stock in order to perform their new role as social entrepreneurs in the future.

5.3 Possible Effects of the Restructuring Policy

It is clear that affluent households, in the discourse of parties like housing corporations and policy-makers, have become associated with neighbourhoods that are 'vital': their presence supposedly reduces crime and promotes clean and safe spaces. How these qualities are achieved is less clear; we cannot find a complete answer in the policy document itself, since it does not say a great deal about the social consequences of the restructuring policy. In addition, important differences may occur between different neighbourhoods, since local actors can decide what parts of the housing stock are to be restructured. Several powerful actors, however, have indicated why they feel the restructuring policy should be continued. The effects they envisage are mentioned here because this can help to understand why the restructuring policy is supported by policy-makers and how the restructuring policy is supposed to produce its effects.

First, the presence of affluent households is expected to benefit the less-well-off households in the neighbourhood. According to one important proponent of the restructuring policy, Peter Noordanus (the current chairman of the advisory board for the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, a prominent member of the Labour Party and a former alderman for housing in The Hague), children of deprived parents benefit from the presence of more privileged peers when they attend school. The presence of positive role models is also considered important for the social development of youth (Noordanus, 1999a, 1999b). Whether the premises of this view are correct or not—and here the present author is in agreement with the authors discussed in section 1—they do not justify *or explain* the political will to

take drastic measures in order to promote social mixing.

Secondly, most obviously and perhaps most importantly, after the restructuring policy has been carried out, the problems associated with a high share of poor or ethnic households are to some degree dispersed over a larger territory, which will reduce the burden on institutions operating in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Housing corporations seek to achieve 'balance' and 'harmony' within neighbourhoods—and if a neighbourhood does not evolve in the way its managers had envisaged, the restructuring policy provides them with a tool to 'rebalance' the neighbourhood population (van Velzen, 1998). The restructuring policy thus provides managers of housing corporations with a tool to control the access to residential areas; it helps to attract and retain desirable elements and to remove and exclude undesirable elements (see Haworth and Manzi, 1999; Goodchild and Cole, 2001). As one representative of housing corporations has put it

Countering segregation is not a goal in itself. As long as we can contain the negative effects of segregation, we can live with it ... Only when the imbalances in the neighbourhood population have negative effects on our ability to let houses and/or liveability, has the time come to take action (van Velzen, 1998, pp. 53, 50)

A similar kind of discourse has been adopted by central government

Although there are no extreme concentrations of vulnerable groups, there are certain neighbourhoods where problems prevail. There is a chance that this will lead to mutually reinforcing processes of dilapidation in parts of the cities. In several neighbourhoods liveability and safety are under pressure ... In many neighbourhoods there are problems that are related to certain forms of one-sidedness ... In some neighbourhoods where one-sidedness can occur or already dominates, increasing the diversity of the housing

stock ... can facilitate the physical, *social and cultural* improvement [*sic*] of living and working environments in these neighbourhoods (Ministerie van VROM, 1997, pp. 47, 49; emphasis added).

It is typical that these comments only refer to issues of social management (safety, liveability) and not to the social and financial costs associated with, for example, relocation of current inhabitants. These actors also do not contemplate—as do Ostendorf *et al.* (2001)—whether the funds that will now be spent on restructuring might not have had more positive effects on the position of disadvantaged households if they were spent another way (on education or employment programmes, for example). This is simply because these actors, by their very nature, are concerned with the management of the neighbourhood and not (primarily) with the fate of individual households.

Thirdly, Noordanus (1999b) emphasises the key role that affluent *ethnic* households are to play in the restructured neighbourhoods; these households are expected to help their communities in terms of 'socialisation', as he puts it. Thus, affluent ethnic households are to function as intermediaries between state institutions—and perhaps Dutch society generally—and the ethnic communities. Put in harsh terms: the presence of affluent households should prevent deprived households from socialising (exclusively) in their own community.

Fourthly, affluent households are expected to play a distinctive role within disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Basing herself on correspondence with the Second Chamber by the former Minister of Big Cities and Integration, Blokland-Potters (2001) rightly argues that affluent households are being used as a *means* to achieve certain goals. Affluent households are expected to play a more active role in the neighbourhood than poor households; they are supposed to deliver and support the stock of 'social capital' necessary to maintain social cohesion. One of the premises of the restructuring policy is that households in owner-occupied housing,

which in practice means relatively affluent households, will revitalise neighbourhood institutions (Noordanus, 1999a). Of course, poor households also develop all kinds of social activities in the neighbourhood, possibly even more so than affluent households. Since they operate at a larger distance from formal institutions, however, it is understandable that these activities are not of primary concern to neighbourhood managers.⁷ The web of institutions that is spun around the neighbourhood as part of the BCP can fulfil its role only if people who share the norms, rules and communication codes of formal institutions are present and willing to participate. This situation makes the presence of affluent households a *sine qua non* for the establishment and successful functioning of the governance coalitions that are responsible for the social management of disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

6. Conclusions

The introduction of market mechanisms in practically all public institutions and the recourse to more authoritarian state strategies have brought the Netherlands somewhat closer to the model of a 'liberal' welfare state. But it is important to emphasise that, in the Netherlands, 'repression' and the 'free market', as mechanisms regulating social relations, are not simply taking the place of welfare state arrangements. Instead, the erosion of certain aspects of the welfare state opens up opportunities for policy-makers to perform their role as 'righters of wrong', as Harvey (1974, p. 225) has put it. That policy-makers were given these opportunities is, as has been shown in detail, the result of a dual process. On the one hand, the lack of opportunities or political will to take appropriate action when most needed, has led to the establishment of a large body of people, the 'urban poor', that lives concentrated within certain neighbourhoods and in large part consists of ethnic minorities. The lack of suitable institutions to integrate ethnic minorities into the Dutch economy and institutional framework has had severe repercussions for disad-

vantaged neighbourhoods and (indirectly) made it increasingly difficult for neighbourhood managers to carry out their tasks. These difficulties (combined, of course, with genuine moral disapproval of the situation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods) led neighbourhood managers to call upon central government to provide them with instruments to increase the manageability of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. On the other hand, recent years have seen the intensification of interdependencies between neighbourhood managers and actors whose frame of reference is the nation as a whole, such as national politicians and policy-makers. For the vulnerabilities of the Dutch regulatory framework became especially evident in disadvantaged neighbourhoods—the places that showed most clearly the repercussions of the problematic integration of ethnic minorities while at the same time becoming more important for a city-oriented national growth strategy. This process made national actors particularly sensitive to the demands of neighbourhood managers and encouraged them to sponsor experiments with modes of regulation at the neighbourhood scale that could help to compensate for the lack of integration and (pillarised) emancipation at a national scale.

Thus, as a result of a complex and path-dependent development of a particular constellation of powers and interests with a highly specific spatialisation, social mixing could come to be seen as a means to an end—the end being the establishment of a multifaceted system of control in disadvantaged neighbourhoods that would make these places easier to manage and that would reduce the burden they formed for a city-oriented national growth strategy.

Although the above analysis emphasises that the shape and function of social mixing policies should be analysed by taking into consideration national specificities, it also allows some more general points to be made. Reflecting on some recent literature, it is remarkable that most research on social mixing deals with neighbourhood effects and that it consequently has the interests and

needs of residents as its main focus (see Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Friedrichs, 1998; Galster, 2002; Ostendorf *et al.*, 2001; van Kempen and Priemus, 1999). Although this bias is understandable, it is important to realise that such research is not sufficient for achieving an understanding of how policies come into being or why these policies often seem to miss their goals. Residents are not the only ones who have (heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting) interests in neighbourhoods. Local and national politicians, housing corporations, social workers and a host of other institutional actors also have a stake in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Since these actors often have more power to command political and planning processes, their interests, which cannot simply be equated with the interests of (all) residents, should be taken into account when one wants to *explain* (as opposed to defend or criticise) a specific policy outcome.

On a final note, it is possible to speculate about the interrelationship between social mixing and governance issues. The more that residents are considered as participants of governance networks, the more social mixing affects the composition of governance networks. Hence it becomes increasingly possible for central government to manipulate the composition of governance networks through social mixing. Whether manipulating governance networks is the most important reason for policy-makers to promote social mixing is unclear, but it is obvious that, in the Dutch case, social mixing will reconfigure the basis of local governance networks that are becoming of more importance as a result of recent rounds of state restructuring. In this light, it would be interesting to study in more depth if and how social mixing is part of and facilitates broader processes of state restructuring in the Netherlands as well as in other European countries.

Notes

1. More details on the BCP are provided below. See also van Kempen (2000).

2. Scholars from outside the Netherlands sometimes make similar comments. For example, Friedrichs says that
 the assumption of a negative context effect of poverty neighbourhoods is, although implicitly, underlying *all* municipal programmes for the amelioration of poor living conditions in European cities (Friedrichs, 2002, pp. 101–102; emphasis added).
3. Here, I am paraphrasing some classic Marxist theorists who claimed that the state is 'relative autonomous' from the economic sphere (for example, Poulantzas, 1973; Miliband, 1983).
4. This is not to suggest that the Netherlands has little in common with other countries. In fact, most of the characteristics described below can be found, in one form or another, in other countries as well. Indeed, the idea of social mixing itself is not only popular in the Netherlands, but is also periodically gaining ground in other countries (see, for example, Musterd and de Winter, 1998, for several European countries). However, I will restrict myself to the Dutch situation and, for now, I will leave open questions of generalisation and comparison.
5. The share of local charges and taxes in the budget of municipalities fell from 50 per cent in 1932 to 6 per cent in 1980. In the past two decades (to 1996), it has increased to around 16 per cent (Terhorst and van de Ven, 1998, p. 470).
6. The fierce and long-standing debate over whose responsibility it is that Moroccan youths are relatively often involved in criminal behaviour and cause nuisance is typical in this respect. The youths are not reached by the authorities, who see themselves forced to call on the Moroccan community to take action, only to discover that there is no such thing as an accountable and coherent Moroccan community (Albrecht and Zonneveld, 2001).
7. It has to be said that local as well as national actors often, though not always (Loopmans and Uitermark, 2000), take into consideration existing social networks when they restructure the housing stock (Helleman *et al.*, 2001).

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