

Urban Development, Governance and Education: The Implementation of an Area-based Development Initiative in Sweden

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Abstract

A large, area-based metropolitan development initiative (MDI) was launched in Sweden in 1999 as part of a new metropolitan policy. The Swedish government and seven municipalities invested about 400 million Euros in 24 of the most deprived urban neighbourhoods in the Stockholm region, Gothenburg and Malmö. The overall aim was to promote integration and combat unemployment, low achievement in schools, poor health, criminality and low democratic participation. The idea of urban governance was highlighted as one of the distinguishing hallmarks of the policy. Elementary schools were, after various labour-market projects, the largest receivers of MDI funding. Drawing on empirical findings as well as on secondary literature, this article describes and analyses how local school stakeholders—most notably heads of local education departments, principals and teachers—implemented the MDI with particular focus on the policy's urban government principle. It is argued that local school stakeholders, as a well-organised group with strong professional identity, captured the idea of urban governance and manipulated it to fit their own particular interests. Some effects of this process include schools becoming further isolated from their local communities, students and parents becoming further isolated from the decision-making processes within schools and money being spent on projects that are exclusively defined by the educators and the administrators, rather than by the communities they serve.

Between 1999 and 2005, the Swedish government together with seven municipalities invested almost 400 million Euros in the social restructuring of 24 urban neighbourhoods in the Stockholm region, Gothenburg

and Malmö. The focus was on the 'social' component of attempted improvement since, according to Andersson (2006, p. 792), this initiative was marked by an almost total absence of physical renovation. The major

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predicament of these neighbourhoods was not deemed physical decay (Hall and Vidén, 2005)—as in some other Western metropolises marred by persistent segregation (see Jargowsky, 1997; Mingione, 1996; Venkatesh, 2000; Wacquant, 1996; Wilson, 1997)—but it was their inhabitants' position in the social and symbolic structure of the city (Bunar, 2001), which was labelled by the media as 'many immigrants' and politically classified as class and ethnic 'segregation' (Andersson, 1999; Andersson and Palander, 2001). In order to combat the negative consequences of housing segregation, an ideologically and economically well-equipped Swedish welfare state launched a number of reform programmes from the second half of the 1980s onwards, although with meagre results (Lindbom, 2001; Törnquist, 2001). At the beginning of the 1990s, the pace of segregation, perceived as a concentration of immigrant and poor families in certain urban neighbourhoods, accelerated. This pace of segregation was due partly to the economical crises unfolding in the country at that time, partly to new waves of refugees fleeing war and persecution in their native countries and partly to high population turnover, or the outflow of the most socially strong families (Andersson, 1998).

The government-sponsored, area-based development programmes culminated in 1999 with a comprehensive metropolitan development initiative (MDI), aimed at 'breaking segregation', creating more social justice and conquering discrimination within all realms of social politics, accompanied by a covenant proposal to local authorities.¹ The MDI also stipulated some compulsory regulations. Among the most important were: co-operation of institutional actors present at the local level, long-term perspective orientation (including implementation of best practices in the ordinary administrative structures and methods) and active involvement of citizens in the implementation processes. Based on previous evaluations (Andersson, 1996;

Hosseini-Kaladjahi, 1998; Integrationsverket, 2000) and academic research (Andersson, 1998, 1999; Andersson and Molina, 1996), the last MDI regulation regarding citizens' involvement at all stages of the MDI implementation was highlighted as crucial to the entire policy. For the first time, the government also required that the entire initiative from the beginning must be followed up and evaluated by externally contracted researchers and evaluators. Furthermore, according to Andersson, one key phrase in the MDI was 'methodological development'

By methodological development, the government simply means that the current sectoral organisation of the public sector makes it difficult to address complex situations and that people run the risk of being sent from one institution to another. In order to set up an individual centred administration, the authorities have to find new ways of co-operating (Andersson, 2006, p. 792).

The largest portion of the money was reserved for projects that combated unemployment and included supporting businesses, promoting ethnic entrepreneurship among local populations, matching the available workforce with the needs of manufacturing and service companies as well as providing re-education and skill-increasing measures that are better able to prepare local populations for a fluid and fast-changing labour market (Ljungar, 2004). Since education was highlighted by the government as being vital in combating segregation, about 40 per cent of the money was reserved for investment in pre-schools and elementary schools (Axelsson and Bunar, 2006). Finally, a smaller part of the economic package was aimed at supporting local cultural activities, initiatives for and by young people, crime prevention, health care and local democracy (Integrationsverket, 2002).

This article will focus only on the educational segment of the metropolitan development

initiative and only on elementary schools. In addition to the significance of education as a primary instrument for future career opportunities and the amount of money invested in its daily operations, the sustainability of the local educational structure is extremely important to the whole community. Without schools as vital social institutions that create opportunities within communities, the quality of life in deprived neighbourhoods would plummet further (Rivkin, 1994; Searle, 1997). The aim is to describe and analyse how some of the major educational stakeholders, such as principals, teachers and heads of local school departments, implemented the MDI with particular focus on the policy's foremost hallmark—namely, the idea of urban governance.

The 'Million Homes Programme' and Housing Segregation

At the beginning of the 1960s, the rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, internal migration and immigration from Finland, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy (Lundh and Ohlsson, 1999) put pressure on the housing market creating enormous demand. After many years of various committees' investigations (Turner, 2001), the government responded positively pledging that 1 million modern apartments and homes would be built between 1965 and 1974.² There is no doubt that this initiative was a watershed in the ambitions of Sweden's welfare state to enhance the living conditions of the working class and the new immigrants. The dark shadows of past poverty, overcrowding and long waiting-lists for housing would be finally eradicated and indeed, according to Hall and Vidén (2005, p. 306), the standard of housing has been raised dramatically. It has to be underlined that not all neighbourhoods created by this programme eventually faced problems of empty apartments, population turnover, bad reputations and an influx of socially weak elements of the population.

In particular, those in the centres of cities and in single- and row-family houses that were also built during the same programme (34 per cent of all housing stock), evaded stigmatisation and segregation (Hall and Vidén, 2005, p. 322). It is therefore ironic that the label most often used for socially deprived Swedish urban neighbourhoods today is 'the million homes programme', whether the homes really descend from that time and that policy or not. The question is what was it that subsequently gave impetus to massive government social intervention in some of these neighbourhoods?

According to many observers, the downward spiral of flight away from the neighbourhoods located on the fringes of cities was provoked by a mixture of architecture and location (concrete boxes at the fringes of big cities), poor communication, insufficient community infrastructure (child care, leisure facilities, grocery shops), an improving standard of living for the working class (including changes in the government's housing loan guarantees) and people's desire to 'buy a villa and a piece of backyard' (Andersson-Brolin, 1984; Andersson, 1999; Arnstberg, 2000; Molina, 1997). In due course, this flight began to take on an ethnic dimension. The more the Swedes (and socially established immigrants) moved out, they left behind more empty apartments into which newly arrived immigrants and refugees were placed and directed to by the authorities. Some of the neighbourhoods, such as Råslätt in the city of Jönköping (Öresjö, 1996), were partly transformed into refugee reception centres. Eventually, a powerful stigma was attached to these neighbourhoods through negative media representations, labelling them as 'no-go areas', 'ghettos' and 'dangerous'. After some time, this stigma even began contaminating local institutions and individual self-perceptions (Bunar, 2010; Ericsson *et al.*, 2002). This stigmatisation prompted even more residents to abandon their neighbourhoods

(Bunar, 2008). Of course, even the local educational structure—from pre-schools and elementary schools to upper secondary schools—suffered greatly from the social and symbolical changes unfolding in the local communities (Bunar, 2001). The outflow of the best-performing students and the inflow of newly arrived refugees depressed the average grades, finally giving many public schools in deprived neighbourhoods the label of ‘underperforming’ or ‘failing’ (SOU, 2006).

However, there are also plenty of positive features that need to be illuminated in order to grasp the complexities of the social situation which the MDI was to tackle. According to many surveys (Bunar, 2008; Sernhede, 2007; Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2008), there is a strong sense of local patriotism among young people and the majority of them enjoy living in their neighbourhoods. Another positive factor is the still-strong presence of welfare institutions and services, such as schools, libraries, health-care facilities, leisure centres, sports clubs and cultural institutions. There is also a relatively strong organisational structure in the form of ethnic and religious institutions and relatively strong participation in these alternative public arenas—although the ties between ethnic and religious groups are weak—and the ethnic and cultural diversity opens up possibilities of ethnic entrepreneurship (Dahlstedt, 2005).

Urban Governance

According to Dekker and van Kempen (2004), urban governance advocates the inclusion of private and corporative interests as well as citizens and their associations in sharing in the power, control, responsibility and accountability of local development (see Cars *et al.*, 2002; Coaffee and Healey, 2003; Jessop, 1995; MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999; Orueta, 2007; Pierre, 1998; Pierre and Peters, 2000; Rakodi, 2001). A policy for genuine change cannot succeed if it is forged by civil

servants based in departments detached from the practical details of real life; a policy has to be created in co-operation with local interests. Andersen and van Kempen (2003, p. 80) write, in an article comparing urban policies in the Netherlands and Denmark, that recent urban policy changes contain several dimensions among which ‘a shift from government to governance’ is among the most important. Other important features of this shift are as follows: a focus on the empowerment of inhabitants and of cities and specific neighbourhoods; a replacement of universalist policies by targeted policies; an attempt to integrate policy fields from various departments into a united project organisation; and, a growing use of covenants as policy regulation. All these dimensions are also found in the formal structure of the Swedish MDI. Van Marissing *et al.* (2006, p. 283), in an attempt to merge the ideas of urban governance and social cohesion, have, with reference to Blokland (2003), proposed three aspects of co-operation, power sharing and accountability: horizontal among citizens themselves; institutional among authorities, policy-makers and local stakeholders; and, vertical among authorities, policy-makers, local stakeholders and citizens. Equally, Kearns and Paddison assert that

Governance is about the capacity to get things done in the face of complexity, conflict and the social change: organisations, notably but not only urban governments, *empower themselves* by blending their resources, skills and purposes with others (Kearns and Paddison, 2000, p. 847).

Nevertheless, while many authors praise the idea of urban governance and argue persuasively for its necessity, they also underline certain problems in relation to its implementation. Accountability (who is responsible for what), potential goal conflicts (whose goals should be worked on first), legitimacy and representations (who is representing whom

and based on which mandate), if not properly dealt with, can easily obscure the core issue, lead to organisational chaos and impede local development (Vranken *et al.*, 2003).

The ambitions of the MDI were unequivocally set up around urban governance aspects, engendering co-operation and grassroots initiatives as irreplaceable instruments of success. However, a major problem developed that was not fully comprehensible at the theoretical/political level; the problem was how to negotiate and reconcile the pragmatic/particular interests of local stakeholders and the overall aims of the MDI through an area-based approach. After several years of fieldwork and analyses, I argue that this dilemma remains largely unsolved since many actors suggested repeatedly that 'urban governance' was the motivating principle of their work while simultaneously doing quite the opposite (see also Velázquez, 2005).

Method

Between 2002 and 2005, I worked with a group of researchers to evaluate and examine the implementation of the MDI in five neighbourhoods in Stockholm. In addition to conducting fieldwork, I also had overall responsibility for combining the individual research results into a concluding report.³ The main method used to collect the empirical material on which this article is based was qualitative, with interviews, participant observations and a review of the secondary literature. We repeatedly sent out questionnaire forms to more than 200 managers with detailed questions about each project that had received money from the MDI. We also developed a database with information about the structure, progress and outcome of each project. Due to the overwhelming number of responses, we were not able to control and validate whether every individual manager's report was true or false. However, we conducted high-quality field research using

interviews, participant observations and document analysis of the largest and (what we deemed at the time to be) the most important projects within each area of social policy affected by the MDI (labor market, education, crime prevention, health care, democracy and cultural life). The material was later compared with the project managers' self-evaluating reports, proving their accounts had a high level of validity. Another major source of material upon which this article is based consists of secondary literature. It includes evaluation reports, scientific articles and books published by academics involved in the follow-up of the MDI in all 24 neighbourhoods (see for example, Andersson *et al.*, 2004; Andersson, 2006; Axelsson *et al.*, 2002; Axelsson *et al.*, 2006; Bevelander *et al.*, 2002, 2004; Hertting, 2003; Hosseini-Kaladjahi, 2002, 2003; SOU, 2005; Törnquist, 2005; Urban, 2005). Since the body of available material is paramount, the references have been limited to only the most important, high-quality publications. Furthermore, a wide spectrum of scientific literature has been consulted, including Swedish and international authors, concerning urban governance, education and urban social policy.

Two general principles guided the analytical approach to this vast amount and wide spectrum of empirical sources. The first was the theory of urban governance, which also, at the practical level, was translated into a policy requirement. The project managers were required by the government to comply with some major principles of urban governance, such as co-operation and citizens' participation in decision-making and implementation processes. Since elementary schools had received considerable amounts of economic resources from the MDI and since they had such high-profile roles in all anti-segregation policy documents,⁴ it was particularly interesting to focus on how the school stakeholders envisaged the idea of urban governance and how they carried out this policy segment in practice.

Schools, perceived as social institutions and not primarily through their pedagogical methods, had received astonishingly little attention in scientific reports on urban renewal programmes or urban social policy in general (see Burgers and Vranken, 2004).

The next question was: what did the empirical evidence say? To answer this question, I reviewed the official documents produced by the schools and local education administrators, including their applications for resources from the MDI. Here, I found a 'perfect' match between the idea and policy of urban governance, on the one hand, and what the school stakeholders pledged to do, on the other hand. The applications suggested that parents and pupils would be closely involved and consulted during the setting up and implementation of the majority of the projects and close co-operation with the local community was seen as an essential part of the majority of the projects. Had the research only focused on these documents, I would probably have arrived at the conclusion that the school stakeholders indeed lived up to the idea and policy of urban governance. However, after fieldwork in and around many schools in Stockholm's five MDI neighbourhoods, and after reviewing the information in the databases from the self-reported evaluations, it transpired that this was not the whole story. A careful review of the interviews, field notes (from visits to different projects and talking to pupils) and comparisons with other empirically grounded publications on the MDI, revealed something quite different from what was stated in the project applications. This article summarises the analysis of the apparent gap between the 'politically correct' discourse on urban governance and its practical realisation.

One important limitation has to be clarified: this article does not aim to offer an evaluation or a statistical account of the MDI school-related projects in terms of, for example, whether the average grades have

increased and whether that eventual increase was a consequence of the MDI.⁵ Neither does it intend to analyse the purposefulness and effectiveness of individual projects. My primary aim is to describe, analyse and discuss the practical responses that a single, and in many ways extraordinary, social policy initiative has provoked among local school stakeholders.

The Implementation of the MDI in Elementary Schools

Various programmes to improve schools in socially deprived urban neighbourhoods have been launched and implemented over the past 20 years, although often with a focus on instructional and language learning methods. No programme has ever achieved the scope, structure and economical resources of the MDI. Therefore, there is no real reference point to be found in previous projects and initiatives. The MDI was, and still is, unique in that sense.

Two documents laid down the overall principles for regulating relations between the MDI and local educational structures: the governmental proposal *Development and justice: a big-city policy for the 21st century* (1997/98: 165) and a set of local covenants signed between the government and the municipalities selected to participate in the programme. It is stipulated in the proposal that "The position for the Swedish language should be strengthened" (p. 30) and that "All students should be given preconditions to achieve specific school goals. It is of outmost importance that no student leaves elementary school without sufficient knowledge of Swedish/Swedish as a second language, English and Mathematics" (p. 30). In the covenants, these aims were further specified but merely in quantitative terms stating what percentage of students were about to improve their grades, accompanied by the already-mentioned principles of co-operation, empowerment, long-term perspective orientation

and the implementation of successful projects into the ordinary school structure. No desirable working methods were spelled out in any of these documents, leaving the entire field open for educators and local communities to set up projects which the actors thought would best serve the purpose (Stockholms stad, 1999). This approach may be in accordance with the urban governance theory, but the implementation became something else. The total amount of MDI resources allocated to local public pre-schools and elementary schools was about 80 million Euros, which is a considerable amount of money, given that the ordinary budget had already covered all basic needs and that the external resources were supposed to finance only new methodological approaches to teaching, learning and strengthening ties with the community. Some of the defining aspects of the MDI's implementation will now be explained.

A Quick Launch and the Organisational Culture

During the interviews, many principals and heads of local school departments (see also Norén, 2002; SOU, 2007) explained that their first encounter with the MDI was intensely stressful. As one principal from Husby, an impoverished area in the north-west of Stockholm, said

We received a call from the municipal office, and they basically told us if we wanted any money, we had one week to present a proposal. I went to my teachers and honestly told them, like, just give me something.

Words such as 'stress', 'hurry', 'just deliver' and even 'anything goes' were repeated when the school stakeholders recalled how they felt at the outset of the MDI. Moreover, the teachers did deliver, which eventually established a kind of imbued ambivalence in the implementation of the MDI.

On the one hand, the teachers and principals found themselves in the midst of the 'promised land of urban governance'.

The municipality and the government promised them a substantial amount of money if they could come up with some ideas—no matter how vague they were, as turned out to be the case later on—about how to improve the educational standards and opportunities for students in urban public schools. Thus, local school stakeholders were granted financial incentives under tight time-frames. The only requirement was that the structural constraints of the MDI, especially its urban governance branch, ought to be observed. On the other hand, this approach ran the risk of reducing the MDI, with all its ambitious goals concerning community development, democracy, social justice, participation and integration, to a simple additional source for the school budget. Otterbeck illustrates this point plainly by summarising the teachers' views on the MDI in Malmö

For Mia [one of the interviewed teachers], the Metropolitan Development Initiative means that she can apply for money to refill the school budget (Otterbeck, 2002, p. 44).

Additional money was welcome and needed, but why in that case develop a whole organisation if the only intention is to allocate government money? In many schools, the external and internal budget resources blended together such that teachers did not even know they were part of a project; some had never even heard of the MDI. As Otterbeck (2002) concluded after evaluating one school-related project in one of the MDI neighbourhoods in Malmö

There was no possibility I could identify any clear goals to evaluate or to comprehend what in this project reflected the Metropolitan Development Initiative's political goals or how its money affected the teaching method, form and content. Maybe it could be said a link was that everyone should be provided with the opportunity to achieve goals in school and that education is important in a dynamic city. Nevertheless, these are general goals (Otterbeck, 2002, p. 45).

One effect was that many activities (evidently part of the schools' ordinary work) were simply defined as 'a developmental work in progress' and were shifted over to the MDI budget. One example is education for teachers in 'the bilingual children's language and knowledge development' which was implemented in Skärholmen, an MDI neighbourhood in Stockholm. Between 2000 and 2004, the project cost around 130 000 Euros. This was nothing strange except that virtually all elementary schools in that neighbourhood had bilingual pupils since the 1960s and the courses relating to bilingual children were a compulsory part of a teacher's basic education. In other words, these courses had always existed throughout the country in one form or another, but here they were suddenly defined as something new and as a methodological innovation. In Tensta, another MDI neighbourhood in Stockholm, an office for newly arrived pupils was set up between 2000 and 2002 at a cost of 240 000 Euros. This was a positive initiative and definitely needed, had it not been for the fact that municipalities were already required by law, and funded by the government, according to the general agreement between the government and municipalities in relation to refugee reception and integration, to create programmes for newly arrived children to help them integrate smoothly into the school system (Appelquist, 2006). In other words, the task performed by this office had always been performed, but here it was presented as a methodological innovation. When the MDI money for methodological development ran out, these and similar projects were set back in the ordinary school or municipality budget. The project managers could thus claim that their projects were successfully implemented. Furthermore, instead of downsizing and adjusting their organisations in accordance with the number of students—and that number shrank due to the use of freedom of choice and demographic changes

in general—the schools used the created surplus to uphold the current scale and even to employ more staff (Axelsson *et al.*, 2006).

Since schools showed very limited interest in what the MDI, as a comprehensive area-based policy, was really about (Parszyk, 2004), and since they did not have time to look for someone with whom to discuss the most optimal initiatives, the schools ended up developing almost all projects alone and almost exclusively appointing teachers and principals as project managers. Virtually no pupils, parents or civic organisations were invited to express their opinions, exert influence on how the money should be spent or encouraged to obtain funding to start their own projects. Teachers, principals and local school administrators considered themselves cogent representatives of the grassroots communities.

Consequently, it could be argued that one of the defining aspects of the MDI's implementation in schools, in relation to the idea and policy of urban governance, was an outcome of the joint act of the MDI's structural weaknesses (quick launch and weak screening process) and the organisational culture embedded in local schools (no history of vertical co-operation and power sharing).

Pursuing Problems to Solve

One of the structural constraints affecting the urban public schools' economy was the policy of freedom of choice and a relatively large number of students from their attendance zone opting out to attend other schools (Bunar, 2008). Many principals and heads of local school departments, confident in their pedagogical superiority (Gruber, 2005; Runfors, 2003) identified the cause of student outflow primarily as a marketing problem. According to the educators, students were leaving because of the elusive symbolic values of status and reputation and not because they were receiving a poor-quality service (see Lunneblad and Carlsson, 2009). In accordance with that

argument, the schools were encouraged by leading local politicians and administrators to use external funding and initiate programmes that could be easily 'sold on the market' to attract students and their parents. Pedagogical deliberations (why do we want to do this? What do we want to teach our students? How can they benefit from this?) succumbed to the superficial market paradigm (what kind of pedagogical profiles can be easily sold on the market?) and the MDI facilitated it. Many principals and teachers embraced the arguments while others, at least initially, tried to oppose them. This point can be illustrated by an excerpt from an interview with Jack who, at the time of the interview, was the acting director for all elementary schools in the district of Spånga–Tensta in Stockholm. Only Tensta participated in the MDI. He said

I do have an obvious example. I am not sure if I am supposed to reveal it, but anyway. We tried early to get the Kämpinge school⁶ to set up a football class. We noticed tens of boys opted out for the Rinkeby school⁷ because they had a football class. And we tried to get them to set up a football class and another one about IT. But the teachers refused, and they set up two profiled classes: one IT and another one about health and body care. I mean no one in grade 6 will choose health and body care! They have to understand this; we need profiles attractive to those 12, 13 years old. It is a necessity, nothing that one finds interesting and funny to work with.

At some point, representation itself became more important than the subject of representation. Eventually, even Kämpinge school offered a football class, but it was too late; the school was closed down because too few students enrolled in it. In this context, we need also to understand the strategies deployed by principals when communicating their schools' involvement in the MDI to different actors. To obtain as much funding as possible from the MDI, the principals painted a picture of their schools in an extremely dark light.

Some of the problems they listed that were in need of intervention included: underachievement, segregation, poor language skills, marginalised and culturally conservative parents, children coming to school hungry, young boys on the verge of criminality and religious radicalisation, and young girls suppressed by their families. However, aware of the power of negative representation, the principals were careful to whom they painted this picture; it was mainly limited to potential funders in the funding applications. One consequence of this intentional and calculating negative representation was that money was explicitly requested to tackle all kinds of real (underachievement) or ostensible (cultural conservative) problems in the schools. Dealing with problems became a defining reality for the MDI-sponsored programmes in urban schools, upon which the actual projects were built.

One example was the 'Art project', set up by a group of art teachers from four schools in the Spånga–Tensta area in the north-western part of Stockholm. In my research, I followed this project closely between 2002 and 2002. Although only Tensta was included in the MDI, the art teachers (friends for many years) explained in the interview that they had decided to apply jointly to the MDI for 50 000 Euros in order to develop an art pedagogy in their schools. However, in the application, they also highlighted another aim of the project, which was to bring together the pupils from Spånga (a middle-class neighbourhood where ethnic Swedes were the majority) and Tensta (a socially deprived million-homes-programme neighbourhood where immigrants were the majority). They claimed this would 'break the internal segregation' in the district. These two neighbourhoods were tossed together in a self-ruled city district after the administrative reform in Stockholm in 1997 and 'the internal segregation' was thus created. The distance between the schools is about 5–6 km, with a railway and several roads in between. The neighbourhoods have their

own business centres, subway (in Tensta) and commuter train (in Spånga) stations and secondary schools. In other words, there is nothing except the umbrella administration that suggests these two neighbourhoods naturally gravitate towards each other or at least not more than to any other surrounding neighbourhood. The art teachers recalled during the interviews that the local administrators had said that they, and especially schools in Spånga, would never be granted funding for developing the art pedagogy unless they could come up with some problem they wanted to solve. So they invented the aim of 'getting together to break internal segregation' and put it in the application. They saw this aim as a paper construction and it remained elusive even during the implementation process. Occasionally, the project provided meeting places for a number of students from Spånga and Tensta schools. However, after participating at three joint sessions—about 60 pupils attended a two-hour lecture by a famous artist and no more than 14–15 of them worked together on a further two occasions—I argue that no meaningful partnerships or relationships were formed during their time together. So, what happened to the rest of the money? The teachers travelled abroad to visit art schools in Holland and England; they arranged overtime salaries for themselves; they hired expensive painters to teach a couple of days; they bought some equipment; and they paid me for the evaluation of the project. Neither the pupils nor their parents were ever asked how they would like the money to be spent.

Some principals manipulated MDI funding more effectively than their colleagues, managing to acquire more money, much of which was used to improve their position, or at least, their image or representation, in the educational market. Examples of the use of MDI funding include buying new computers, rebuilding schools and building new leisure and sport facilities (although partly financed

by the MDI) adjacent to schools (Bunar, 2004). Some even bought new pool tables and placed them in the school corridors; others set up football and basketball classes. However, these improvements occurred at the expense of their neighbours, who subsequently witnessed a growing number of their students opting for schools with a lot of extra-curricular activities, sponsored by the MDI. In terms of practical consequences, the MDI interfered with and actually distorted competition within the local educational market. In fact, the acting director for all elementary schools in the city district of Kista in Stockholm, whose neighbourhood of Husby was also a part of the MDI, responded to a direct question during the interview regarding whether external funding can distort local school competition in the following way

Yes, I would like to claim it is in that way. Husbygård and Oxhaga schools have two very energetic principals, and they have got a lot of money. Now we are having discussions with the Husby school. They cannot survive only on vouchers from their 220 students.

Needless to say, many students left Husby for other local schools.

Consequently, a second defining aspect of the MDI implementation was to search for a problem to solve, and a concern for status and reputation. The schools recognised that it was easier to obtain MDI funding by highlighting problems, rather than suggesting positive development initiatives; thus, the MDI ended up dealing, almost solely, with a wide variety of problems. Therefore, problems, rather than development possibilities and opportunities, became a blueprint for the implementation of the MDI. This approach, regardless of how unintentional it might be, contributed to corroborating the schools' negative images. Even the most successful projects were engulfed by an inevitable conclusion: 'We have solved another problem'. Had the idea of urban governance, especially its vertical dimension,

been observed to a larger extent, to include parents, students and civic organisations, the outcome would most probably have been different. The local community does not perceive itself as a problem and especially not a problem that is exclusively symbolic and representational (Dahlstedt, 2005). Furthermore, the unbalanced, uncontrolled and unco-ordinated allocation of money between schools interfered in the operation of the local educational markets, since schools competed for students and their vouchers, thereby putting the weakest schools in an even more precarious situation.

Dual Definition of a School Community

In all the documents from the MDI concerning educational issues (see Axelsson *et al.*, 2006) as well as in the schools' own steering documents (see Bouakaz, 2007), it is clearly stated that schools must seek to forge closer networks with their communities. If schools open up their doors to parental organisations, ethnic associations, sports and cultural clubs and businesses and try to involve them in their daily pedagogical and social activities, it would benefit all parties.⁸ The community would gain stronger schools with better reputations and increased average grades, and form meeting-places for a variety of actors and institutions where parents and teachers involved in productive co-operation could further promote the idea of urban governance and deepen the notion of local democracy. Schools would gain additional and much-needed support and, perhaps most important, a direct communication channel to parents. From the schools' point of view, parents would not need to make decisions about staying or leaving, based on rumours or on 'hot knowledge' as Ball (2003) put it, but on relevant and accurate facts or, in Ball's terminology, on 'cold knowledge'.

There is a huge obstacle to implementing the community school idea in socially deprived neighbourhoods. Many schools deem the

local community their biggest problem and the major source of distress (Bunar, 2001). Stigmatisation and low grades are blamed on poor and culturally conservative immigrant parents who cannot or do not want to support sufficiently their children's school work. During the interviews, the educators expressed the view they were not co-working with parents but, rather, were involved in power struggles over children's hearts and minds. As Ingrid, a deputy principal at one suburban school in north Stockholm said

There are cultural clashes. I mean what has been said at home differs very much from what we are trying to get through, how it ought to be, so to speak.

Encountering the practical handling of these attitudes deters parents and ethnic/religious associations—people who never felt particularly welcome anyway (Bouakaz, 2007)—from further attempts to become an integrated part of the 'community' dimension in the 'community school' notion.

Still, to provide money, the MDI demanded community school development programmes. It is here that a practical sense and the logic of practice (Bourdieu, 1977) among principals and teachers, who were also likely to be project leaders, are showing their full potential. The concept of community was in practice divided into two parts. The first part could, in Blokland's (2003) terminology, be labelled as the institutional dimension of the urban governance idea. It represents the level and quality of co-operation with government and municipal services and authorities deployed in the neighbourhood, such as police, welfare officers, health care and youth workers. Even organisations outside the neighbourhood, such as universities and businesses, were considered a part of this wider community component (Benton *et al.*, 1996). Teachers, principals and heads of local school departments underlined the importance of transcending the

constraints of geographical belongingness and the importance of having connections with 'the world outside'. Relationships with agents outside the geographical school community were generally considered among the educators as being of higher status and more profitable for schools, since these relationships could be used as an additional competitive advantage in the educational market. Thus, the nature of the relationship, mutual understanding and the exchange of information with (mainly) other authorities and actors outside the geographically defined community was satisfactory and cohesion was attained relatively smoothly. An obvious example is the earlier-mentioned 'Art project', where teachers never invited any of the local painters to teach or to participate in the project.

Parents and ethnic and religious associations represented the other component of the school community, which Blokland (2003) labelled the vertical dimension of the urban governance idea. And for reasons previously explained, this did not work very well. Still, the school stakeholders could claim external resources, pointing out the good work achieved from co-operating with the 'community' and thereby promoting and perpetuating the idea of urban governance. The failure of even attempting to reach out to parents and local, strong, religious and ethnic associations was cunningly hidden in the seldom-spoken definition of community. Recognising and accepting only a part of the urban governance idea, the institutional one, the local school stakeholders managed to obtain external resources, while simultaneously negotiating some of the core values and aims manifested in vertical power sharing and cohesion (see Borman, 2005).

Conclusions

The focus for this article has been the enactment of the metropolitan development initiative and its urban governance requirement in

the educational structures of 24 of the poorest neighbourhoods in Sweden. Based on empirical evidence as well as on relevant literature, I have identified three defining aspects of the implementation process: the policy's structural weaknesses concerning launching and control; solving various problems that became virtually a requirement for obtaining MDI funding; and, the equivocal perception of what constitutes the local community by a well-organised group of local school stakeholders with a strong professional identity. It is argued that these three aspects and the strong position the school stakeholders hold in deprived communities made it possible for principals, teachers and heads of local school departments to obtain external funding while simultaneously capturing and distorting the idea of urban governance as one of the MDI's main requirements. Some of the effects of this distortion are the further isolation of schools from the local community, students and parents being further isolated from the decision-making process within schools and the money being spent on projects exclusively defined by the administrators and educators, rather than in partnership with the community.

It is not suggested that the schools did nothing constructive; in fact, this issue is not at stake. A number of fine projects aimed at improving pedagogical practices in relation to learning Swedish as a second language and integrating native language tuition into regular school programmes were developed and, according to the evaluations, the projects were very successful (Axelsson *et al.*, 2006; Bak *et al.*, 2004; Norén, 2002; Parszyk, 2004; Sahlen, 2002; Tryggvason, 2003). The purpose of this article was to reveal lessons from the Swedish MDI implementation in the educational segment regarding the theory and practice of urban governance. The lesson is: even if the principle of urban governance is imbued in the very foundation of a new policy and even if all the policy-makers and local stakeholders are politically devoted to observing it, when

it comes to practical implementation, there is a high risk that strong local interest-groups will try to capture the policy and reformulate it to fit their own goals, especially if there are 'leaks' and ambiguities in the policy structure itself. The outcome will then not be urban governance permeating the local community horizontally, vertically and institutionally (Blokland, 2003; van Marissing *et al.*, 2005), but rather a number of isolated, segregated urban governances in the pursuit of new sources for their shrinking budgets.

Notes

1. Governmental Proposal (1997/98:165) *Utveckling och rättvisa: en politik för storstaden för 2000-talet* [Development and justice: a big-city policy for the 21st century]. Stockholm: Regeringskansliet.
2. According to Hall and Vidén

During the 'record years' of 1961–75 some 40 000 apartment blocks with about 920 000 dwellings and almost 480 000 dwellings in single-family houses were built in Sweden. One million of these dwellings came into existence during the ten years of the Million Homes Programme, with the same distribution between apartments in multi-family blocks (66%) and single-family houses (34%). Homes were built all over the country. The three metropolitan regions of Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö accounted for 35% of the entire production. In proportion to the size of the municipalities, however, growth was at least as great in a number of big towns and in many small industrial municipalities (Hall and Vidén, 2005, p. 304).
3. An outcome of this particular project was more than 15 reports, articles and working papers (see for example, Axelsson, *et al.*, 2002, 2006; Axelsson and Bunar, 2006; Bunar, 2003, 2004, 2005; Ljungar, 2004).
4. See for example, Governmental Proposal (1997/98: 165).
5. For this information, see the report issued by the National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2006).
6. One of the local elementary schools.
7. An elementary school in a neighbouring city district of Rinkeby, also a part of the MDI.
8. For discussion on the so-called community school, see Arum (2000); Ascher (1988); Epstein (1995); Sanders (2003); Skrtic and Sailor (1996).

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