

SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN THE NETHERLANDS: DISCUSSIONS AND INITIATIVES

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1. Introduction

1. OECD-CERI is well known for its international comparative research projects on children and youth at risk, as well as disabled children. Both target groups of youngsters are dealt with separately in these projects, although it has always been clear that there are quite a few similarities between the two groups, and even some overlap. It therefore comes as no surprise that the latest CERI project includes both groups and aims to study the common ground between them: social exclusion.

2. The concept of social exclusion is used to describe many different things. It refers primarily to problems encountered in modern welfare states, such as long-term unemployment and 'modern' poverty. Such problems may lead to people being excluded from participation in all kinds of institutional, social, cultural and political associations. They lack the resources that people commonly use to participate in society, in other words, theirs is a 'deficient citizenship'. Such resources are not only financial ones (income, consumption) but also non-financial ones (health, welfare, social participation, housing, education, paid employment). Poverty indicates a lack of these resources in relation to what is regarded as minimally necessary in a society. In the Netherlands, poverty is regarded the most important cause of social exclusion.

3. The Netherlands belongs to the group of richest countries in the world. Over the past few years, we have seen an increase in international attention for the ways in which the increase of wealth has been stimulated in the Netherlands. Elements that stand out are the degree to which the government works with employers and employees: the corporative economy, and the extent to which political striving is still always geared at consensus: the consensus democracy. The whole of politico-economic mechanisms in the Netherlands is sometimes referred to as the 'polder model'. International acclaim for the 'polder model' became apparent when it received the prestigious Bertelsman prize in 1997. However, like all models, the 'polder model' presents a simplified reality, and this reality forces us to regard the success of the model as relative: for instance as one regards the problems of people who live on the fringes of society and the forms of social exclusion that occur or threaten to occur there. That is why the title of a recent report on poverty and social exclusion is so appropriate: 'wet feet in the polder model'. (That is to say: the 'polder

model' does not succeed in keeping everyone's feet dry in our wet country; in spite of its success, there are still some groups in society that experience poverty and the threat of social exclusion).

4. In this paper, we analyse the concept of social exclusion in the Netherlands as it becomes relevant to children and the changing family contexts in which they find themselves. We do this with particular reference to disadvantaged and ethnic minority groups. Section 2 focuses on the discussions on social exclusion in the political arena and in the research community.

5. Section 3 analyses initiatives taken by public, private and/or voluntary bodies aimed at preventing and countering developments leading to social exclusion. In section 4, reference is also made to examples where communities have developed approaches to resolving problems regarding social exclusion. In section 5, the conclusions, some themes for discussion at the first CERI Conference on the project on social exclusion are identified. Since almost all of our reference material is in Dutch, we refrain from mentioning titles here. (A full list of references is available, however, and can be ordered from Sardes Educational Services, free of charge).

2. Social exclusion as a political issue in the Netherlands

6. Social exclusion and related concepts such as social binding and social coherence are much more prominent on today's political agenda of the Netherlands than they were three or five years ago. For a large part, this is due to pressure from municipalities and social institutions, where concern about the social exclusion of groups in society was felt most strongly. The Dutch government receives much praise for its economic policies, but is often criticised for generating too few social policies. This criticism is expressed by political parties, the Roman Catholic church, organisations that deal with disadvantaged groups and, of course, the media. Recently, one of the Roman Catholic bishops drew a great deal of attention when he, while pointing out the problems of poverty in the Netherlands, at one point, said it would be acceptable for poor people to steal bread if they are hungry. This statement was discussed a great deal in political circles and the national press alike. Moreover, incidents with police being confronted by aggressive youngsters in neighbourhoods or fights between people near bars, sometimes resulting in serious injuries or death of the people involved, have brought the issue of the social structure of society to the front pages of newspapers and prime-time television programmes.

7. Data about social exclusion in the Netherlands have been known for some time, with extensive research reports on poverty and social exclusion having been published in 1965, 1975 and 1984, but it was not until 1995 that this knowledge came to be used in political and, broader, public debate. The main proof of this is the Queen's remark in her annual speech from the throne (in which the government formulate their intentions once a year) and the note entitled *De andere kant van Nederland* (The other side of the Netherlands, referring to Harrington's *The Other America*, which enhanced awareness of poverty in that affluent society in the early sixties). Social exclusion and poverty thus became political facts. The least that can be said about the Dutch government is that, on the one hand, they have commissioned sound research, documentation and monitoring of the situation of poverty and social exclusion, and on the other, they have stimulated research and discussions on the causes of and possible solutions to this problem. Both areas will be discussed below.

Facts and figures about poverty and social exclusion in the Netherlands: wet feet in the 'polder model'

8. The debate on poverty has intensified in the Netherlands in recent years. In the past policy was concentrated on keeping social security spending within bounds, and there was little scope for actively combating poverty. In 1995, however, the present Cabinet published its policy document on poverty

(*Armoedenota*), which indicated that the problems of 'silent poverty' and social exclusion in the Netherlands had not yet disappeared. The new poverty policy rests on four main principles: promoting participation in the labour process, improving income protection, limiting spending and combating the non-take-up of social security. The policy is the subject of an intensive public debate, *inter alia* at the annual *Social Conferences* - a discussion which involves policymakers, the poor and their representative organisations, benefit agencies and researchers.

9. This development led two major government-affiliated research institutions to pool their strengths in order to improve the quality of the information on poverty in the Netherlands. The *Poverty Monitor 1997* is the first product of this co-operation. A summary of research carried out by universities and other institutions is the *Poverty and Social Exclusion Yearbook*.

10. In the *Monitor*, poverty is generally defined in terms of two income criteria; the first of these, the 'social policy minimum', is based on the standards which apply in social legislation and which have been simulated as accurately as possible. The second criterion, the 'low income threshold', is based on an amount of 16,000 guilders per annum for a single person (1990 prices, annually revised in line with the trend in prices). The amounts for other household types are derived from this figure on the basis of equivalence factors taken from budget surveys. In 1990 the low-income threshold was more than 14% above the social policy minimum as adopted in the Dutch National Assistance Act.

Poor households

11. In 1995, 242,000 households had an income which was below the social policy minimum, while 667,000 households were either on or below this criterion. These figures correspond to 4% and 11%, respectively, of all households. Measured using the other criterion, the low income threshold, almost 1 million (996,000) households had an income below the poverty line in 1995.

12. The composition of the group varies according to the criterion adopted. If the poverty line is set at 95% of the social policy minimum, then 38% of poor households are economically active. Half of these are self-employed, while the group also includes employees earning less than the legal minimum and workers with an income which is reduced by high interest payments. If the line is set at 105%, there are relatively fewer economically active people in the group and more unemployed persons, pensioners and people dependent on benefit. According to the low-income threshold, lone-parent families, the unemployed, benefit claimants and pensioners are strongly represented in the poor group. Only 22% of this group are economically active.

The budget of poor households

13. The rising costs of housing are the main factor driving up the fixed costs of poor households. In the early eighties poor households spent 33% of their income on contractually or statutorily fixed expenditure items. In 1994/95 these fixed costs accounted for almost half (46%) of the income of poor households.

14. More than two-thirds (69%) of poor households spend at least 40% of their income on fixed costs, compared with a quarter of better-off households.

15. This sharp increase in the fixed costs of poor households in the nineties has taken place mainly at the expense of spending on food, particularly eating out.

Problematic consequences of financial hardship

16. In 1995, 13% of households indicated that they had *difficulty making ends meet*. Ten years earlier this percentage was much higher (19%), but between 1985 and 1991 this group shrank to 11%.

17. In 1995, poor single parent families and single persons on or below the minimum income were over-represented in the group having difficulty making ends meet (64% and 43%, respectively). In the majority of household types, the proportion having difficulty making ends meet has fallen since 1985; this does not however apply for single-parent families, where the percentage has remained roughly constant.

18. In total (including the better-off households) around 70,000 households were unable to afford a full hot meal every other day.

19. Poor households which have difficulty making ends meet also frequently have *payment arrears* in rent, gas and electricity, and they make up a considerable proportion of the category with insufficient capacity to repay loans. There appears to be some evidence of a *poverty tunnel* effect: a proportion of the group with difficulty making ends meet have insufficient funds for core outlays such as clothing; a proportion of this group is unable to buy or replace durable goods; and a proportion of *that* group is also in arrears with payment or has insufficient capacity to repay loans.

Dynamics of poverty

20. Of the almost one million households which had a low income in 1995, more than 40% (430,000 households, 7% of the total) had been in that situation since 1992. This corresponds to 790,000 persons. The number of households with a sustained low income was around 10% higher in 1995 than in 1992.

21. An analysis of *poverty periods* shows that these often begin with the loss of a partner (11%), a change of main breadwinner (e.g. due to loss of work, following which the partner generates the higher income; 11%) and a transition from economically active to inactive (where the main breadwinner remains the same; 6%). The start of a period of poverty is less frequently associated with young people setting up home on their own, the birth of a child and the reaching of retirement age.

22. Comparable factors are found at the end of the poverty period: entering into a new relationship (10%), a change in breadwinner, e.g. because another family member accepts (more) work (9%) and the transition from economic inactivity to activity by the main breadwinner (10%).

23. The chance of escaping from poverty is not the same for all groups. Low *outflow chances* can be found amongst pensioners, single persons, single-person families and benefit claimants. Single elderly persons have a very high risk of remaining in poverty: after four years 79% still have a low income.

24. Poverty moreover has a self-propagating effect: the longer a person is poor, the more difficult it is to improve their income. This is caused by both a 'duration effect' and a 'composition effect'. The duration effect indicates that the chance of escaping from poverty reduces for all poor persons over time. The composition effect refers to the fact that as the duration of the poverty increases, the group of poor people becomes increasingly populated by households with the least favourable household and labour market characteristics: more elderly people, more single persons, etc.

Geographic concentrations

25. The 'top 100' of the poorest postcode areas confirms the cartographical picture: around half of the poorest areas are located in the three major cities, with the highest poverty intensity being found in Rotterdam and The Hague. Of the 20 poorest postcode areas, 11 are located in Rotterdam, four in The Hague and only one in Amsterdam. A large proportion of the other areas in the top 100 lie in the provinces of Groningen and Friesland, particularly in the cities of Leeuwarden and Groningen and in small municipalities (approximately 20% of the total).

26. A multivariate *causal analysis* reveals that the percentage of poor households in an area is determined to a large extent by the proportion of unemployed persons and social assistance claimants living there. The percentage of self-employed persons and single-parent families also has a major impact. The latter effect is partly direct (low alimony, low incomes of working single mothers due to a limited time budget and low education level) and partly indirect (via a high proportion of social assistance benefits among single-parent families). After allowance has been made for these effects, other factors prove to have only a limited influence.

International comparison

27. In the Netherlands, as in most other countries of the European Union, less than 20% of households have difficulty in making ends meet from their income. In two countries with less advanced economies, namely Ireland and Spain, however, this group is much larger (27% and 36%, respectively).

28. To facilitate international comparison, the poor as a group was equated to the households with a standardised income in the lowest quintile (20%-group). In Belgium, the Netherlands, France and the UK around a third of this group indicate that they have difficulty making ends meet. In Denmark this category is smaller (18%) and in Italy slightly larger (39%); the high figures in Ireland (47%) and Spain (59%) stand out.

Non take-up of individual housing benefit

29. Individual housing benefit is an important instrument in combating poverty in the Netherlands, on account of the large group of claimants (900,000 households) and the fact that several special income supplements and purchasing power repair benefits are paid out to housing benefit claimants.

30. To the extent that non take-up occurs, the households concerned miss out on both a reimbursement for high housing costs and the supplementary benefits which are paid out via the individual housing benefit system.

31. The non take-up was studied by comparing the amount of housing benefit received with the amount to which a given household was entitled according to a microsimulation. In 1993/'94 32% of all those entitled to claim received no housing benefit at all (total non take-up, while a further 24% received less than they were entitled to (partial non take-up). On average the former group missed out on 1,900 guilders per year, and the second group over 700 guilders. Among poor households - with an income under the social policy minimum, including housing benefit - almost half (46%) fell into the 'total non take-up' category, resulting in an average income deficit of 2,400 guilders per year.

32. A large proportion of the sub-minimum total non take-up group (54%) would move on to or above the social policy minimum if they were to effectuate their entitlement to housing benefit. It is estimated that this could reduce the number of poor households by approximately a quarter. The high percentage of non take-up of individual housing benefit is consistent with the results of earlier research in the Netherlands and other countries. The risk of non take-up of individual housing benefit is high because it is a supplementary benefit, is hedged in by a large body of rules, is subject to means testing, and because the initiative for applying for it lies partly with the client. These are all factors which are known to increase the risk of non take-up.

2.2 Causes and potential solutions to poverty and social exclusion

33. The recovery of social themes has been called the “Columbus Complex” by Sorokin. Why the theme of poverty and social exclusion was recently recovered and has been turned into a political fact is explained as follows. Social inequality increased in the Western welfare states in the 80s and 90s, mainly due to changes in employment structures (the loss of industrial and stable employment), retrenchment of the welfare state, demographic processes (including migration), and socio-cultural changes (individualisation). These processes create new risks and have a negative effect on the chances of survival of citizens who are in a vulnerable social position. In the Netherlands and other European countries, from the early 80s onwards, the concept ‘new poverty’ has been used, even though many dimensions of that concept are not new, such as financial misery and social isolation. Also, groups that were poor in the past, still are (e.g. the elderly and the unemployed). However, new groups have joined them (one-parent families and people who are long-term dependent on the state).

Definitions of the problem and relevant research

34. There are many descriptions and operationalisations of the concept of poverty or social exclusion. This conceptual confusion is no coincidence, because the concepts do not only describe a situation but also have a moral aspect. According to many, poverty is not just a factual situation, but also an unacceptable state of affairs. This is where research and politics meet. That is to say that a distinction has to be made between, on the one hand, research into the degree of inequality at a certain time and in a certain place, and on the other, the political debate about the question what degree of inequality is acceptable.

35. Due to the fact that research and politics are interwoven, issues relating to definitions of the concept are often at the centre of political striving. After all, those who, by using a certain definition of poverty, can prove that it is a major problem, also have an argument to advocate that something should finally be done about it. Conversely, one can try to ‘define the problem away’ so that nothing needs to be done. Choosing a certain financial limit for poverty or a percentage of poor may be a factor in this. Those who succeed in getting a certain definition of the situation accepted in a certain forum have therefore also determined part of the avenues of solutions and excluded others.

36. Generally speaking, a development can be observed in the thinking on the subject that goes from regarding poverty as an absolute, objective and material phenomenon to regarding it as a relative, (inter) subjective and immaterial phenomenon. In advanced Western welfare states, poverty is no longer life threatening, but rather a situation of relative disadvantage of certain groups in relation to the majority of the population. Characteristic of that, modern poverty is the exclusion of poor people from dominant societal institutions (employment, education, leisure activities) which goes together with long-term

dependence on the state's welfare systems. Modern poverty is a multi-dimensional problem, there is an 'accumulation of misery', both material and immaterial.

37. The fact that this development in thinking about poverty is controversial will become clear from the no less than six approaches to poverty taken in research and politics:

- 1) the budget- or expert method
- 2) political or policy-based poverty lines (including the legal subsistence level)
- 3) various statistical income approaches (including strictly relative or quasi relative)
- 4) the relative deprivation index (incl. Townsend)
- 5) various subjective poverty lines (including the Leyden Poverty Line or de Deleeck Line)
- 6) Sen's poverty approach in terms of capabilities.

38. None of these approaches provide a definitive answer to the question what poverty means in the modern social context and how it can best be measured. Ultimately, no standard of poverty can be free from a certain amount of arbitrariness. This conclusion is generally and internationally acknowledged and subscribed to by poverty researchers. In the Netherlands, the answer to this usually takes the form of a plea for a multi-method approach. Moreover, the research concept needs to be connected to the commonly used concept and cannot be separated from it by way of definitions and operationalisations. The need for an adequate concept of poverty will therefore have to be discussed outside research circles as well, by researchers discussing it with other citizens, including the poor, as well as with social organisations.

Explanation of the problem

39. The paradox that poverty can still occur in a rich country has led to a large number of explanations. Firstly there are one-dimensional explanatory models that emphasise the economic factor, the cultural factor or the perverse effects of social policy. Authors who work from the cultural model tend to blame the victim, while those working from the economic model tend to blame the system. Both models are incomplete due to their one-sidedness. It is true for all three models that they do not make the connection between the three dimensions of economy, culture and policy.

40. In addition, there are more complex explanatory models that do connect such dimensions as well as various processes, such as the inner-city approach (Wilson's ecological perspective) or the individualisation perspective (Beck et al.). Discussions have been held about the extent to which both approaches exclude or complement each other; we feel that they are complementary, particularly because they focus partly on a different segment of the socially insecure population.

41. In spite of the different approaches, or maybe because of these differences, a number of important causes for the phenomenon of poverty may be inferred from the report. They have been summarised and are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Table 1 **Social causes of poverty**

<p>1. Structural causes</p>
<p>a. Economic-technological factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . functioning of the labour market (insufficient skilled personnel, restrictive legislation) . the labour market becoming flexible (changing permanent jobs into flexible jobs due to market fluctuations and market insecurity) . developments in the urban labour market (fewer jobs in cities) and arising of local concentrations of recipients of unemployment benefits . international competition, globalization (strategic operation of multinational corporations, disappearance of jobs due to transfer of production to cheap-labour countries or countries with favourable fiscal regime) . role of technology (use of labour-saving techniques, fewer jobs due to outdated technological knowledge, disadvantage in the area of new technology, insufficient knowledge infrastructure)
<p>b. Socio-demographic factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . increased life expectancy leading to extended duration of allowance dependency (elderly) . increase of labour offered with stable demand (married women and immigrants) . extension of school period and shortened employment duration over total lifespan; extension of periods of not working due to early retirement, unemployment and incapacity for work . decrease of birth rate, individualisation of forms of cohabitation, increase in divorce frequency . development of a pluralist society and increase of immigrants with unfavourable prospects of work
<p>c. Institutional factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . insufficient management of social organisations . opaque legislation and procedures . deficient means and instruments for effective mediation and counselling . restrictive legislation for welfare bodies such as social services
<p>d. Political factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . social security policy (lowering allowances, stricter checking of conditions, cuts, sanctions, fines system) . restrictive labour market policy (insufficient effective instruments in the area of training, work experience, creative employment, voluntary work, etc.) . effects of policy in the area of health, housing, education, etc. (e.g. through influence on costs of housing, illness, school) . budgetary policy (cuts) . lack of integral policy due to compartmentalisation of policy . lack of policy for reduction of poverty in the past . fear of major financial consequences for policy . political power relations (formation of coalitions) . lack of European policy and legislation

2. Cultural factors

- . role of generally accepted opinions (e.g. level of minimum allowance)
- . values and norms (work and benefits ethics, view on solidarity)
- . role expectations, e.g. male/female
- . attitude towards ethnic minorities against the background of the multicultural society
- . attitude towards vulnerable groups in general (social stigma leading to rights not being exercised)
- . development of a culture of poverty in small, close groups and communities with a concentration of vulnerable groups, where poverty can be passed on from one generation to the next
- . perception of poverty and inequality

Potential avenues of solution to the problem

42. A simple answer to the question of how poverty and social exclusion can be tackled is: make sure that the poor get paid jobs. However, this answer is all too simple for two reasons. To start with, empirical research has shown that the prospects for poor households of considerably improving their situation financially by way of a paid job are generally unfavourable.

43. Next, it remains the question whether full employment in a modern post-industrial society can be effectuated at all. If not, and there are several indications for this, it is about time for us to be clear about this and to attach political consequences to it (compare for instance the plea made by Viviane Forester in her French best-seller about the terror of the economy that makes parts of the population ‘redundant’).

44. Moreover, work as the solution does insufficient justice to the multi-dimensional social character of the poverty problem: the accumulation of problems, for instance with certain groups and in certain neighbourhoods, requires that several instruments be put to use at the same time, in order to arrive at a long-term solution to the problem.

45. Potential avenues of solutions that do try to do justice to the multi-dimensional character of the problem of poverty and social exclusion will therefore focus on more than one cause at the same time. The survey of causes and research outcomes about the relative importance of the various causes may prove helpful in this respect.

46. With regard to children and youth, education offers a good basis for solutions. First of all because almost all youth can be found at schools, but most of all because a completed education more and more provides access to participation in paid jobs and hence to certain forms of social participation. Due to the fact that one always tries to make education match the higher requirements of society, the disadvantaged threaten to be left behind. This could be compared to a group of cyclists in a race with the whole group going increasingly faster: those who were still able to follow the last ones, at one point, will have to let go and end up with the refuse collectors. This ‘refuse collecting’ in the shape of compensating provisions across the board of education requires major investments, which, in the long run, will yield returns socially speaking.

47. In earlier projects, OECD-CERI (OECD 1995, 1996, 1998, 1998a)¹ studied the kind of provisions that could prove successful for children and youth at risk and disabled youngsters. Just as with

1. OECD (1995) *Childhood Youth at Risk*, OECD, Paris

those projects starting points for solutions were sought in risk moments and factors for school failure for instance, in the new project one could start with risk moments and factors in the broader area of social exclusion. A study was recently carried out into the marginalization of young people from ethnic minorities, in the Netherlands. This study could be used for this project.

48. A third way of finding starting points is to build onto the various strategies that exist to help dependent groups by way of intervention. In brief, there are five strategies:

- give them money
- give them rights
- give them political power
- give them expert, professional social workers
- give them the resources to help themselves.

49. The welfare state has opted for the 1st, 2nd and 4th strategy. According to some, this choice has contributed to the limited success of the fight against poverty and social exclusion. There is an old Chinese maxim that says: give someone fish and he will eat one day, show him how to fish and he will eat every day. A modern Westerner recently added to this: empower someone and he will not eat fish every day but will be able to choose what he wants to eat. That is what the 3rd and 5th strategy boil down to: enabling the people concerned to find their own solutions. Much of what they want is not allowed within the far-reaching rules that the welfare state sets for those dependent on it. In that sense, people who are poor and excluded socially are the stepchildren of the welfare state. The strategies at issue here are self-initiating ones, for instance by way of vouchers for a certain basic income for everyone, that ensure that the initiative lies with the dependent group. Snower has worked out the strategy for the UK, and Gilbert introduced the term Enabling State in the same context, contrasting it to the old Welfare State. We feel this is a school of thought that could be tried out within an OECD project also.

50. A last method to be used on the way towards better solutions that we should like to mention here is: start from current policy and propose improvements resulting from the criticism of this policy. This method was used in the Netherlands for the annual Social Conferences that have been organised since 1996, and in which interested citizens and their organisations participate as well as policy makers, opinion leaders and experts. In a report issued as the preparation for the 1997 conference, the policy pursued in respect of poverty and social exclusion is criticised on the following points:

- the policy seems to take poverty as an individual problem, yet it is a problem of society, a matter of social and economic organisation
- the policy has a tendency to narrow down the concept to the financial aspects, but insufficient social, physical and mental possibilities to participate in society and to give meaning to the idea of ‘full citizenship’ are also part of the issue; income is an important but not a conclusive condition for that participation; other aspects of one’s situation, such as

OECD (1996) Successful Services for Children Youth at Risk, OECD, Paris

OECD (1998) Co-ordinating Services for Children and Youth at Risk - A world view, OECD, Paris

OECD (1998a) Children and Families at Risk - new Issues in Integrating Services, OECD, Paris

health, stable social relationships, adequate accommodation and social appreciation and respect are conditions that also need to be met

- in the policy, there is insufficient acknowledgement of the fact that poverty could happen to anyone and is not limited to a certain group; there is a kind of *democratisation of poverty*; the social risk of unemployment, incapacity for work or the breaking up of a family for instance, has increased for each and everyone; Beck speaks of a *risk society* in this context; it sets new requirements for people to meet, the ideal person is someone who is an autonomous and independent individual, and those who cannot meet these requirements, or can only meet them in part, quit, either temporarily or long-term; these new requirements lead to new inequalities; it is pointed out that this is not just due to (international) socio-economic developments but also because the policy has not provided a conclusive answer to the social issues; poverty is not something that just happens to a society such as the Dutch one, there are certain policy choices that cause it;
- the division of wealth is strongly connected to paid jobs, which causes those who do not participate in paid jobs, like the elderly and many women in the Netherlands (for instance because they have to take care of the children), to end up with ‘wet feet in the polder model’; the dichotomy between paid and unpaid jobs does not correspond however with the dichotomy between useful and less useful work, on the contrary: much useful work, such as jobs involving caring for people, has been priced out of the market, and banned to the unpaid circuit;
- the policy is focused too much on poverty as a problem of the poor, while in countries such as the Netherlands it is also, to a large extent, a problem of wealth, and especially of the division of wealth; the point is solidarity between insiders and outsiders, but the gap between the two has widened over the past ten years.

51. These points can be made part of the discussions about the avenues of solutions - the social conferences are after all also meant to give starting points for new policy. It will be clear that as far as the Netherlands is concerned, there is a strong preference for the social, institutional ‘European model’ as opposed to the liberal ‘Atlantic model’ in which the social aspect seems to primarily serve to take the edge off the failing of the market. A plea is made for more coherence between economic and social policy, and a policy on poverty that is part of a broader social policy. The social aspect should not be next to the economic aspect, but should be a full part of policy.

52. Against the background of the crumbling of a solidarity with the weaker part of the population that we assume was always taken for granted and the danger of a decline of social cohesion, a plea is made for a revitalisation of the social aspect and the promotion of community thinking in society. An additional starting point could be the fairness principle, according to which everyone gets an equal share of the common heritage.

53. The revitalisation mentioned also entails an investment of society in the unused reservoir of human capital of all those whose abilities are not used. Better use of human capital by way of a participation policy in the broadest sense serves an economic and a social purpose. After all, the existence of poverty has to be paid for by society. In that sense, the policy proposed can be regarded as an investment in social capital, in paid and unpaid, useful jobs, an investment that can be a source of wealth, just like an investment in economic capital.

54. From the concept of full citizenship, an active participation policy is proposed which is to prevent and combat social exclusion. It is elaborated from two points of view:

1. an employment-participation scenario that conforms with the market
2. a social participation scenario

55. This requires that the government play a more active role than they have so far, and it requires a new course in social security policy.

3. Initiatives: government policy and policies of municipalities

56. The discussion about social issues has become a lively one, but this does not mean that it is always a well-structured one. There was a tendency in political debates in 1997, as there probably will be in 1998, to concentrate on the following themes:

- the fate of the poor in Dutch society and what can be done about it. Several large-scale conferences have been organised on this subject, which is predominantly treated as a matter for social security policies
- educational policies with regard to preventing school failure and improving education for young children aged 0 - 6. Due to the fact that, in 1997, several important parts of Dutch educational policy were transferred to the level of the municipalities, possible new funds for these policies will be used within the framework of municipal educational plans. These have to be stated for the first time in August 1998
- welfare and health policies, which have already largely been decentralised. There is a strong tendency towards integral policies, combining elements of education, welfare and health provisions for disadvantaged groups in society, both ethnic minority groups and Dutch low SES groups
- policies of the Ministry of Justice. This Ministry has proposed to strengthen education with the help of parents and to make parents accountable for the behaviour of their children.
- economic policies. It is often thought that the reduction of the number of unemployed will automatically guarantee a social balance in society. Full employability would largely put an end to problems of social exclusion. Although it is disputable whether full employability is a realistic option and whether the assumption that work is an adequate remedy for the problem of social exclusion is correct, this idea is still very strong in some government circles

57. A new impetus was given to youth policies in 1996, when a steering committee for local preventive youth policies started its activities. This steering committee, chaired by Mrs Groenman, took initiatives to stimulate municipalities to develop preventive youth policies, aiming to achieve three targets:

1. paying more attention to children and youth in policy making
2. intensifying the co-ordinating role of municipalities with regard to youth policies
3. increasing the involvement of youth in developing policies

58. In 1996 and 1997, several models relating to youth policies were developed. In 1998, about 100 municipalities will be supported by experts, connected to the steering committee, in developing youth policies.

59. There is a strong interest among municipalities in developing preventive policies for youth. This will probably be reinforced by recent statements made by senior police officers, indicating an increase in criminal behaviour among children and youngsters.

60. It should be noted that, until a few years ago, policies regarding social problems and social exclusion were often aimed at specific categories, such as ethnic minorities, inner-city areas, Dutch low SES groups, girls etc. Since then, there has been a strong tendency towards more general policies, serving much broader categories. Because problems, or problematic behaviour, are very often concentrated in specific groups or areas, there are still some specific policies for specific categories, but the dominant line is to develop more general policies for broad categories.

61. The question how policies in the Netherlands will be developed in the years to come, cannot be answered conclusively at this point. Social exclusion will most probably be an important issue in policy making. It is also clear that solutions will be sought using as anchor points:

1. schools: in co-operation with other social institutions in the areas of welfare, health, sports and justice. The idea of the 'broad school' attracts a lot of attention.
2. parents and families: it is to be expected that education by parents and within families will be the subject of potential new policies. Whether this will involve fairly harsh policies that stress the responsibilities of parents for the behaviour of their children and use sanctions if these responsibilities are not met, or more supportive and preventive policies, or a combination of both, remains to be seen.
3. neighbourhoods: in a large number of municipalities, social services and social structures have to a large extent been organised at neighbourhood level. Therefore, intensifying the social function of neighbourhoods, involving people in taking care of their neighbourhood and delegating responsibilities to institutions within neighbourhoods are often regarded as part of an interesting option to combat social exclusion.
4. peer groups of children and young people: recently, ways of influencing the behaviour of children and young people by influencing the peer groups they participate in have received quite a bit of attention. In literature on youth and education systems, using tutors and mentors is described as a very effective method. In some policy papers and policy advice, the necessity to develop new methods for using peer groups has been argued.

62. The third administrative level in the Netherlands, that of the provinces, does not have many responsibilities with regard to policies relevant to social exclusion. Sometimes they take initiatives in co-operation with the municipalities in their region. The provinces are however responsible for some relevant policy areas, such as youth care. This does not always make it easier for municipalities to develop integral policies.

63. The development of policies to reduce social exclusion and strengthen social binding is not without some serious problems. The most important seem to be the following:

1. The decentralisation of policies from the national level to municipalities is not an easy process. Both ministries and municipalities have to adjust to the new situation. The type of work of officials in municipalities is changing rapidly (e.g. they have to learn to develop educational policies) and often their organisation has to be adjusted. Ministries still seem to be struggling with their own roles and responsibilities. The question as to what exactly has to be done by whom has not been answered unequivocally. Because the timetable of decentralisation differs for different policy sectors, the development of integral policies is sometimes very difficult.

2. In education, it is not only responsibilities that are transferred to municipalities. To increase the autonomy of schools is another objective of Dutch educational policies. School boards do not always like the idea that on the one hand they become more autonomous, while on the other they are increasingly confronted with the municipal level exerting influence.
3. In most municipalities, sectors that are considered to be relevant to social policies are handled by different departments. In order to develop integral social policies, these departments have to co-operate. Even if officials are truly willing to do this, differences in tradition, bureaucratic cultures, legislation and personal or institutional interests may still cause problems.
4. The same is true at the institutional level. Although there are very interesting examples of co-operation between schools, youth care, health care, libraries, welfare organisations, and the police for instance, it proves difficult to stabilise such co-operation. It is often dependent on the good will of individuals within the organisation. Nevertheless, over the past years, much progress has been made in this field.
5. Sometimes legislation is a hindrance. Often, one or more institutions, e.g. schools or welfare organisations receive signals about serious problems in families that would call for action by other organisations and a co-ordinated approach to the family. The family may receive assistance from an organisation for certain problems or until the children reach a certain age, but should not be left to itself when this organisation has to stop its activities. Because of the law protecting the privacy of individuals, organisations are often not allowed to pass on information to other organisations.
6. Sometimes policy makers develop measures to cope with problems, but they do not manage to really interest institutions or services to work towards the solution to the problem. For instance the reduction of drop-out rate in schools is seen as a policy priority by national and municipal policy makers. In an individual school, pupils dropping out may be seen as not a major problem since losing 'difficult' students may in fact make life at school easier. Intensifying the education of young children is advocated by researchers and policy makers, but people working with young children are not always convinced that this is necessary or even desirable.

64. This shortlist of problems should not be seen as a sign of desperation. It would however not be realistic to underestimate the problems in developing social policies and particularly in developing integral social policies. Certainly, the development and implementation in the Netherlands will be a process of many years. However, there are quite a few interesting developments where policy is put into practice that deserve mentioning. Some of them are described in the next part of this paper.

65. Even though it is expected that the next Dutch government - after the elections in the spring of 1998 - will invest in education (in the reduction of school failure and in strengthening education for young children), it is clear now that the development of concrete policies and actions will be largely the responsibility of the municipalities. It is difficult to estimate how successful municipalities will be in this regard, partly because decentralisation only started recently and partly because the traditional Dutch system of educational research has been abolished as of 1998, causing a gap in the continuity of research efforts and the availability of research outcomes.

66. At this point the development appears to show some clear characteristics:

1. Many Dutch municipalities are working very seriously on the development of educational policies, even though this is quite a new kind of responsibility for them.
2. Municipal councils are often very concerned about the social infrastructure of the city, and tend to see schools as part of that social infrastructure.
3. Popular themes in municipal educational plans are:
 - education for young children
 - reduction of drop-out rate and school failure
 - improving language proficiency of children, in particular of children from ethnic minorities
 - strengthening social binding and social coherence
 - improving the connection between education and the labour market.
 - Educational policies should be attuned to other social policies, such as youth and welfare policies, health policies and law enforcement policies. This refers to the idea of more integral policies for children and youth.

4. Some examples of innovative social policies

67. In the 1990s a great number of innovative projects for children, youth and their parents have been developed and implemented on a small or large scale. Some of them have been evaluated, many have not. Some of the projects did not survive very long, others gradually contributed to structural changes in the regular work of institutions. Perhaps most important, the projects generated some innovative ideas that have since become part of the repertoire of policy makers. It is interesting to note that some projects were originally aimed at achieving certain specific goals, but proved successful as a means to achieve other goals. In the 1980s the effective school movement was very influential in the Netherlands. A number of projects were developed in order to improve for instance the reading ability of children in primary education. In some of these projects, participation of and activities by parents were central elements. Evaluations showed that the involvement of parents in school and the strengthening of interaction between parents and their children were important social results of these projects. Because of the growing interest in the social aspects of education, these results, which, at the start, were seen as side effects, are now seen as central results of the projects.

68. We will describe below some projects that are considered to be very promising. We selected projects that are not only interesting as projects in themselves, but that also contain basic ideas that may be used in other contexts. Moreover, the projects described have been evaluated and implemented on a rather large scale all over the Netherlands.

4.1 Extended school day, broad schools or multi-service schools

69. The ideas about integral policies in policy making have been translated on a practical level into the idea of the so-called broad school, extended school day or multi-service school. The phenomenon we are dealing with here was originally termed the 'extended school day' in national policies, a variant developed in the city of Groningen was called the 'multi-service' school, and the newest variant as introduced in Rotterdam bears the name 'broad school'. As is often the case in the Netherlands, the Rotterdam approach is becoming the most influential one and the term 'broad school' is rapidly becoming the dominant one. The basic idea is that schools, both primary schools and secondary schools, should offer a broad spectrum of services to pupils and students, in addition to the regular curriculum of the school. This idea was tried out in an experiment, financed by the Ministry of Welfare and the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. This experiment was only partly successful. Its official goal was to improve the basic skill of pupils, such as language proficiency of children from ethnic minorities, but in most experimental settings the emphasis was on offering pupils cultural and sports activities. Although the results of the experiment were not very clear, the idea of the extended school day spread very rapidly through the country and in quite a number of municipalities some form of the extended school day was introduced. The city of Groningen developed the concept of multi-service schools, where educational and other social and cultural activities are offered to children and their parents in the same building. The building should be open most of the day. 1997 saw the start of the building of new schools in which several functions can be combined. The same idea was introduced in Rotterdam, where intensifying the contacts between schools and the labour market came to be an additional goal. In 1997, the Ministry of Welfare started a new experiment with an extended school day in secondary education. Reducing social exclusion and strengthening social binding are the explicit goals of this approach.

70. The idea of a broad school is of course quite ambitious but still a little vague, because several types of implementation can be considered.

- The extra time and activities may be used to improve the learning results of pupils or students, e.g. in language, mathematics, foreign languages, or the first language for children from minority groups. Special facilities for doing homework are part of this variant.
- The school may offer, together with other services, special help to youngsters who have problems or cause problems. Health and welfare services are attached to the school in a common provision. The school may develop into a ‘teaching and caring’ institution.
- The school offers many more cultural and sports activities to its students. The idea is that children need to be educated in a broad sense, becoming more involved in culture and becoming physically healthy and fit. For children of disadvantaged groups, who get no support in these areas from the home front, this may be very important.
- The schools explicitly try to improve the preparation of students for the labour market, e.g. by paying more attention to social skills and confronting students with behavioural codes adhered to in businesses.
- In their regular and additional curriculum, schools try to reinforce the social competence of students and their binding to society and its norms and values.

71. Of course, combinations of these variants are always possible and are indeed found in practice. The idea of the ‘broad school’ has not been completely worked out yet, but it may well prove a basic concept in Dutch educational and youth policies in the near future.

4.2 Neighbourhood networks for youth welfare

72. In many Dutch municipalities neighbourhood networks for youth welfare have been set up. These are small-scale networks of people who work with the children and youngsters in the neighbourhood on a daily basis. The objective is to spot problems in an early stage, to find answers to these problems, and to develop a strategy for solving them. Participants in these networks are usually teachers, people working in day-care centres, physicians, social workers, nurses, school counsellors and police officers. Network meetings are organised monthly or bi-weekly. Participants point out the problems they have encountered and try to find a way to respond to the problems. In the meetings, new and already known problems are discussed. Teachers from primary schools seem to bring up indications of problems most often. The family problems discussed most often are social isolation, drug addiction and criminality, situations of neglect and maltreatment, housing or financial problems. The problems of the children most discussed are emotional and behavioural problems, suspicion of maltreatment or incest, incapacity of the parents to provide education, neglect. (Tilanus, C., Jeugdbeleid, 1997).

73. It is considered absolutely crucial that problems are detected and pointed out in these networks, in a very early stage, that action can be taken quickly and that individuals and institutions that are in contact with the child or the family know what the situation is. The networks are quite active and are often able to offer support at short notice. Research indicates that in 60% of the cases improvements have been realised after some time. In about 33% of the cases no change in the situation occurs, in 7% problems have been aggravated.

74. The neighbourhood networks for youth welfare sometimes organise preventive activities in the neighbourhood, such as information evenings for parents on special topics. An important side effect is that the people and organisations involved become more aware of what other institutions do, become more

professional in dealing with complicated problems, and tend to make adjustments in their regular work, based on the experiences gained in the network. The networks are an inexpensive provision, although they require an experienced and competent co-ordinator. Since recently, social workers can follow a special training course in co-ordinating neighbourhood networks.

75. The neighbourhood networks are certainly not the final solution to social problems, but they are considered to be a valuable system for spotting problems and providing some co-ordinated assistance.

76. They have existed since 1984 (when the first development started) and are highly valued in many municipalities.

77. 4.3 Step-by-step programmes

78. The Ministry of Welfare, Health and Sports has facilitated the development of a series of programmes for disadvantaged children in the age of 0 - 12 years and their parents. The programmes were mainly, but not exclusively, designed for ethnic minority children and families. Part of the programmes are home based, others focus on schools and parents. Of the home-based programmes 'Op-Stap', which has been renewed for children of 4 - 6 years, is best known. The objective is to foster the cognitive and language development of the children and their socio-emotional development.

79. Characteristics of the programme are:

1. Parents are taught to interact with their children in a way that enhances their development. This aim is pursued with the help of paraprofessionals, who are recruited from the same group as the parents that are visited. So families from Moroccan origin are visited by paraprofessionals from Moroccan origin. Group meetings of mothers and paraprofessionals are organised within the project. Mothers are given the opportunity to exchange experiences.
2. The programme has a clear and fixed structure. As the programme advances, its structure becomes less rigid.
3. The programme lasts two years. The materials cover thirty weeks per year. Every week, five days a week, the mother and child are expected to do a number of exercises, for about ten minutes a day.

80. The programme is available in four languages : Dutch, Turkish, Arabic, Papiamento. Parents can choose in which language they want to carry out the programme with their child.

81. Even though the evaluation has not rendered spectacular results at the level of the children in e.g. language development, the social value of the programme is certainly considerable. Many parents from ethnic minorities and Dutch disadvantaged groups, that are socially excluded in many ways, are reached by the programme. The system of working with paraprofessionals contains some risks, but it also means a part-time job for the mothers and a means to escape from social isolation.

82. Another very interesting and successful programme in the step-by-step programmes is the 'Stapdoor' programme. In Stapdoor older pupils (about 12 years old) function as tutors of younger children (about 7 years old) in reading. Stapdoor is aimed both at helping children to read better and at improving social contacts between the children and involving their parents in the process. The tutors are specially trained in social skills, communicating with other children, and didactics. They also are trained in the principles of reading comprehension. At school, time is reserved for sessions where the older and

younger children read together. Supporting materials are available, but the children themselves can choose the books they want to read together. For their parents special activities are organised by the school or the library. The programme appears to have positive effects with regard to reading comprehension, but even more apparent are the social results. Nearly all the children love this kind of activities and schools report improvements in the social climate within the school. Often the children start doing things together outside of the programme. Older children from disadvantaged groups seem to develop more self-esteem when given the role of tutor, which is enhanced because of the training they have received. It should be noted that children are free to decide whether they want to function as tutors, but normally only one or two out of 25 to 30 children in a group do not want to be a tutor. The younger children love the attention they get from other students. The methods children use to explain the meaning of words to each other are sometimes quite unorthodox but very effective.

83. Stapdoor is preceded by a programme which focuses on children in year three in primary school, when they start to learn to read. No tutoring is used here, but materials have been developed for the parents to use at home. The words and concepts in these materials reflect the reading method used at school. By repeating these words and concepts in other -more playful- contexts at home, it is hoped that the process of learning to read is enhanced. 'Overstep' is very successful in reaching parents from ethnic minority groups. Often 90% or more of the parents attend the meeting at school and do the programme at home with one or more children.

84. In the Stapdoor project the involvement of parents is a little less successful. This may be the result of the characteristics of the programme, or because it is more difficult to involve parents in this stage of the development of the children. It may also be attributed to a new policy by which many parents are forced to take a job, even though they have young children, and have less time to go through this kind of programme with their children

85. The step-by-step programmes seem to be important in supporting parents and children from disadvantaged families. They certainly have taken a lot of people out of their social isolation and improved the relation between schools and the families. The programmes, however, only cover some years in the life of the children, which means that there is no follow-up when a programme is completed. Much could be done to develop the step-by-step programmes into a comprehensive system for children and parents from disadvantaged groups. Whether this fits in the new policy developments remains to be seen.

5. Conclusions

86. The discussion about social exclusion in the Netherlands takes place within the broader context of the boundaries of welfare states and 'modern' poverty.

87. As to the boundaries of the welfare state, the following argument of Professor Paul Schnabel is illustrative:

- The grip the state has on things defines the boundaries of the provision of care, rights and duties. The welfare state as it was developed after 1945, can only be implemented in relatively prosperous societies with a highly developed administrative and bureaucratic system, with an effective government in other words.
- As welfare states are after all the re-distributors of social wealth, the issue is how to divide duties and rights, advantages and disadvantages fairly and justly. It is because of that function of redistribution, that people in the welfare state are so afraid of: so-called black money, moonlighting, the shadow economy, illegal aliens, tax evasion, and free riders.

88. Abuse of care provisions in the Netherlands is combated less by a sharpening of the tracing of abusers than by a refining of the rules or, even worse, a restriction of the provisions themselves. This reduction of care provisions, that is described by some as 'de-caring', is currently taking place. Does this also mean the end of a state that is strong in providing information and steering its care processes?

89. Nation state, constitutional state and welfare state never completely correspond and the differences in the margin say more than the similarities at the centre. Differences have increased in the past twenty years, as has the chance of marginalization: being there but not belonging, or even being allowed. This awareness has been enhanced by the increased number of outsiders entering the country as well as by the weakened commitment of the residents. We have begun to need more but can do less. Welfare states flourish most in situations in which they are least needed. The often refuted presupposition in this is that the generosity of the provisions offered would not be turned into an embarrassment by the eagerness of a surging demand. Now that the demand threatens to get out of hand, it appears that welfare states can do less as they need to do more. However: in the thinking about the welfare state there is really no place for the exclusion of people who need care. To be honest, the principles of the welfare state cannot be applied universally, in fact, the welfare state can only exist by the grace of an unequal and unjust division of wealth in the world.

90. As for poverty, it appears that there is a relationship between the division of the poor and rich in the world at large and that division within a country. In the case of the rich post-industrial countries we sometimes speak of 'modern' poverty in this context.

91. As with all types of poverty, this type also results in forms of social exclusion. It is clear that the concepts of poverty and social exclusion are not just descriptive, but also show a value judgement in the sense that the phenomena at issue need to be combated. In this paper, four avenues of solutions to this problem have been submitted:

- I. find starting points in the causes
- II. find starting points in risk moments and factors

III. use criticism of current policy as a basis for proposals for improvement

IV. based on the idea of an Enabling State as the successor to the Welfare State, find strategies to give the people involved political power as well as the resources to help themselves.

92. These four avenues enable one to find solutions that do justice to the multi-dimensional character of this phenomenon. Work as the remedy, a solution heard most in political circles, is often all too easy. It is true that poverty is often related to unemployment, but it is not the only factor contributing to social exclusion. Providing work to more people may help people to become included in society, but there is no guarantee that all problems in this area will be solved. One should also not assume too easily that it will be possible, even in the long run, to provide employment for everyone. Such an assumption would take away attention from the problems of people who, despite all efforts to stimulate employment, still cannot be reached. How to find a place for them in society appears to be a neglected question.

93. Poverty and unemployment may be partly related to criminality, but this should not be exaggerated. The vast majority of people who live in poverty do not engage in criminal activities; and criminal behaviour does occur among the rich and well-educated too. In fights between supporters of football teams and in serious violent incidents, the people participating are often people who have jobs and a family. They seem to be very well integrated socially, but nevertheless show criminal behaviour. Recent studies about criminality show that there are many hard-core criminals who regard criminal behaviour as a career opportunity and who engage in well-planned criminal behaviour, carefully weighing the risks and benefits of this behaviour and acting in quite a professional manner.

94. Social exclusion therefore should perhaps be analysed at two levels:

1. at the level of people who are not able or not allowed to participate in society, where unemployment and poverty may be factors that contribute to social exclusion, but are certainly not the only factors.
2. at the level of people in general, where a person may be socially integrated in many ways but may not comply with broadly accepted and legalised norms and values.

95. At both levels, the question of how to bind people, and more especially young people, to society remains to be answered. Finding such answers is certainly not easy. Some programmes described in this paper seem to be useful in helping young people to solve their problems and participate in society, but at best, they offer a small contribution to a major problem.

96. In line with the above, we should like to submit for discussion at the CERI meeting, some points that may help us to formulate a possible agenda for research:

- opting for a working definition of social exclusion and poverty, and with it, for one or more approaches to the problem
- opting for a multi-method approach in the research on the subject
- establishing a connection with (a review of) the state of the art in research on the subject
- a further analysis of the causes of poverty and social exclusion, as well as the mechanisms that play a role in exclusion processes and their socio-environmental and inter-generational aspects

- cultural aspects of poverty and social exclusion, and particularly: how do children and youth perceive these
- paying attention to the increase and accumulation of the risk of long-term poverty for certain groups of the population, with special attention paid to youngsters
- research into effective national and local policy relating to the reduction of social exclusion
- research into alternative social arrangements in respect of work, income, care and policy
- analyse examples of good practice in which multi-dimensional solutions have been tried out successfully, with special attention for those factors causing it to be successful as well as for the conditions for implementation
- research into the relation between the micro, meso and macro level in prospect-enhancing avenues of solutions
- research into the role of education and training in overcoming situations of social exclusion and poverty.