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URBANIZATION, SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF YOUTH AND STREET CRIME

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SUMMARY

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1. Theoretical base and methodology

1.1. The theoretical base for this research has three aspects to it:

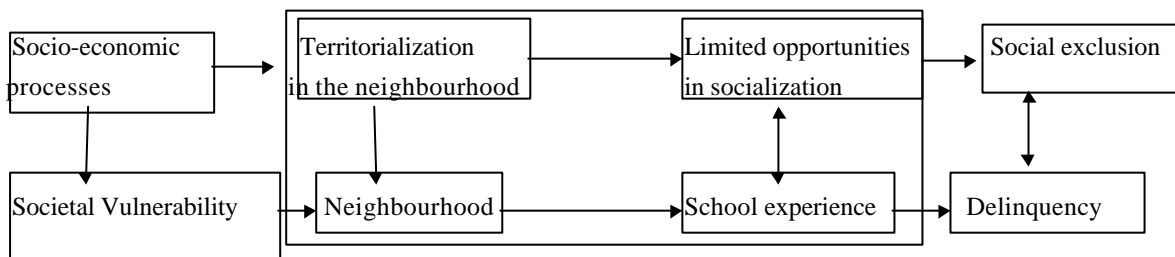
1° Concerning urban crime, there are two important accents in traditional criminal investigation. A first is focused upon the criminal and investigates the ‘criminogenic’ social and living circumstances in certain districts within the city¹. A second investigates the specific characteristics of the city environment that promote criminal activity.² Wikström among others presents a synthesis of both options³.

2° In the theory of social vulnerability, we synthesize the large amount of criminological literature concerning frequent and persistent youth delinquency into a coherent framework. In a recent publication we have used this theory to supplement Wikström’s theoretical model of urban crime⁴.

3° Major socio-economic evolution brings with it new and stronger forms of social exclusion. The municipal restructuring that accompanies such evolution contributes to a spatial concentration of this exclusion, inhibits the socialization process of the youth that live in this space and leads to a specific spatial pattern of crime⁵.

These approaches can be synthesized in the following diagram.

Figure 1: Linking the theories of social vulnerability and the “territorialization” of poverty



1.2. From this a number of theses were deduced which provide a focus for the collecting of our data and its processing.

Thesis 1: *The material and social structures of certain neighbourhoods are the outworking of mechanisms of social exclusion.*

Thesis 2: *These mechanisms fundamentally impact the living conditions of the youth, their integration into society and their perspectives for the future.*

Thesis 3: *The shortage of appropriate leisure activities for youth leads them to hang around in groups in certain public areas, which leads to ‘a struggle for territory’ with other groups and functions that lay claim to the same space and to ‘criminalizing conflicts’.*

¹ Such as, for example, C.Fijnaut, H.Moerland en J.Beijerse, *Een winkelboulevard in problemen*, Arnhem, Gouda Quint, 1991; F.Dubet, *La Galère: jeunes en survie*, Paris, Fayard, 1987.

² Such as in, for example, O.Newman, *Defensible Space*, London, Architectural Press, 1975; M. Felson, *Crime and Everyday Life*, London, Pine Forge Press, 1994.

³ P.O. Wikström, *Urban Crime, Criminals and Victims*, New York/ Berlin, Springer, 1991.

⁴ L. Walgrave, Criminological prevention in the city. In C. Fijnaut e.a. (eds.), *Changes in Society, Crime and Criminal Justice in Europe. Part I: Urbanisation and Crime*, Leuven, University Press, 1995, 251-283.

⁵ See, among others, Chr. Kesteloot, La problématique de l’intégration sociale des jeunes urbains: une analyse géographique du cas Bruxellois. In C. Fijnaut e.a. (eds.), *Changes in Society, Crime and Criminal Justice in Europe. Part I: Urbanisation and Crime*, Leuven, University Press, 1995, 113-129.

Thesis 4: The problems indicated in 2 and 3 occur with greater frequency among immigrant youth who, in addition, are also *approached in a negatively selective way by the recreational possibilities that are available, by the police and by non-professionals.*

Thesis 5: *Some* are thus exposed to the seduction to become part of the so-called ‘hard core’ of street delinquency consisting of young adults who adapt their *lifestyle* to a sort of ‘vice industry’.

Thesis 6: In addition to the problems indicated in 1° and 3°, *city planning* increases the *risk of delinquency* still more by the *concentration* of attractive ‘victimizable’ objects and persons in certain areas and by the *difficulty of controlling* certain urban developments.

1.3. Based upon these theses and orientations in the possible use of the concepts, we originally opted for the following strategy and methods.

1° Research into the variation among a number of quantitative indicators concerning the territory of Brussels. Analysis of the global socio-spatial structure of the city at the level of the neighbourhoods with an emphasis upon characteristics relevant to the research and their recent dynamic; mapping out the distribution of the leisure offerings available to youth; questioning a representative group of Brussels’ pupils, process verbal analysis of youth crime.

2° A thorough description of two selected problem neighbourhoods. The intended foci were the formal and informal aspects of neighbourhood life that impact the living conditions of youth, the manner in which youth deal with such, the accompanying conflicts and the manner in which these are resolved.

3° Follow up of two groups, selected on the basis of 2°, of so-called “youths hanging around” who cause serious problems.

4° A biographical study of some 10 persons who are part of the so-called hard core of delinquent youth, selected based upon the information gained at research levels 2° and 3°.

However, we were very quickly forced to scale back our ambitions for a list of reasons: because the means allocated were considerably less than those that were requested; because it appeared that the figures available concerning registered crime are incomplete and not reliable enough; because the systematic questioning of youth in the Brussels’ schools was much larger in scope than originally planned; and because the inventory of recreation data in Brussels did not provide the hoped for results.

For these reasons we were able to cover only the first phase and parts of the second phase. Thus the empirical research rests upon the following:

- Quantitative data on the distribution of social characteristics and on the Brussels youth. The largest part of this material was already collected earlier by ISEG.
- A superficial inventory of recreational possibilities in Brussels that in principle are also open to youth.
- An extensive questionnaire administered to a very large and representative sample of secondary school students in Brussels.
- Registration of all cases of delinquency that arrived at the Brussels juvenile public prosecutor’s office over a 7-month period.
- A description of two areas in the city that are known as ‘problem neighbourhoods’ based upon the composition of the population, an analysis of the functions, the recreation possibilities, observations from the street, discussions with privileged witnesses and with youth.

The following chapter will describe how this data was collected and processed.

2. Youth in Brussels

2.1. Based upon the ISEG data, Brussels can be divided into four types of districts or zones:

- Underprivileged districts, mostly populated by immigrants ('Déf.étr.')
- Underprivileged districts, mostly populated by indigenous Belgians ('Déf.B')
- Other districts, mostly populated by immigrants ('Aut.étr.')
- Other districts, mostly populated by indigenous Belgians ('Aut.B')
- Districts along the periphery ('Pér').

The underprivileged districts are located in the city centre and within the so-called 'nineteenth century ring' immediately around it. There 36.9% of the youth (up to age 24) live, 45% of which live in the Déf.étr. districts. There are less youth living in the other districts and the proportion of non-Belgians living there is also much lower. Along the periphery only 9% of those less than 24 years of age are non-Belgian.

2.2. Based upon a number of indicators (schooling, unemployment, poverty, number of children in the family, recreational possibilities) it appears that children from underprivileged districts, and especially non-Belgian children, were continually over represented in the least favourable categories. They also attend the so-called 'concentration schools' and their neighbourhoods provide the least attractive possibilities for recreation.

3. Pupils from Brussels schools questioned

3.1. *Sample size and method*

In total 4,347 Brussels secondary school students were questioned. The questionnaire was compiled with an eye towards the variables that emerged as significant in the research theses: personal data, the structural characteristics of the family, style of upbringing, school and career situation, involvement in education, place of residence, leisure time activities, circle of friends, future prospects, dark number data on 12 crimes and problematic patterns of behaviour. The written questionnaire was administered by the researchers in the classroom setting but in the absence of teachers. If required the researchers could provide additional information while the questionnaire was being answered.

In the sample, 74% of those questioned attended French speaking schools. From the distribution according to age, sex and type of education, it appears that the sample can be considered relatively representative for the population of Brussels secondary educational institutions, with the qualification that technical education is slightly over represented.

Eighty-six percent of the students were born in Belgium. Sixty-six percent were of Belgian nationality, 14% were Moroccan, 9% non-Belgian European and the others were placed in the category "other". Yet only 49% of those questioned had a Belgian father, 21% a Moroccan father and 13% a non-Belgian European father.

Social stratification was more or less equally distributed across three large categories. Five percent were from the very lowest social layer⁶. Three-fourths of the youth lived with their parents, 15% with one of the parents and 7% in a reconstituted family.

⁶ According to the Elchardus categories

Four percent of the sample lived in an underprivileged district where primarily indigenous Belgians lived, 20% in an ‘immigrant’ underprivileged district, 12% along the periphery, 38% in the other Brussels districts and 25% lived outside the Brussels Capital Region.

In addition to the structured written questions, interviews using open questions were also done with 13 youth of Moroccan origin and 1 of Greek origin, selected via community work for the neighbourhood and youth in two selected neighbourhoods that were known to be underprivileged districts where primarily immigrants lived.

3.2. Some results

Analysis of this data was focused upon the phenomenon of delinquency. Table 1 shows the percentages of the youth that admitted engaging in the indicated behaviour during the past year.

Table 1: Admitted delinquency (rounded percentages taken from the sample)

	Males	Females	Total
Shoplifting	40	27	33
Carrying a weapon	33	8	20
Drug use	20	12	16
Vandalism	22	6	14
Graffiti	17	9	13
Harassing passers by	17	8	13
Beating up someone	19	5	12
Auto theft	10	1	5
Selling drugs	8	2	5
Burglary	6	0	4
Theft of purse/wallet	6	1	3

The distribution according to age varies: ‘shoplifting’, vandalism’ and ‘harassing passers by’ increase until the age of 16 after which it decreases. Perhaps it here concerns an expression of so-called ‘age-related’ delinquency. Using and selling drugs continues to increase with age. Here it perhaps concerns an expression of lifestyle.

Indigenous youth, more than youth of Moroccan origin, say that they carry a weapon, use drugs and have committed acts of vandalism and shoplifting. The opposite is the case for auto theft, theft of purse/wallet and burglary. In general these latter crimes were committed less often (also the case for Moroccans) and they are considered by all youth as the most serious crimes⁷.

Exactly the same distribution is present when the population is divided up according to socio-economic class. Thus for the moment it is not clear which variable (ethnicity or SEC) is the most significant here.

3.2.1. Spatial analysis

It was investigated whether there is a link between the location of the crime (criminal’s own neighbourhood, close to school, elsewhere in the city, or at a combination of locations), where the criminal lives and the type of crime. Correspondence analysis explained up to 80% of the variance, but the links established are complex. Thus it appears that criminals from underprivileged (immigrant

⁷ The youth were asked to evaluate the seriousness of the crimes on a scale from 1 to 5.

and indigenous) neighbourhoods committed their crimes more in their own neighbourhood and youth from richer neighbourhoods engaged in criminal activity much more often outside their own area. Crimes such as auto theft, burglary or shoplifting are more likely to be connected with specific locations. Drug use is notably less prevalent in the user's own neighbourhood or close to school. In any case it appears that the link between living in an underprivileged neighbourhood and the number of crimes committed is not a direct one. However, there did seem to be a link to the type of crime committed and this link coincides on the one hand with the link between 'serious' and less serious crimes mentioned earlier and, on the other hand, with the link between social stratification and ethnicity. Crimes tending to be linked to specific age groups were distributed more homogeneously across all neighbourhoods.

Finally, a collective comparison was made of the influences that the spatial, social and ethnic factors have upon delinquency. The spatial factor, i.e. the neighbourhood in which one lives, has only a very weak impact if indeed there was one at all. The most significant factor by far was the result of the socio-economic variables. This influence is strengthened still more by the type of schools attended. Indeed a typology of schools emerged. Certain schools attract a highly problematic population from throughout the region of Brussels and the students from these schools are also responsible for more delinquency including that of a serious nature.

3.2.2. Social vulnerability and delinquency

Insight was sought into the factors that were able to help clarify delinquency at the level of the individual, using the theory of social vulnerability as a theoretical framework. Eight variable clusters were created: personal characteristics, school characteristics, structural familial characteristics, use of leisure time, high risk behaviour, controlling behaviour on the part of parents and type of neighbourhood. A canonical discriminate analysis, plotted on a bivariate graph, calculated on the one hand the relative weight of these clusters in the quantity of delinquency and on the other hand the seriousness of the crimes committed.

1° The results based upon the number of different crimes and based upon the seriousness of the crimes yield nearly the same result, which leads us to conclude that those who commit the most crimes are also those who commit the most serious crimes.

2° The transition from 0 to 4 different crimes per year occurs gradually and also does not deviate much in the group of Brussels school children. Committing 5 or more different crimes is atypical and such behaviour is characteristic of a strongly delinquent group (in total 379 respondents or 9% of the total group). With males, the committing of no crimes is a rather exceptional phenomenon. With females the committing of 3 or more crimes is already a relatively high delinquency score.

3° Risk factors that coincide with the group committing 5 or more crimes are the following: 'being suspended from school', 'skipping school for a complete day or more', 'running away from home', 'parents who never ask where youth are going and with whom', 'participation in groups of youth who hang around', 'hanging around the street or at amusement parks'. Personal characteristics and structural familial characteristics do not play a primary role here. Undisciplined youth who spend much time just hanging around and who have serious disciplinary problems at school are thus more vulnerable to frequent delinquency. There are not many protective variables that coincide especially with 0 crimes. Only the variables 'being female', 'never skipping school', 'intense monitoring by parents' and to a lesser extent 'two-parent homes' seem to increase the chance of complete conformity.

This is not surprising in itself. Most striking is the weakness of the stereotypically expected variables such as structural familial variables or ethnicity. It is thus not true that a 'broken family' or 'being Moroccan' brings about a linear increase in the risk of serious and frequent delinquency.

4° The structural familial variable 'lowest SEC' and the ethnicity variable 'being of Moroccan origin' largely coincide with living in underprivileged neighbourhoods and being a vocational training student. Thus here it seems to largely concern the same group. These youth from the lowest SEC (who are especially of Moroccan origin, live in underprivileged 'immigrant neighbourhoods' and more often attend vocational training) are less represented in the average delinquency category but more represented in the groups that commit no crime or commit much more crime. This group 'chooses' as it were whether to conform or whether to genuinely engage in delinquency. It is clear that it is the SEC that is primarily determinative and not being Moroccan or the neighbourhood or the school. However, youth of Moroccan origin do have a much higher risk of living in a family in the lowest social levels, living in certain concentration neighbourhoods and ending up in vocational education.

This tendency is reinforced by the fact that the 'opposing variables' 'Belgian', 'middle and upper class', 'non-underprivileged neighbourhoods' and 'general education' are located closer to the middle groups concerning delinquency and somewhat farther away from the 0 and 5+ crime groups.

5° A comparison of the bivariate graphs for males with the bivariate graphs for females yields little in the way of other accents. It thus appears that for males and females the same independent variables coincide with delinquency, with the difference, however, that for females the groups of 3 and 4 crimes are already more exceptional and thus begin to indicate the characteristics of serious delinquency.

6° Separate bivariate graphs for indigenous Belgian youth and immigrant Moroccan youth yield the same picture but the explained variance is lower for the Moroccans. This could be attributed to statistical causes but also partly to the fact that we are missing one or more variables in the explanation of delinquency.

7° It is clear that there is not a simple direct link between the level of delinquency and one simple independent variable. In the group that is most socio-economically marginalized, the risk of more systematic delinquency is great, but that risk is only realized when this unfavourable status coincides with a lack of control by parents (which is perhaps an expression of a wider lack in upbringing on the part of the parents), severe disciplinary problems at school (which is probably the tip of the iceberg concerning integration into school life) and unorganised hanging around with peers (which can be considered as indicative of a general way of spending free time). If these negative elements are absent, the odds are good that these youth will commit less crime than youth from families with a medium or higher SEC.

In this sense these results are a good illustration of the theory of social vulnerability. This theory attempts to make it clear that it is not social status in itself that is linked with delinquency but rather the unfavourable relations with societal institutions, climate of upbringing in the family, integration in school (especially) and relations with peers. SEC is also proposed as a risk factor with respect to a possibly unfavourable career path. It all fits.

In addition the results also reveal that the factor 'being of Moroccan origin' is subordinate to SEC and to the career factors mentioned above. The immigrant factor adds no weight to the explanation of delinquency but is an element that can increase vulnerability with respect to the other elements.

4. Analyses of public prosecutor cases

During the period April – October 1998, all official police reports that concerned youth delinquency at the public prosecutor’s office in Brussels were registered. It concerned a total of 2580 cases of which 533 resulted in arrests, i.e. youth who were picked up and immediately referred to the juvenile court. The other 2047 concerned simple police reports over which the public prosecutor must still pass judgment.

Table 2: Type of crimes registered at the public prosecutors office (in rounded percentages)

	Not arrested		Arrested		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Non-violent theft	669	32	220	41	889	34
Violent theft	132	6	82	15	214	8
Against persons	235	11	45	8	280	10
“Narcotics”	195	9	35	6	230	9
Other	237	11	30	5	267	10
Not a real crime (running away, going to a discotheque, ...)	579	28	121	22	700	27
Total	2.047	100	533	100	2.580	100

Eighty percent of those concerned were male. However, females were more strongly represented in the category ‘not a real crime’ especially among those detained. The number of youth concerned increased with age. Fifty-five percent were 16 and older, 4% were less than 12 years of age. Those ‘arrested’ are on average somewhat older than the others. Among those registered, 38% were indigenous Belgians, 24% of Moroccan origin and 32% of other non-European origin. Among those arrested, the percentage of Moroccans increased to 37% and the percentage of indigenous Belgians decreased to 23%.

In any case, it is conspicuous that two of the crimes that are strongly represented in the media, violence and drug use (and sales) remain limited. In total only 19% of the reported crimes involved the use of violence and in these cases only 5% of the reported criminals were arrested. During the seven months of registration, 8.9% of the total number of reported crimes concerned ‘narcotics’. Nine tenths of a percent of the total number of crimes concerned the sale of drugs.

Thus Brussels is not being overrun by a wave of drugs and juvenile violence as is sometimes suggested.

The police on the scene were usually satisfied with the questioning of the youth and the drawing up of the official police report. In a number of cases, however, the juvenile suspect was arrested. The elements of the case that play a role in the decision of the police to allow juveniles to go free or be arrested were investigated.

The statistical method used was the same as that used in the multivariate analyses of the questioning: canonical discriminate analyses, plotted on bivariate graphs. The dependant variable was the presence or absence of an arrest. The independent variables are sex, age, nationality, origin, type of the delinquency, group delinquency, time of the police report and the police making the report.

The independent variable carrying the most weight in the direction of arrest is ‘Moroccan origin’. Moroccan nationality also plays a role, albeit to a lesser degree than origin. Thus it seems to be more external appearance and the foreign name that makes a difference rather than the identity card.

Concerning the type of the crimes, violent theft increases the risk of arrest. Another risk of arrest is associated with crimes committed in groups.

Being questioned by the state police decreases the chance of being arrested.

Repeating the bivariate graphs per crime category again demonstrates that the variable 'Moroccan origin' brings with it a marked increase in the risk of arrest. The fact that Moroccans are arrested more often is thus not due to the fact that they commit a certain type of crime more often. Only for the category 'status crimes' (especially 'running away') does the variable 'sex' become more significant: Females are more often detained when they run away than are males.

Of course it could be that other underlying variables, including the seriousness of the delinquency or behaviour during the questioning, explain this difference in arrests. However, our results indicate that Moroccan origin itself brings with it a marked increase in the risk of arrest. It is thus time that a thorough investigation is done into this in order to eliminate any suspicion of discrimination.

5. Conclusion: Policy recommendations

5.1. In comparison with the figures from other countries and cities, there appears to be a relatively low number of incidents of criminality⁸. The largest proportion of the youth (males) with a favourable background do commit acts of "minor" criminality but this activity gradually decreases as they get older and the societal perspective becomes increasingly significant. This positive evolution is less the case for youth with a less favourable social background.

This unmistakable link again demonstrates the importance of social integration. We find it necessary to again point out *the need for a just and inclusive socio-economic and cultural policy*, as it remains the foundation of any policy capable of motivating youth to behaviour that is more in conformity with the norm.

5.2. Research and theoretical insights from other countries lead to the thesis that 'youth cause problems because they have problems'. This thesis has in fact only been partially confirmed. The fact that there is less real delinquency is perhaps due primarily to two elements: internal social control from the Moroccan community itself and the major effort made in recent years on behalf of residents of so-called problem neighbourhoods.

For this reason *local policy should engage in more goal-oriented efforts to work together with these 'positive forces' within the Moroccan (or Turkish or any other immigrant) community*. These efforts must respect the uniqueness of the community concerned, be systematic, thorough and not be dependant upon one or another incident.

Federal, communal and local authorities have made major efforts in recent years to assist the so-called 'problem neighbourhoods'. The research results could be considered as an encouragement to resolutely continue in this same direction. *The local oriented social and welfare work card should be played to its maximum advantage*. This now happens all too often in drips and drabs, with a certain amount of mistrust, because this approach is unable to sufficiently demonstrate 'its efficiency'. However, this type of work effects deep and long term changes and cannot count on concrete media-friendly results in the short term.

5.3. The research clearly demonstrates that the fact of being an immigrant does not necessarily lead to more delinquency. The risk of higher levels of delinquency has everything to do with social exclusion. However, Moroccan immigrant youth, more often than indigenous youth, come from

⁸ See for example the figures on other European cities in J. Junger-Tas, J. Terlouw en M. Klein (eds.), *Delinquent behavior among young people in the Western world*, Den Haag/Amsterdam, WODC/Kugler, 1994.

lower socio-economic classes, which means that they have a relatively higher representation in the police registers. Thus we arrive in a vicious circle of stereotyping and discrimination.

Here a fundamental task lies ahead for the authorities at all levels. The authorities must ensure that this image improves, possibly via focused campaigns but even more so through their own careful use of language.

Racism as such must be attacked head on. The law against racism is one of the means to this end, but certainly not the only one. Its inadequate application in practice points out a problem in the formulation of the law and/or in the lax attitude on the part of police and the courts. Moreover, the administrative, police and political authorities must be sensitive to and react alertly to expressions of racism on the part of their own personnel.

5.4. Special attention must be paid to the relation between the police and the immigrant population. The research has clearly demonstrated that Moroccan origin in itself substantially increases the risk of arrest. Moreover, discussions with Moroccan youth indicate the extent of their irritation at the attitude of the police. There is a serious problem that leads to, among other things, an increase in the preparedness to riot on the part of immigrant youth who otherwise are not involved in delinquency.

The police must work very consciously on its relation with the immigrant population and with the youth. This is made possible by, among others, being very alert in looking for possible racist behaviour or other discriminatory behaviour on the part of the police, by avoiding unnecessary identity checks or, when they are deemed necessary, ensuring that they are done correctly and without reaction to possible provocations.

The police must be prepared to enter into discussions with authority figures from the immigrant communities and make much better use of the possibilities that are already present with respect to social and youth work. Here again the discussions between the police and these workers must be fundamentally horizontal and the uniqueness of these services must be respected and supported. Moreover *more effort should be made on the part of the police itself in allowing immigrants into the police corps.*

These recommendations have been formulated with respect to the police because it represents one of the most sensitive points, but of course there is a need for discussion at a much broader level than the police alone. *A broader structure for discussion should probably be created under the leadership of the mayor, in which channels for discussions with the police could be provided.*

5.5. Concerning criminality, a basic cause is social exclusion. Our research has confirmed earlier research that indicates that it is primarily at the school that the foundations of this causal mechanism are laid. Education is as it were the institution that ascribes to the youth their position in society. It has also become clear that certain schools are confronted with more delinquency than others. A focused educational policy with respect to the socially vulnerable and immigrant youth is the key to a constructive integration policy.

The problem of the so-called concentration schools needs to be dealt with seriously. The concentration in itself is not the problem. It becomes a problem when the concentration of 'problem youth' goes together with a shortage of means and other forms of support, which is followed by a decrease in motivation on the part many of the teachers. That is why the authorities should *increase the pressure on the schools that too easily dismiss the task of integration for the good of 'the pedagogical project' or other sham reasons.* Moreover *a well set up system of student transportation* can ease access to the 'good' schools for immigrant youth.

Special attention should be paid to *guidance in the choice of schools for immigrant youth*, as our research indicates that parents are often unable to provide this. There is a special role for the CLB

[Student Guidance Centres] in discussion with parent groups, youth and neighbourhood action groups, and of course also with school communities.

Schools that make a great effort at providing education to a large number of problem youth (of both immigrant and indigenous origins) should benefit from positive discrimination. Existing experiments must be honoured at the level of the school and at the level of the individual teacher and if possible be expanded or included in the regular channels of financing. Thoughts in this direction include *smaller classroom sizes for certain groups, establishing special methodologies, facilitating projects that involve a mix of immigrant and indigenous groups, promoting school community work* as an inclusive methodology that also involves parents. Such actions should be promoted *beginning with kindergarten.*

5.6. If it works well and is integrated into the network of social institutions and services, youth work can be a very important link that can help in the transition to the regular social services such as education, CLB, the job market, recreational possibilities and sport clubs.

5.7. The research was unable to demonstrate that the neighbourhood as such has its own influence on the existence of serious and frequent delinquency among youth. However, neighbourhoods remain areas where a number of social problems are concentrated and thus which can also be targets of focused social action. These neighbourhood bound actions can be situated at two levels. The neighbourhood can be *a territorial demarcation for socially-focused initiatives* such as neighbourhood social work, youth work, work with the homeless and the like, which was pleaded for above. Efforts must be made/continued in making the neighbourhood a more attractive place to live. Material improvements in the residential areas can have a favourable influence on the living climate in the neighbourhood and on a positive attitude on the part of the residents. This influence becomes greater when these initiatives occur in discussion with the residents.

In such neighbourhoods there are usually one or more youth clubs but for the rest there is actually little available for young people. Thus many just hang around on the street, which places them, as it were, in 'competition' with other 'users' of the same space such as shopkeepers and playing children. Escalating conflicts and criminalization are the result⁹. *Thus it is very necessary that work be done in the neighbourhoods to create interesting and varied possibilities for recreation and open meeting places for children and adolescents.* In addition to the construction of certain areas, other options to consider include negotiations with schools concerning making play areas and gyms available for supervised recreation and the expansion of the possibilities available at sport clubs.

5.8. The report contains a number of impulses for new scientific approaches to the questions, however, we would like to especially present four themes.

- Youth from socio-economically precarious situations follow two paths with respect to delinquency. Either they commit more crime than the average youth of the same age, or they will commit noticeably less crime. *More thoroughgoing research is required to determine what precisely influences this 'choice'.* Thoroughgoing qualitative research is needed to determine which factors and incidents in the life of youth are of such a nature as to 'dispatch' youth either toward an attitude and behaviour of conformity, or of more serious delinquency.

- The research was limited to delinquency among secondary school students and registered delinquency among minors. It is possible that the more troubling forms of delinquency are not committed by these groups but rather by young adults.

⁹ B. Melis, *Jongeren in de stad. Onderzoek naar vrije tijd en conflict*, Leuven, Youth Criminology Research Group, 1994.

Research needs to be done concerning how far the image that we have sketched of delinquency among minors also applies to young adults and what the relationship is between delinquency in these two age categories.

- For the Brussels police, the Moroccan origin of a criminal is a reason to approach a crime more resolutely and to arrest the youth with a view toward immediate legal action. At first sight it appears to be very discriminatory with respect to ethnic background but this is not necessarily the case. Other more subtle elements can also play a role. More thoroughgoing research is urgently required here, certainly in light of the possible relation between the police and immigrant youth indicated above.

Such research should focus not only on the interrogation and arrest policy of the police, but also on the attitude of immigrants with respect to the police and the 'police culture' with respect to immigrants.

- This research is seen as interdisciplinary in nature. The degree of difficulty is high. The report demonstrates in how far the interdisciplinary approach has been fruitful. However, the report is certainly not a theoretically polished final product. For this, much more time would be required for discussion and reflection.

Interdisciplinary research is in principle still very highly valued. In the research procedures more attention should be paid to interdisciplinary work itself. *Science policy should pay explicit attention to this and also grant to projects the necessary time. The projects billed as interdisciplinary should explicitly indicate in their research plan the activities that contribute to such* (such as the writing of 'draft texts', organizing seminars, etc...).