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Cities under observation: Social monitoring in integrated neighbourhood development in Hamburg

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Abstract

This contribution¹ describes social monitoring in integrated neighbourhood development in Hamburg as an example of current observation tools for urban socio-spatial development. In the first instance, the relevance and objectives of such quantitative analysis tools are considered, then the scope and limitations of the index-method are set out along with their applications.

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1. Background: Changes in urban development

In recent years small-scale observations in German cities have become an increasingly important foundation for informing policies and administrative actions. Monitoring systems for social or integrated urban (neighbourhood) development are used in the observation of small-scale developments in order to identify local areas where action is needed, and to deduce appropriate measures founded on empirical analysis. Developments are the result of transformation processes taking place in society as a whole, including globalisation, changes from an industrial society to service society, demographic changes or reunification, which mostly occur on a small-scale in urban agglomerations.

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Since the mid-1980s in particular, socio-economic structural changes, immigration and growing unemployment in large cities has led to the transformation of the inner structure of cities. Social environments in cities have become more differentiated since then, neighbourhoods (districts) are becoming more segregated and many areas show a trend towards polarisation between affluent and poorer neighbourhoods.^{2,3} Polarisation processes can lead to divided cities, social and ethnic segregation as well as to the exclusion and isolation of certain districts. Generally, a strong trend towards socio-spatial fragmentation of cities is being attested, which raises the question of new types of city policies.⁴

2. On the relevance of the topic ‘social (space) monitoring’

The theoretical background for monitoring socio-spatial development processes is founded on the assumption of context effects. This means that “... urban neighbourhoods, in their role as learning and socialisation environments, generate a spatial effect which can significantly affect the current and future circumstances of its inhabitants”.⁵ This assumption is explained by the fact that particularly in urban areas where segregation processes have led to growing social problems, additional neighbourhood effects may worsen the already difficult social circumstances of some residents even more and lead to further disadvantages.⁵

This includes socialisation in an environment or milieu which is gradually moving away from the norms recognised by society as a whole. Reasons for this may be that “... a stable employment history and related daily routine are an exception or that some acts of petty crime are considered acceptable. These effects also have an impact on people who are not members of this milieu, but who are confronted with it on a daily basis. Children and young people are affected in particular, for whom the neighbourhood plays a special role as a ‘learning environment’.⁵ The second aspect mentioned is that insufficient infrastructure facilities in the neighbourhood’s physical material environment causes further discrimination. The third reason cited is the negative image that these neighbourhoods often hold. In the form of public image or self-image this can lead to further discrimination through stigmatisation.

At this point strategies for action come into play which were established in the context of urban regeneration programmes initiated by federal government and states. The ‘Social City’ programme plays a special role as its objectives address precisely the social deficits described. Consequently most funding goes to the stabilisation and enhancement of structurally weak districts and neighbourhoods which are economically and socially disadvantaged and have not benefited from regeneration. This scenario led to the early recognition of the specific importance of monitoring systems.^{6,7,8} Social urban monitoring has the goal of detecting accumulations of all types of social problems in urban sub-spaces and thus “identify disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In this way it serves as the groundwork and preparation of urban policy decisions”.⁵ Berlin is the trailblazer in ‘social urban development monitoring’.⁹ In Hamburg, the Framework Programme for Integrated Neighbourhood Development (Rahmenprogramm Integrierte Stadtteilentwicklung - RISE) provides a joint umbrella for the implementation of urban regeneration. “It pursues the target of strengthening social cohesion within the city”¹⁰ (www.hamburg.de/rise) and so integrates policy objectives for the ‘Social City’ into key objectives for the city as a whole. Small-scale social monitoring has been given a firm place within the programme and is an established programme control tool.

2.1 What is social (space) monitoring?

Social urban development monitoring is the systematic and regular analysis of spatially differentiated socio-structural developments in urban areas, using suitable indicators or indices which examine these developments relative to one another and/or to developments in the city as a whole.

Models for social urban development monitoring are characterised by the following points⁴:

- regular implementation (eg. annual);
- uniform, small-scale basis;
- continuity of indicators;
- comparability;
- relation and analysis of different thematic indicators to one another;
- clarity and transparency of the process.

The key objective of current socio-spatial monitoring systems in Germany is to observe developments in specific sub-spaces within the city, to compare them with one another and thus identify areas with a special need for social and urban development action.⁴ Correspondingly, the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg has defined its central objectives for social monitoring to be the mapping of the dimensions of social inequality within the city, by regularly

collecting socio-economic context data in small-scale areas and assisting early identification of neighbourhoods with emerging problems¹¹ (Parliament of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg 2009). Monitoring is intended to serve as both an early warning system and a search strategy, using selected indicators to help identify areas where culminating problems and a need for action are anticipated. The results and assessments then provide a base for a more detailed analysis of the areas, and, if required, deduce a need for urban development policy action. In the context of the Framework for Integrated Neighbourhood Development programme social monitoring supports the selection of possible action areas, the delineation of their boundaries and helps the justification of urban regeneration measures in deprived areas.

The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg's monitoring system is briefly described below, then the scope and limitations of this process are addressed along with possible applications.

2.2 Social monitoring in integrated neighbourhood development in Hamburg

Social monitoring was conceived as a control tool for the Framework Programme for Integrated Neighbourhood Development. In the year 2010 it was designed by the Ministry for Urban Development and the Environment (Behörde für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt) in cooperation with HafenCity University and Hamburg University, and has been operating continuously ever since. Hamburg has the specific status of a city-state and has a population of 1.860.759 inhabitants (as of 31.12.2016). The spatial boundaries are based on Hamburg's 941 statistical areas (as of 31.12.2015), which were defined according to urban planning and socio-structural criteria of homogeneity after the 1987 consensus.¹² To minimise any source of statistical errors, only statistical areas with more than 300 inhabitants were considered. In 2016 this included 847 statistical areas with an average of approximately 2.100 inhabitants each. Although 94 statistical areas were not considered due to low numbers of inhabitants, the study areas comprised 99% of all inhabitants registered in Hamburg.

The key elements of social monitoring are the indicators which should describe the social situation and development for each area. The selection of appropriate, i.e. comparable and meaningful indicators is crucial. The goal is for results that are reliable, valid and objective. The base data for Hamburg's social monitoring was commissioned under the direction of the Ministry for Urban Development and the Environment, collected and processed by the Office for Statistics North (Statistikamt Nord)¹³ and the Schools and Professional Training Authority (Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung BSB). Annual social monitoring reports are prepared and published online (www.hamburg.de/sozialmonitoring).

Seven indicators were used in the process of social monitoring to highlight areas requiring special attention: children and young people with migration backgrounds, children of single parents, welfare benefits claimants (Social Act II [SGB-II]), unemployed people, children on minimum benefits, those on minimum benefits in old age and school leaving qualifications. Each of these indicators has been examined over the past three years in terms of the status quo (hence called status indicators) and in terms of the development (dynamics indicators) (see Table 1).

In the following, the single attention indicators are briefly outlined. A detailed description and discussion can be found in the pilot's report of the social monitoring.¹⁴

1. Children and young people with migration background

Ethnic characteristics are playing a central role concerning the future prospects of children and young people. Through spatial polarization socially closed ethnic groups arise which makes integration more difficult. Therefore, integration and participation possibilities of children and young people with migration background are the central challenges.¹⁴

2. Children under 18 years with single parents

Talking about Hamburg, single-parent families with children are more affected by poverty than other households (45.2% of all single-parent families with children under 18 votes of SGBII). In addition, this has negative impacts on children's future prospects. The proportion of children under 18 years of age who live with single-parent families is recorded in this monitoring. Thus children are the focus of the investigation.¹⁴

3. Recipients of basic welfare benefits (SGB II), 4. Unemployed of population, 5. Inhabitants unfit for work and in need of help (SGB II) of population under 15 years, 6. Recipients of minimum welfare benefits in old age (SGB XII)

Four socioeconomic indicators are linked to economic poverty and exclusion. At the same time, two indicators focus on demographic aspects of poverty in terms of child poverty and poverty in old age. Especially an increase in income disparity in Germany shows that more people are affected by poverty, and that a division of society is taking place, which is congruently seen in urban structures. The concentration of people affected by poverty has a direct impact on

the spatial environment. Child poverty as well as poverty in old age as indicators have, however, to be seen critically. They may provide a biased picture of an area if, for example, only a few children or elderly people are living there.

7. Proportion of pupils without higher school-leaving qualification

This indicator provides information about the situation concerning education. Referring to international standards (International Standard Classification of Education, ISCED) it is defined as the proportion of pupils without Abitur (Higher School certificate, general qualification for university entrance) or Fachabitur (Vocational baccalaureate diploma, e.g. technical diploma) as highest level of education. Concerning the development of a knowledge-based society, education has a key role to play.

Table 1: Attention indicators

Status indicator	Dynamics indicator
S1 Proportion of children and young people with migration background of population under 18 years	D1 Percentage change over the last three year period
S2 Proportion of the population of all children under 18 years with single parents of population under 18 years	D2 Percentage change over the last three year period
S3 Proportion of recipients of basic welfare benefits (SGB II) of total population	D3 Percentage change over the last three year period
S4 Proportion of unemployed of population aged between 15 and 65 years	D4 Percentage change over the last three year period
S5 Proportion of inhabitants unfit for work and in need of help (SGB II) of population under 15 years	D5 Percentage change over the last three year period
S6 Proportion of recipients of minimum welfare benefits in old age (SGB XII) of population aged 65 years and over	D6 Percentage change over the last three year period
S7 Proportion of school leavers without a school-leaving qualification or with a basic certificate or middle school certificate of all school leavers (three-year sum)	

The informative value and methodical applicability of the attention indicators used in Hamburg's index method were tested and confirmed by a pilot report during the start-up phase of social monitoring.¹⁴ It recommended a regular review of the indicators. The dynamics index measures changes in variables contained in the status index over a period of three years. One exception is the indicator S7 'school leavers without a higher leaving certificate', which was calculated with the sum of all three years due to the low number of cases. Therefore, the dynamics indicator cannot be included.

The composite indices are determined by combining and assessing single attention indicators (see Diagram 1). To make sure that all indicators carry the same weight when added up in the calculation of the status index or the dynamics index, a z-score standardisation is applied. Subsequently, the statistic sum is formed by the addition of seven z-values (zS1-zS7). The dynamics sum was formed by the addition of the six z-values (zD1-zD6).

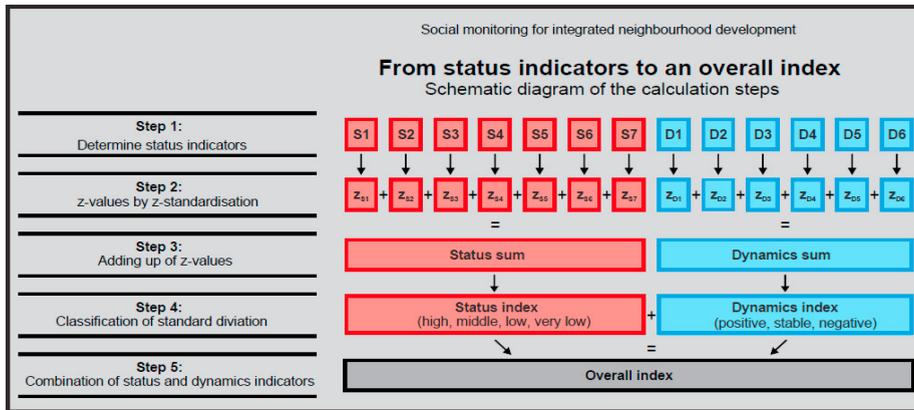


Fig. 1: Schematic diagram of the calculation steps of the indices¹⁵

Classification of the status index and the dynamics index is done by using the standard deviation (SD) as a threshold value. This means that the number of areas in each class is not fixed, but aligned to the statistical distribution of values. For the status index, four classes are defined: high, medium, low and very low. Areas with more than -1.0 SD are classified as high, areas with an SD of -1.0 to +1.0 as medium, areas with a SD between >+1.0 and +1.5 as low and areas with an SD of more than +1.5 as very low. Three classes are defined for the dynamics index: positive, stable, negative. Areas with an SD of more than -1.0 are aggregated to the class positive dynamics, areas with an SD between -1.0 and +1.0 to the class stable dynamics and areas with an SD of more than +1.0 to the class negative dynamics. By overlaying both indices without further computation the overall index results in the last step. This overall index is the essential result of this monitoring and enables further conclusions about the positioning of single statistical areas regarding social status and the changes in the past three years compared to other observed areas. Hence, both high status areas and low status areas can have positive or negative development (see Table 2).

Table 2: Overall index for Hamburg and distribution of statistical areas 2016¹⁶

Overall index 2016	Dynamics index			Total
	Positive	Stable	Negative	
high	4 (0.5%)	151 (17.8%)	1 (0.1%)	156 (18.4%)
medium	61 (7.2%)	424 (50.1%)	57 (6.7%)	542 (64.0%)
low	9 (1.1%)	48 (5.7%)	10 (1.2%)	67 (8.0%)
very low	5 (0.6%)	60 (7.1%)	17 (2.0%)	82 (9.7%)
Hamburg (847 areas)	79 (9.3%)	683 (80.7%)	85 (10.0%)	847 (100%)

The results show that most areas (50.1 %) are classified in the middle category (‘medium’ status, ‘stable’ dynamics). The values for these areas coincide with the mean values for the whole city. Special attention should be given to areas whose values deviate from the middle category. Thus, all areas with a very low or a low status and with a negative dynamics index are highlighted (grey fields in Table 2) since these areas are assumed to be particularly prone to cumulative problems or, in the last case, likely to ‘decline’ into a lower status category requiring appropriate action.

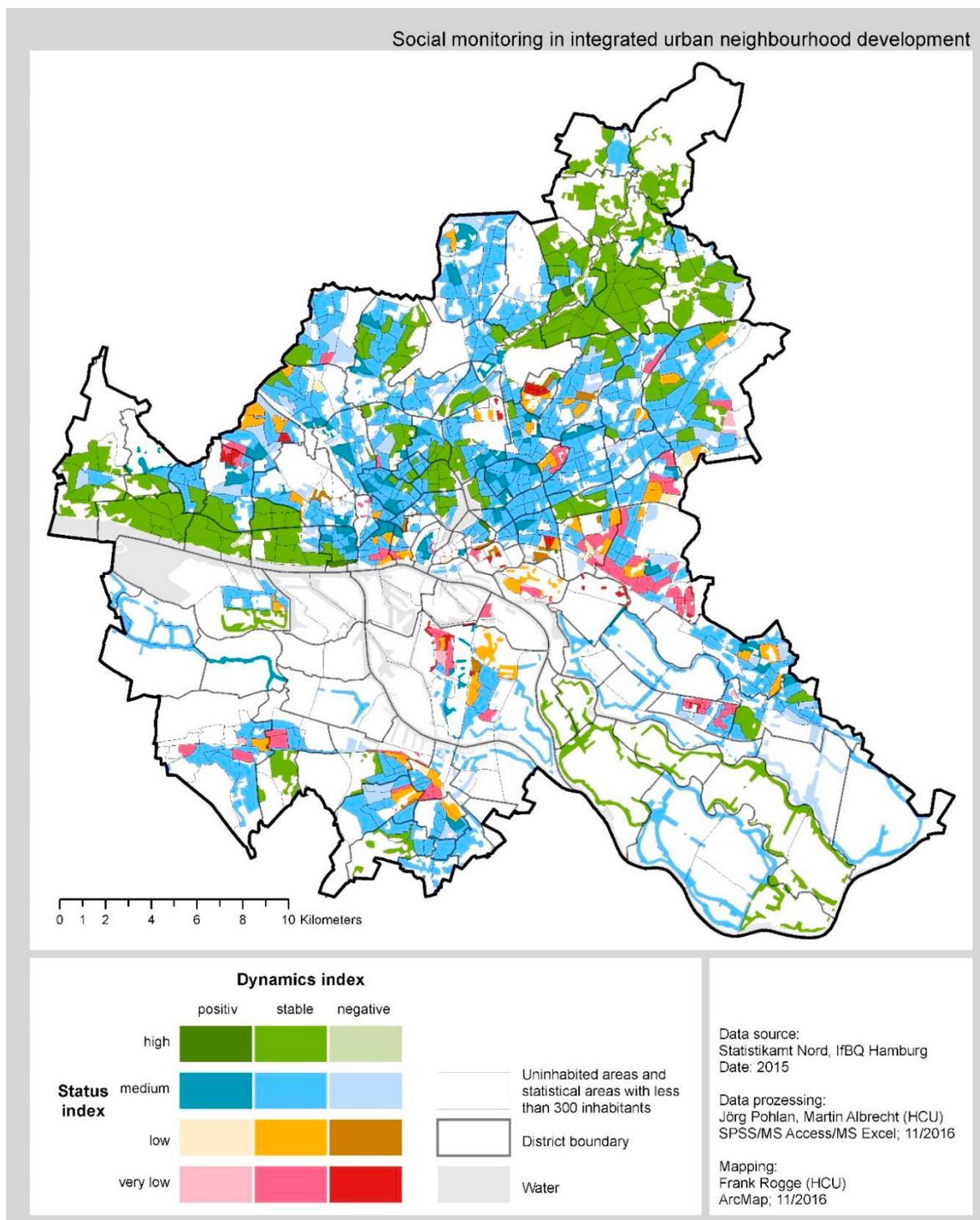


Fig. 2: Social monitoring 2016: Overall index¹⁶

The overall results are also illustrated on maps included in the respective reports (see Map 1). Additionally, the results for each statistical area are listed in detailed tables. Areas in the focus of social monitoring with a ‘low’ or ‘very low’ status are primarily situated on the city’s eastern periphery (mainly in the districts Billstedt, Horn and Jenfeld), south of the River Elbe (Wilhelmsburg and Harburg), on the western periphery (Osdorf and Lurup), in the western city centre (St. Pauli and Altona-Altstadt) and in the districts Dulsberg and Steilshoop.

2.3 Scope and limitations of the index method

The following section will briefly discuss the scope and limitations of the statistical method applied in social monitoring.¹⁷ As already mentioned, the index method used for social monitoring is based on a set of seven indicators. This intentionally permits a narrow, problem-oriented perspective with a special focus on social problems encountered in the context of integrated neighbourhood development. It also seeks to clarify which interpretations are permissible and which are impermissible. The chosen method is most suitable for fulfilling its indicator and early warning functions. However, statistical evaluation of the results does not directly reveal the need for action. This requires political assessments of these conjectural areas at district level, which can then provide an impetus for a more detailed analysis or course of action.

However, sometimes expectations regarding the tool’s objectives and opportunities are too high. For example, it is not a suitable tool for evaluating (in the narrower sense) urban regeneration programmes since social monitoring and its findings cannot be used to identify any direct links between cause and effect.

The results of social monitoring allow an assessment of the situation and changes within a statistical area at the time of the analysis, in relation to other areas or in relation to the average of all Hamburg’s areas. This has been designed into the method by standardising the indicators and the changing circumstances of the entire city’s situation and development. Hence, each relevant situation, i.e. the assessment of the social situation in an urban area, can be observed within the current overall context. Correspondingly, the relative changes for statistical areas, particularly their ‘descent’ into the group of low status areas or their ‘ascent’ out of a low group can be tracked over time.

When assessing ‘absolute’ changes in an urban area, it must be taken into account that the Hamburg index method is based on an indicator *system*. At the level of the base indicators, i.e. the specific *attention indicators* or the additionally considered structure indicators, such an assessment is possible for each indicator by examining for example, absolute or percentage changes compared to the previous year’s value. However, this is no longer possible once status index and dynamics index have been combined into *condensed indices*, as in that case standardisation has already generated a perspective relative to each analysis date.

Both the classification into ‘high’, ‘medium’, ‘low’ or ‘very low’ statuses and the depiction of developments as either ‘positive’, ‘stable’ or ‘negative’ are not absolute attributions of social monitoring but rather describe the status and/or the development in the observed area in comparison to the situation in the city as a whole. Consequently, a statistical area can, for instance, be attributed to another status index class without any changes in its situation, if development in the entire city shifts in either direction. This also applies to the dynamics index: it is conceivable that a statistical area is classified to have ‘negative dynamics’ despite its own advantageous development - if the overall development in the entire city is more positive. This is an intended feature of the social monitoring methodology as its objective is to identify sub-spaces which are assumed to have specific development needs compared to all areas of the city. There is no claim to deliver an assessment of the ‘absolute’ situation and development.

Even after having undergone successful urban regeneration programmes, some areas may still be classified as having ‘low status’ several years later. A deciding factor is the social structure of the population in these areas, which in most cases depends on the neighbourhood’s existing housing stock. Social monitoring therefore often draws attention to neighbourhoods with a high proportion of social housing and thus areas with affordable homes for people on welfare benefits, etc. Consequently, it is inevitable that certain areas receive more attention, even if urban renewal projects have been completed and there is no further need for action regarding neighbourhood development and urban regeneration. This may reflect the actual limitations in scope attributed to investment-related urban regeneration programmes.¹⁸

3. Application

The practical application of Hamburg's Framework Programme for Integrated Neighbourhood Development assigns social monitoring - together with a small-scale data pool - a consulting and supporting function, which should not be underestimated. It enables the city administration to identify neighbourhoods with particular development needs at an early stage. Furthermore, it underpins the selection of regeneration projects for integrated neighbourhood development by providing an objective data base. Different sections of the administration use data in the data pool and the social monitoring findings as a basis for socio-spatial planning at district and city levels. It helps departmental policies (e.g. education, social affairs, housing programmes, land use management, supply of open space) to focus on certain selected districts and neighbourhoods; particularly in the context of conducting area-specific baseline studies, preparing problems and potentials analyses or devising integrated development concepts. Social monitoring results are also evaluated at interim appraisals when updating integrated development concepts and during assessments at the end of urban regeneration programmes.

This type of application is possible in Hamburg as both the social monitoring results, presented in tables and maps, and the base data are made available through the administrative network. Geodata baseline information is now accessible through various geoportals (www.geoportal-hamburg.de/geoportal/geo-online/index.html). This allows any place in the city to be easily linked to a statistical area and hence to the relevant social monitoring results. Furthermore, the Ministry of Urban Development and the Environment has issued a handbook on integrated neighbourhood development providing recommendations and interpretation guidance on social monitoring for area-specific data.¹⁹

One of the special features in Hamburg is that its social monitoring includes small-scale, place of residence-based education data. In response to this connection between education and neighbourhood development, the Schools and Professional Training Authority has issued a Regional Education Atlas in June 2014, which in turn refers to the social monitoring findings (www.bildungsatlas-hamburg.de).

One further application area concerning monitoring data could be settled in the field of environmental justice. Recently different agencies and regions have increasingly dealt with linking data of social situations with environment and health. With regard to the social situation and environmental justice, it could be determined in which extent it is useful to develop an environmental monitoring system for cities. With the help of an overlay of data on social situations and data on different emissions (noise, light, air, etc.), it might be possible to identify multiple loads in certain districts. This could meet the claim to focus on integration of environmental and health aspects into urban development, reduce multiple loads and contribute actively to health promotion in urban neighborhoods.

4. Conclusion

Monitoring systems for social urban development can provide a basis for solidary urban policy by identifying socio-spatial inequalities and their developments. It is a tool that helps inform, justify and initiate socio-spatial oriented policy, and additionally provides information for specific interventions in support of integrative and cohesive policies. Furthermore, monitoring systems serve as a rather more rational basis for settling differences about the allocation of funding. They can also - depending on the type of monitoring - keep an eye on developments across the entire city. Experience gained in Hamburg has shown that social monitoring is now well-established and has been met with interest and acceptance by the administration and politics. The seventh annual report is recently being published. Since its launch, social monitoring has made a major contribution to achieving much improved and more up-to-date data bases, which are uniform throughout Hamburg's entire administration. Simultaneously, a standardised and thus comparable evaluation methodology was introduced for the entire city, supporting a transparent and clear illustration of complex issues. It is based on a justified selection of indicators which can be adapted to changing framework conditions, if required. The tool is focussed on a small-scale identification of socio-spatial inequalities and associated development trends. Social monitoring thus becomes a tool for neighbourhood development which is suitable for seeing the intended integrated approach from a socio-spatial perspective.

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