Socio-spatial Planning in the Creation of Bridging Social Capital:

The Importance of Multifunctional Centers for Intergroup Networks and Integration

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ABSTRACT:

Social capital is about people who meet, get to know each other and help each other in various ways. Therefore, it appears odd that discussions on meeting places and social capital are rare. This paper discusses the linkage, here termed socio-spatial planning. It raises the question: How can public meeting places facilitate creation of bridging social capital? It suggests that one possible way of securing regular, inter-group face-to-face meetings would be to establish multifunctional centers. Such houses include public services such as health care, school, library; private enterprises as grocers' shops and banks; and facilities for local associations such as theatre scenes and sports halls. Cases from the Netherlands and Denmark indicate that such large meeting places help counteract segregation of various groups – be it ethnic, social or age. In this way, a well-functioning multifunctional center facilitates provision of the collective goods of integration and bridging social capital.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Meeting places in the creation of bridging social capital

How can public meeting places facilitate creation of bridging social capital? This question is important for at least two reasons.

First, it challenges the belief that social capital is something 'out there' doing a lot of good things. This something is somehow brought to life by a mysterious force outside the control of the state – inherent in either a 'cooperative culture', 'norms of reciprocity' or 'civic engagement'. This stance was made famous by Putnam in Making Democracy Work, in which social capital is seen as "norms of reciprocity and networks of civil engagement" (Putnam 1993: 171). No doubt that civic engagement *most often* is conducive to communication and networking across ethnic, religious, social or age cleavages. However, there is a tendency to ignore the more material side of the matter, namely that these 'networks of civic engagement' are formed, and function, in specific places. And that there are both 'good' and 'bad' places for generating social capital.

Second, the question is important because it allows us to think of the state as a co-player (e.g. Herreros 2004; 2009). This is to say that the state can actively contribute to foster beneficial bridging social capital and thus counteract group segregation harmful to society (Uslaner 2006, 2009) and leading to excessive *bonding* social capital – by Putnam termed 'superglue'. Not only non-corrupt, high-quality institutions count here. The state may also invest in high-quality *meeting places*, where vital public, trade and leisure time services are offered, in the following termed multifunctional centers. This out from the simple logic that social capital presupposes that people meet each other. And that, if we get a chance to meet each other, this often enables us to trust and help each other (or, at least, not fight each other). In short, *bridging* social capital presupposes inclusive meeting places. Not for the few but for the many. Not only for the identical ('the usual locals') but also for people who do *not* resemble us and have other skills than us. And not small meeting places, but large ones placed where social life actually takes place. This out from the simple observation that "where people are, more people will gather", as a Danish saying goes.

1.2. Definitions

Here, bridging social capital should be understood as open networks that are "outward looking and encompass people across diverse social

cleavages" (Putnam 2000: 22). This in contrast to *no* meeting places and segregation of individuals and groups leading to 'bonding' social capital. In contrast to the bridging type, bonding social capital consists of "inward looking [networks that] tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups" (Putnam 2000: 22). The latter implies family and friend care but also, in extreme cases, 'superglued' networks based on aggressive exclusion and harmful to society; that is, *excessive* bonding, such as in the case of intolerant religious groups or the Ku Klux Klan (Putnam 2000: 21ff.).

The term socio-spatial planning has been used within social geography, architecture and physical planning. It roots in an idea of a socio-spatial dialectics, meaning that people constantly modify and remodify places while, simultaneously, places constantly impact the lives of their inhabitants (Knox 2005: 3). The latter also implies people's social life. Thus, there is "an important dialectical relationship between social structures and the everyday practices of the 'insiders' and subjectively constructed spaces and places. We live both in and through places" (Knox 2005: 2). Such an idea has deep roots in the history of science, most notoriously elaborated in Robert Owen's working communities about 1800, Ebenezer Howard's garden cities about 1900 and in the community planning of New Urbanism from about 1980, as a reaction of uncontrolled urban sprawl.

Finally, a multifunctional center should simply be understood as a house for the whole community. All people in the local area have an incentive to go there, because it houses public services (e.g. school, kindergarten, library, health care), private enterprises (e.g. bank departments, postal offices, hairdressers), as well as facilities for local voluntary associations (e.g. sports halls, theatre scenes) (Lenteren 2005a; Svendsen 2009).

1.3. Structure of the paper

In the following, I will argue that the link between physical space and social networks is crucial, from a local citizen's as well as a policy perspective. First, I discuss bridging social capital in relation to residential segregation (Section 2). Then I give three historical examples of socio-spatial planning in the creation of bridging social capital (Section 3). Next I present cases from the Netherlands and Denmark indicating that a large and strongly inclusive meeting place in a local area – a multifunctional center – may actually help counteract segregation and facilitate provision of the collective goods of integration and bridging social capital (Section 4). Finally, a model for

meeting places in the creation of bridging social capital is presented (Section 5).

2. Diversity, residential segregation and meeting places

The literature on ethnic diversity and segregation is substantial. It reflects a major concern about large-scale immigration from poor third world countries to Western Europe in recent years (e.g. Ireland 2008; Nannestad et al. 2008; Hou & Wu 2009). More specifically, in many European countries there has been a fear of ghettoization and the emergence of so-called 'parallel societies' in which immigrants live in their own neighborhoods, speaking their own languages and generally leading their lives quite isolated from the rest of society. Not least, this is the case with poorly integrated Muslim groups in Germany (Schaefer 2005), the UK (Bisin et al. 2008), France in particular (Tully 2007; Brown 2007; Giri 2006), New Zealand (Kolig 2006) and many other countries. An illustrative extreme case is Salman Rushdie's bearded, turban clad imam in *The Satanic Verses*, who reputes living in a western 'Sodoma' (Kensington, London) and who avoids interacting with non-Muslims in this "hated city": "The curtains, thick golden velvet, are kept shut all day, because otherwise the evil thing might creep into the apartment: foreignness, Abroad, the alien nation. The harsh fact that he is here and not There, upon which all his thoughts are fixed" (Rushdie 1988: 71).

Until now integration problems in Europe have remained largely unsolved. For example, labor market integration has arguably failed due to the insufficient education and qualifications of large parts of the immigrant population, incentive problems, or discrimination in the labor market (SOPEMI 2002; Little 2007). Among EU-27, this is particularly true in the cases of England, Denmark and the Netherlands (Zimmermann et al. 2008: 13).

In academic debate, two key arguments have prevailed, both of relevance in this context. The first one, and oldest one, is the contact hypothesis within psychology and sociology. This hypothesis, which is also known as intergroup contact theory, asserts that regular face to face contact between citizens from majority and minority groups *under the right conditions*, that is, for example, equal status, economic equality, mutual need to cooperate, legal justice for all and, in short, equality of opportunity. This will lead to less ignorance and more inter-group tolerance, counteracting prejudices and racial discrimination in a good circle (Allport 1954). This hypothesis has been verified in many studies (e.g. Pettigrew 1998; Green & Wong 2009),

although it is still not fully clear exactly which conditions promote contact and the building of intergroup networks. For example, Pettigrew (1998: 782) reports that in the classic "Robbers Cave" experiment done by Sherif et al. (1962) "prejudice lessened only when members of two hostile groups were *forced* to cooperate with one another".[1] A similar idea can be found in the literature on "defended neighborhoods", where the claim is that racial heterogeneity in neighborhoods leads to more tolerance (DeFina & Hannon 2009: 374), a thesis that recently has been empirically contested by Putnam (2007: 146-49) who, using the US Social Capital Benchmark Survey, shows that social trust is lowest in areas with a high concentration of ethnic minority groups. Hence, neighborhood diversity tends to make people "withdraw from collective life (..) to distrust their neighbours (..) to volunteer less, give less to charity (..) to vote less (..) and to huddle unhappily in front of the television" (Putnam 2007: 150-51).[2] Surprisingly, in such studies the important issue of the link between *socio-spatial planning* and integration success – such as the establishment of centrally placed, strongly inclusive meeting places facilitating the collective good of bridging social capital – are rarely touched upon and, overall, "the spatial dimension of social capital has received little attention in the literature so far" (Rutten, Westlund & Boekema 2010: 863). As already mentioned, this paper aims to contribute to fill this evident gap.

In contrast, the so-called conflict hypothesis, at times also termed social disorganization theory, claims that contact between groups instead of fostering cross-group bridges may increase intolerance and stereotyping of out-groups. Here the main argument is that increase in the size of the minority group within a community may be perceived as a threat by the majority group, as in the case of white majority and black minority groups in the US (for an overview, see Hou & Wu 2009: 694-695).

In recent years, the debate has shifted somewhat. Instead of discussing pros and cons in connection with ethnic diversity, focus has been directed to the problems, or challenges, of ethnic segregation in physical space, particularly residential (housing) segregation, as in the case of isolated Muslim communities mentioned above. For example, Uslaner has criticized

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[1]   Recent studies indicate that economic equality, connected to low corruption, is an important indicator of inter-group trust and bridging social capital. This may explain why a country like Brazil, characterized by severe economic income differences between social groups and their physical separation in space, ranks lowest in social trust in the World Values Surveys (Uslaner 2009a, b).

[2]   Note also that, in the USA, there is a gap between who people say they would like to have as neighbors (high tolerance), and who they actually have as neighbors (homophili reigns) (Taylor & Morin 2008).

Putnam's one-sided, ethnic diversity approach, arguing that there is no empirical evidence that human diversity in itself should lead to lower trust and suboptimal outcomes.[3] Instead it is *residential segregation* that tends to "breed in-group identity at the expense of the larger society" (Uslaner 2009: 9). At the same time, such findings confronts studies that, in line with the conflict hypothesis, argue that segregation may be positive as it allows migrants to "form their own social networks, circumvent linguistic barriers and incubate small businesses" and, hence, reduce contact with the majority group and hence the risk of conflict (Ireland 2008: 1334). Taking the direct opposite stance, Uslaner states:

> The culprit is not diversity *per se*, but rather social isolation. When people of different backgrounds live apart from each other, they will not – indeed, cannot – develop the sorts of ties – or the sorts of attitudes – that leads us to trust people who are different from ourselves (Ibid.).

That segregation of groups in physical space is problematic is also the message in Varshney's survey on violence between Hindus and Muslims in India. In his book (Varshney 2002), he describes how several thousands have been killed in ethnic riots in India 1950-90, however almost exclusively in big cities like Bombay and Ahmedabad where Hindu and Muslim communities are segregated and seldom meet. In contrast, only few killings have taken place in rural villages, where Muslims and Hindus meet and mix in the local associational life and where people know each other. Thus, excessive in-group trust (or 'super-glue') appears closely related to ethnic segregation leading to stereotypic representations of 'them' and 'us' and symbolic and physical violence. Hence, regular face-to-face meetings between Hindus and Muslims in the single communities seem to be the best guarantor for mutual trust and peaceful co-existence.

Likewise, a fieldwork study from Denmark (Svendsen 2006) reports that residential segregation between groups of locals and newcomers on social transfer incomes in a rural municipality almost bereft of meeting places has led to suboptimal outcomes, including increasing municipality taxes. Why?

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[3] Here Uslaner refers to Putnam (2007), who has argued that immigration and ethnic diversity has involved such effects in the US – although only on the short run, while, according to Putnam, diversity has long-term positive effects Uslaner's paper is formed as a critique hereof, pointing at ethnic parallel societies as the real sinner and *not* diversity.

Again, because "us-them" stereotypes lead to misunderstandings, distrust and people working against each other in a deadlocked lose-lose game.[4]

Thus we see that, to paraphrase Uslaner, it is not diversity *per se* which is sinner (differing educational, social, language, ethnic, or religious backgrounds), it is rather the *physical segregation* of groups within a nation. Put otherwise, the main problem seems not to be heterogeneity, but simply that members of various groups *never meet* and hence, by only judging from more or less arbitrary second-hand information and rumors about the others, are more apt to construct stereotype pictures of these others.

Richard Wright's auto-biographical book Black Boy from 1945 eminently describes these mechanisms 'from within'. Here the segregation between white and black communities in the US south during the 1920s appears almost complete, a simultaneous mental and physical 'Apartheid' as it were, characterized by stereotypic and almost formally defined roles for how whites and blacks should act when interacting. Such behavioral schemes were impossible to avoid, even for an intelligent and skilful youth as Richard Wright, who always forgot to act as a negro rather than as a human being: "I was nearing my seventeenth birthday and I was wondering if I would ever be free of this plague [i.e., persecution of white people] [It] was simply impossible for me to calculate, to scheme, to act, to plot all the time. I would remember to dissemble for short periods, then I would forget and act straight and human again (..) forgetting the artificial status of race and class. It was the same with whites as with blacks; it was my way with everybody" (Wright 2008 [1945]: 185).

Also today, the simple observation of mental and physical segregation of groups as the 'culprit' for lack of integration and cooperation is supported by everyday experience. Take so-called 'multi-ethnic' cities as Brussels, London or New York. In reality, such cities largely consist of mono-cultures in that they are sharply ethnically segregated in space – as for example is revealed in Brussels when, passing the Turkish or Moroccan parts of the city,

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[4] In the study, the fieldworker concludes: "Several (..) locals confided to me that if the Copenhageners [i.e. the newcomers on social transfer incomes coming from the capital of Copenhagen] only would leave *them* (the locals), in peace, then there would be no problems except for the increased municipal expenses to provide social incomes. However, my study indicated that this is not true – lack of integration is much more expensive. Thus, the economic losses of bonding social capital could be measured in many other ways, for example, a drastic increase in doctor and psychologist visits, early pensioning, children with social problems, fights between neighboring [newcomers] and locals, all of which [the citizens in the municipality] have to pay for via taxes. Thus, we see that widespread distrust in a community certainly does cost, in all respects" (Svendsen 2006: 66).

one thinks: Is this really Belgium? Does Belgium and EU law de facto rule here? And is French or Dutch spoken here at all?

How, then, can bridging social capital be promoted and residential segregation avoided? In line with the contact hypothesis but with an explicit focus on socio-spatial planning, I will in the following suggest that one possible solution might be to build strongly inclusive meeting places securing inter-group meetings, information flow and cooperation.[5]

3. Socio-spatial planning: Historical examples

3.1. Where do people meet?

As already mentioned, it appears strange that social capital research has largely left out what social capital really is about: Face to face meetings in geographic space.[6] Thus, obviously important questions have been left near unaddressed, as: Where do people really meet and get to know each other? Do some places stimulate formation of intra- and inter-group networks more than others? Is it possible to design high-quality meeting places where people feel comfortable and get into a 'socializing mood'? And how can these places be constructed so to hinder too much intra-group socializing, which may lead to intolerance towards outsiders? How can they instead ensure *more* inter-group meetings, securing provision of collective goods such as integration of minority groups, low criminality, widespread cooperation and learning?[7]

Truly, Putnam (2000: 408) in a passing remark refers to new urbanism and finds it plausible that "design innovations in mixed-use zoning, pedestrian-friendly street grids, and more space for public use should enhance social

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[5]   It should, however, be noticed that shared spaces do not *per se* lead to inter-group communication and trust, as e.g. illustrated by the violent conflict in Kosovo in 1999 between ethnic groups (primarily Serbs and Albanians), who formerly had lived peacefully together and often in ethnically mixed communities.

[6]   Of course, the internet has made possible an increasing number of *non* face-face meetings in *virtual* space, however it is unclear whether this leads to more trust and cooperation in the real world or, maybe, rather erodes social capital.

[7]   Note that sociological research as such has for long ignored the socio-spatial connection. "[A full appreciation of space] remains peripheral to the sociology curriculum, reflecting its poorly specified place in sociological theory and research (..) Sociology, despite its deep stake in understanding spatiality, has been inconsistent in its efforts to analyze this component of social life, and has made little forward progress in systematically incorporating it into its central projects (..) Space and place are still struggling to find their voice in sociology" (Tickamyer 2000: 1).

capital".[8] Also in Better Together, Putnam and Feldstein mention several successful meeting places acting as hotbeds for bridging social capital. For example, in Chicago the public library has established community centers where all kinds of people join – including a café, which has become an important meeting place for local residents (Putnam et al. 2003: 42). Another example is a multicultural festival where volunteers working side by side, talk together and get to know each other (op.cit.: 80). As well as a megachurch in California where more than 45.000 congregants gather.[9]

3.2. Community lyceums

As mentioned, community planners have for long attempted to conceptualize strongly inclusive meeting places designed to foster face-to-face meetings and socio-economic welfare in a local area – be it in a city or in the countryside. In the Western world, important roots can be found in the flourishing civic societies of the 19th century. For example, Putnam mentions the establishment of a community lyceum in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1829. Its founder, Thomas Greene, formulated the purpose of such a large-scale local meeting place in the following way:

> We come from all divisions, ranks and classes of society to teach and to be taught in our turn. While we mingle together in these pursuits, we shall learn to know each other more intimately; we shall remove

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[8] New urbanism has sought to promote an "architecture of community" as an alternative to monotonous, identical suburbs, which are seen as physical barriers for social life, cooperation and mutual trust, that is, what is summed up in the term bridging social capital (cf. Katz & Scully 1993).[8] Thus, socio-spatial "master plans" have been claimed a necessity, in order to secure the sustainability of urban and rural communities – economically as well as demographically. For example, (Hall & Porterfield (2001: xxii) has described the agenda thusly: "If we take positive steps now to establish a framework, we can achieve the changes that are necessary to bring about a strong sense of community and develop a broader vision that that which is evident in parcel-by-parcel growth. By definition, growth in and of itself is good, as it usually signifies economic vitality and financial health. Where effective master plans for growth are implemented, balanced economic expansion is more apt to be realized, assuring a larger tax base from which the community as a whole benefits. Where no vision for growth exists, sprawl results".

[9] Elsewhere one reads about the American Megachurch Movement: "Recent research indicates that megachurches – particularly black megachurches – play an active political role in their local communities. They initiate or participate in a wide variety of community development activities. Black megachurches often create community development corporations (CDCs) to coordinate their community development activities (..) These community development activities may range from housing assistance, to various types of commercial development (e.g. job training and/or small business programs and support), to the provision of a variety of social services (e.g. child care, food/meal distribution, clothing centers, etc.)" (McIntosh et al. 2006: 7).

> many of the prejudices which ignorance or partial acquaintance with each other had fostered (..) In the parties and sects into which we are divided, we sometimes learn to love our brother at the expense of him whom we do not in so many respects regard as a brother (..) We may return to our homes and firesides [from the lyceum] with kindlier feelings toward one another, because we have learned to know one another better (in Putnam 2000: 23).

Hence, Greene envisioned that meetings between formerly strangers would lead to bridges between the classes and increased social cohesion in society, that is, more *bridging* social capital in a good circle.[10] In many ways, Greene's visions were reflected in the idea of 'garden cities' which, however, implied the socio-spatial design of a whole lifestyle.
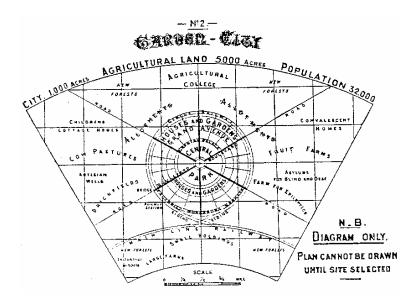
3.3. Garden cities

Ebenezer Howard conceptualized 'the garden city' at the beginning of twentieth century, an idea that was to exert a major impact on 20th century urban planning.[11] In his famous book Garden Cities of To-Morrow, Howard stated that "it is deeply to be deplored that the people should continue to stream into the already over-crowded cities, and should thus further deplete the country districts" (Howard 1902: 42).[12] This led him to the question: "What (..) can possibly be done to make the country more attractive to workaday people than the town?" (Howard 1902: 45).

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[10] See also Patulny & Svendsen 2007 for an overview of the bridging/bonding social capital literature.

[11] Also in recent years, social geographers, architects and urban planners have been inspired by such ideas. For example, building on the legacy of Ebenezer Howard the New Urbanism school in the US seeks to promote an "architecture of community" instead of urban sprawl (Katz and Scully 1994).

[12] "These crowded cities [as London] have done their work; they were the best which a society largely based on selfishness and rapacity could construct, but they are in the nature of things entirely unadapted for a society in which the social side of our nature is demanding a larger share of recognition—a society where even the very love of self leads us to insist upon a greater regard for the well-being of our fellows" (Howard 1902: 146).

Source: Reproduced from Howard 1902: 52.

Figure 1: Garden city: Complete plan.

Howard answered himself: *Social* cities mixing what he saw as the most attractive rural and urban elements, termed the town and country 'magnets' respectively:

> There are in reality not only, as is so constantly assumed, two alternatives – town life and country life – but a third alternative, in which all the advantages of the most energetic and active town life, with all the beauty and the delight of the country, may be secured in the perfect combination; and the certainty of being able to live this will be the magnet which produces the effect for which we are all striving – the spontaneous movement of the people from our crowded cities to the bosom of our kindly mother earth, at once the source of life, of happiness, of wealth, and of power" (Howard 1902: 7).

Thus, in contrast to urban misery in cities like London Howard argued that the garden cities would provide "air and space, wood and water, schools and churches, shrubberies and gardens, around pretty self contained cottages in a group neither too large to deprive it of country character, nor too small to diminish the probabilities of social intercourse" (Howard in an article in Edinburgh Magazine, Dec. 1848).

In contrast to later interpretations and developments of the garden city idea – primarily undertaken by anarchists and communists – Howard argued for a garden city population that constituted a cross-section of society but *not* a classless socialist utopia (Sarkissian 1976: 235-36). However, in contrast to a huge, unhealthy and 'unsocial' city like London, the community would be so small as to allow for 'social intercourse' across class cleavages in stimulating green 'mother nature' surroundings. Hence, small paradises of garden cities were originally designed to foster equality, social integration and mutual cooperation and trust. Many of these ideas were adapted in the Scandinavian countries during a so-called 'era of associations' during the 19th century.

3.4. The Scandinavian tradition

The Nordic countries have long traditions for establishing open meeting places, and this primarily bottom-up, by initiative of the civic society. This tradition is firmly rooted in major civic movements during the 19th century (e.g. Rothstein 2002; Rothstein & Stolle 2003; Svendsen & Svendsen 2004).

For example, in rural Denmark cooperative and high school movements during the latter part of the 19th century led to establishment of shared buildings in the single parishes. These included cooperative dairies, community assembly houses, free schools and free churches, folk high schools, agricultural schools and cooperative wholesales (Svendsen & Svendsen 2004). Not least, the community assembly houses (*forsamlingshuse*) constituted an important infrastructure for building local stocks of beneficial bridging social capital as well as human capital. Thus the historical records clearly show that these buildings facilitated the 'lubrication' of socio-economic networks, in line with the American community lyceum mentioned above.

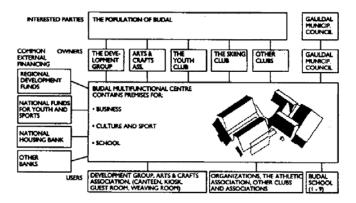## 4. Contemporary multifunctional centers

In the beginning of the 21th century, new needs for high-quality, flexible meeting places have arisen, in particular in scarcely populated rural areas. Consequently, a new, transnational 'culture house' or 'community center' movement has formed. Unlike the old common buildings dating back to the 19th and 20th centuries, many of the new meeting places are multifunctional. This simply means that each room can fulfill more than one purpose, allowing it to be used 24 hours a day in principle. For example, during day-time a room may function as a classroom and in the evening, thanks to

removable walls and practical furniture, it may be quickly transformed into a concert hall, a dancing room, a theatre, or an auditorium.

4.1. What is a multifunctional center?

The definition of a multifunctional center is not fully agreed-upon. Wylie et al. (1997: 26) refer to places which provide a range of services including "long day care, before and after school care, occasional care, mobile kindergartens, toy libraries, play groups, support groups for parents, and youth activity services for young people of secondary school age who live in socially and economically disadvantaged areas".[13]

A more broad definition is found in Buvik & Cold (1995), who describe multifunctional centers as buildings with joint location and coordinated use, however not necessarily under the same roof. These centers have "open meeting places and various service facilities", including public services such as school, kindergarten and health-care, cultural and recreational activities, businesses like banks, and activities "run by organizations, clubs, and private groups" (Buvik & Cold 1995: 89). Budal Community Center in the county of Sor-Trondelag illustrates this vision.

Source: Reproduced from Buvik & Cold 1995: 92.

Figure 2: Plan of the multifunctional centre in Budal, Sør-Trondelag county, Norway.

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[13] The literature on multifunctional community centers is scarce. However, among practitioners the idea has been known and developed for at least two decades. Thus, multifunctional centers have been established in Holland, UK, the Scandinavian countries, Australia and New Zealand (Walmsley & Weinland 1991; Buvik & Cold 1995; Wylie et al. 1997; Föbker & Grotz 2003; Lenteren 2005a; Jones 2006; Svendsen 2009).

4.2. The Dutch "kulturhus" movement

In recent years, the Dutch concept of a rural culture house (*kulturhus*) has become popular.[14] Inspiration comes from the Scandinavian countries (Lenteren 2005b: 12; Larsen 2005: 60) and the very word, *kulturhus*, is Danish. It is generally agreed upon that a *kulturhus* is flexible, without fixed walls, open for all, based on widespread cooperation and providing collective goods (e.g. Lenteren 2005b; Temmink 2005; Laan 2005). Hence, it can be seen as a facilitator for building bridging social capital in the form of strongly inclusive, inter-group networks.

Most centers include public school, library, health care services, sports and culture facilities as well as – in some cases – private enterprises as hairdressers, post offices and banks. Although economically sustainable, a Dutch *kulturhus* is a great deal more than pure business (Lenteren 2005b: 13). For example, it is based on democratic cooperation between three types of equal partners: Public employees, people from the local associational life, and private entrepreneurs. Finally, an important socio-economic purpose has been to offer job-training for unemployed people in the local area (Lenteren 2005b: 15, 17).

These 'all under one roof' buildings have been financed by a host of public and private donors, the most important of them being municipality, state, funds from various foundations, and private investors such as the Rabo Bank. Most often, school/library is the most important partner, securing economic sustainability. One strategy has been to modernize and enlarge existing buildings (e.g. schools and churches); another to build complete new houses fully equipped with all facilities for the local population (Lenteren 2005b: 16).

[14]   Thus, 22 culture houses have been established in the country's most rural region, Overijssel, in the north-eastern part of Holland. Investments exceed 90 million Euros. Still another 14 have been built in the region of Gelderland, and 21 in the Utrecht region. Most buildings have been established in the period 2004-7 (Kulturhus Nederlands 2007; Lenteren 2005b: 14).

4.3. The *kulturhus* in Giesbeek

An illustrative example of a modern Dutch culture house is the *kulturhus* of Giesbeek (2800 inhabitants) in the rural region Actherhoek.[15] At the common initiative of the local library and public school, this new, modern building has replaced the outdated, noisy public school buildings that were in function until the opening of Giesbeek Kulturhus in 2003. Now the school is situated in the middle of a *kulturhus* equipped with modern high-quality facilities in pleasant surroundings. Today, the house is shared by 6 separate partners: The school, the kindergarten, the day care center, the library, the sports association (incl. amateur theatre) and private enterprises. The school direction has the overall economic responsibility for the house.

At the initiative of the school director, significant economies of scale have been achieved. For example, large-scale purchases of lamps and chairs have saved money on the budget. Also, money has been saved by investing in a high-quality floor, which allows cleaning to be done very quickly and efficiently. And, of course, heating during the winter is now much cheaper than in the old school buildings. In sum, the building appears well-constructed, practical, flexible (e.g. equipped with many moveable walls), and suitable for multifunctional purposes. The house is made of high-quality, noise-reducing materials, the walls are painted in beautiful colors, and the building is both environmental and energy friendly. Likewise, the outside area is a paradise for children, including a playground rich on modern, high-quality playground equipment.

The school director says that gathering all activities under one roof has led to considerable savings at the school's annual year budget. Apart from cheaper heating and cleaning, the school now obtains significant incomes from hiring out rooms outside school hours. Today, the house is in use from early morning to late night. The house is beyond doubt the single, most important meeting place for the local population in the area. An important 'by-product' is mutual trust in the community generally, as well as between the various private, public and voluntary partners specifically. As the school director puts it: "To be able to cooperate, we have to trust each other".

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[15] The author saw this *kulturhus* at an excursion August 22, 2007, in connection with a conference in Wageningen arranged by the European Society for Rural Sociology (ESRS). This section is based on the two presentations this day: the first one by a *kulturhus* consultant, the second by the school director and leader of Kulturhus Giesbeek, who also showed the participants the house and explained its design. Information was supplemented by internet information as well as email communication with the consultant from Variya (Projectbureau Kulturhus), Margreet Hogenkamp, whom the author wishes to thank.

4.4. Multifunctional centers in Denmark[16]

In the following, I present two multifunctional centers in Denmark, all situated in peninsular Jutland: The Community House in Øster Lindet and Skærbæk Leisure Time Center. Both are placed in the Southern, rural part near the German border (Figure 3).
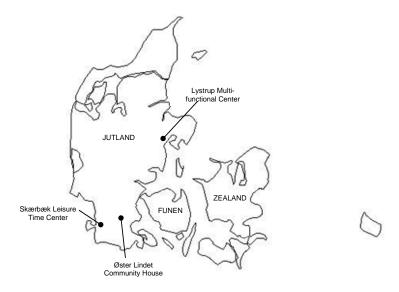

Figure 3: Map of Denmark.

4.4.1. The Community House in Øster Lindet

The house in Øster Lindet (900 inhabitants) opened March 2006. It is located in a typical Danish rural area threatened by depopulation and is an example of the close collaboration, and mutual benefits, between the local public school and voluntary partners, such as the football and gymnastics club.

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[16] This section presents some of the results from an interview survey carried out September-December 2007, and which included four Danish multifunctional community houses. The purpose was to highlight advantages and problems involved with such buildings, both in order to provide more information to local dwellers wishing to build their own house and to formulate policy recommendations to Danish politicians at all levels. The survey was based on 1-2 hour interviews with the leading persons behind the centers. Besides, in Skærbæk the author made 5 additional, 10-30 minutes interviews with 4 users of the house and 1 employee from the fitness center. In both long and short interviews, an interview-guide was used (see also Svendsen 2007, 2009 for more details).

According to one of the main initiators, Sofus Andersen, the public school and the assembly house in the village were too small to contain the many educational, sports and cultural activities. Therefore, a community house committee was established in 1997. The board represented 11 partners: The school, the kindergarten, the children's day care, the gymnastics' association, the football club, the scouts, a planned after school care center, a day folk high school, a youth club, an association for local historians, and a network of pensioners.

At a public meeting in 1998, there was some disagreement about whether the new building should be a part of the school or the football club house. However, although a more expensive solution, it was decided to make the building an extension of the school. Apart from more school rooms, citizens wanted to strengthen and safeguard the most important meeting place in the village. Andersen remembers:

> The majority found that the building should be placed beside the school, because the school is the life nerve in such a local community. That's the place where people meet.

In the following years, there were "innumerable meetings" with the municipality. From EU they received 40,000 € and from the local area another 90,000 €, including voluntary donations. Finally, the municipality decided to support the house as well.

At a meeting for local citizens in 2004, people were asked to fill out a formula, indicating which of three types of work they were able to perform: Carpentry, bricklaying or painting. About 80 people were enrolled. "Afterwards, everything went quite fast", Andersen reports. The Committee made an agreement with the architect, specifying what the volunteers should do, and which tasks should be left over to professionals. The professional craftsmen started work July 2005. Work inside the building was largely done by voluntary, local citizens, organized by a team of coordinating leaders. "Everything went on smoothly", Andersen remembers. The community house was opened March 12, 2006. Since then, half of the budget has been financed by the municipality. The other half is paid by incomes from rent and activities in the house. The house is opened each day from 8 to 22.

The school has benefited greatly from the community house, which now houses the school library and IT room, as well as all sports facilities. Consequently, several rooms within the school area have been changed into

ordinary class rooms, solving an acute need for space. Furthermore, a new after school care center has been established, using all facilities in the community house. The modern sports facilities have generally made the community house an important meeting place for children and youngsters after school and in weekends.

Photos: The author, April 2009.

Figures 4: The Community House in Øster Lindet. View from outside and inside.
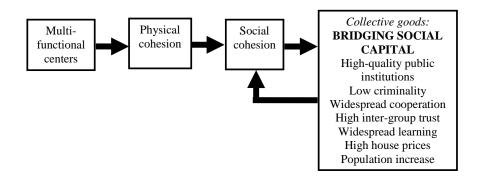

Figure 5: Multifunctional centers in the creation of bridging social capital.

Asked about problems in connection with establishing the community house, Andersen tells:

> It has been a long process – almost 10 years. There has been innumerable meetings with municipality employees (..). Several times, we were at the point of giving it all up, because the

municipality continuously rejected the project. However, we kept our good spirits.

Concerning advantages, Andersen finds that the most important thing is that all activities have been concentrated on one place – not only resulting in improved conditions for formal learning (more space to school children) but also for *in*formal learning and strongly inclusive, bridging types of networks.

Now we have a house that is open for all. All age groups are able to meet in one place. This gives people a little more energy to contribute with their ideas (..) Previously, each association tended to go its own way.

Cooperation is further strengthened by all having a clear interest in making the house economically sustainable, by providing money through new activities, fundraising, etc. According to Andersen, this has strongly contributed to create more social solidarity and reinforced cooperative norms as well as cooperative efficiency. Andersen explains:

When you live in such a small local community, there are certain obligations. We try to convince each other that it's necessary to support local initiatives, that is, for example we inform neighbors, friends and connections [about forthcoming local initiatives and events].

4.4.2. Skærbæk Leisure Time Center

The case of Skærbæk (3000 inhabitants) is instructive because it gives us an example of an architectural framework that strongly nurtures an expanding social economy. Like the community house in Øster Lindet, Skærbæk Leisure Time Center is obviously successful in providing beneficial bridging social capital, that is, formation of open and inclusive networks across group cleavages conducive to collective goods such as social trust, low criminality and widespread civic engagement.

Skærbæk Leisure Time Center was opened back in 1997, in connection with the establishment of a new swimming hall. In 2001, the building was enlarged and old and new buildings gathered under one roof. Apart from the swimming hall, the center now contains two sports halls, bowling alleys, cafeteria, a long and spacious entrance hallway, a theatre scene, a fitness

center, a room for a therapist, several meeting rooms, and a gallery for local artists including several workshops.

Photo: The author, October 2007.

Figure 6: Skærbæk Leisure Time Center on an ordinary day at noon. The janitor greets a group of child-minders, who have a room in the house.

The center has 500.000 guests every year and employs 50 persons, 25 on full time and 25 on a part time basis. The annual budget is more than 2 million €. Activities are going on 362 days a year, from 6 am to midnight. "This is really a community house", tells the manager. According to him, the house has a "perfect location" at the end of a pedestrian street surrounded by shops and shopping centers, public service institutions, a football field, tennis and petanque courts and green recreational areas partly covered with small cottages for tourists and a playground including a jumping pillow.

There are no educational institutions in the center, thus it does not house any formal education. However, being such a huge, popular and widely used meeting place it should be seen as an invaluable setting for a multitude

of daily meetings between different people from different age groups and social classes and, thusly, for informal learning and bridging social capital.

Photo: The author, April 2009.

Figure 7: Skærbæk Leisure Time Center on an ordinary day in the morning. Pensioners playing bowling and drinking coffee.

The interviews show that the center is an important meeting place in the whole area. For example, elderly citizens from Skærbæk and the many small surrounding villages always have the possibility of spending their mornings in the center – bowling together with other pensioners, drinking a cup of coffee, or just having a chat. For example, a 65 year old pensioner, who bowls 4 times a week and plays handball once a week, tells:

> It [the center] has a tremendous importance. The bowling alleys are extremely used in the mornings and afternoons, with an occupancy rate about 80 percent (..) All chat with each other. When you need somebody to talk with, you can always find people here (..) I never worry about what to do in the mornings.

Likewise, the many school kids spend their afternoons and/or evenings playing football, handball, hockey or badminton together with friends in a vacant sports hall, chatting, swimming, going to the cafeteria, or simply just drifting about inside and outside the center. For example, a 16-year old boy told that he visited the center 2-3 times a week. He and his friends were allowed to do all the sports activities they wanted, provided that there was an unoccupied sports hall. Besides, he enjoyed the social life there, as well as to "have a little exercise". His friend also came after school 2-3 times a week. He liked to play football with his friends. He said that he appreciated "the many possibilities [to engage in various activities]" and the "non-obliging socializing with friends". According to him, at lot of kids from his school liked to go to the center on afternoons, when they didn't know what else to do.

Thus we see the importance of the physical-material framework for meeting and socializing. Obviously, the physical infrastructure contributes to secure that *people meet regularly*. That is, in or outside the sports halls or the nearby, outdoor tennis and petanque courts, the football field, playground or, even more informally and non-obliging maybe, in the hallways and corridors, at the spectator seats area, in the cafeteria, and so on. Moreover, the architecture secures economies of scale, for example in relation to cleaning and efficient use of employees. Besides, the continuous expansion of, and increased investment in the center seems to be enhanced by the all-under-one-roof concept: "Where people are, more people will gather", as goes the motto of the manager. This includes many tourists from Denmark and abroad, some of whom rent the about 40 vacation huts in the area. "The location in the middle of everything is extremely important". In short, Skærbæk Leisure Time Center is in a good circle and has become a big and well-known meeting place.

Another remarkable thing in Skærbæk is a substantial social economy rooted in local networks of volunteers, mostly from the local sports associations. Thus, in a sense the center succeeds in *capitalizing* a local social capital that was present already before the center was established. Like in Øster Lindet, the corps of volunteers invests a lot of time and energy in the house. In Skærbæk, this work is organized by professionals, whose role is to plan and coordinate all activities, as well as secure that the physical surroundings and facilities are optimal. In many ways, such volunteers form the backbone of the center. "Several hundred volunteers are working for free", the manager tells.

5. Model

5.1. Social capital in the creation of human capital

One of the founding fathers of social capital research, American sociologist James Coleman (1988), has argued that, in the family, human capital presupposes social capital. If parents – however wise and resourceful they may be – have no or almost no relationship with their children, they cannot transfer knowledge to them. And there will be no learning. Hence, human capital presupposes social interaction. It presupposes time spent on cultivating social networks for socio-economic purposes. Or put more simply: It presupposes that we spend time together with our spouse and kids, our relatives, acquaintances, neighbors, friends, colleagues. Human capital presupposes social capital.

This also holds true at the meso level, say, in firms or in local communities. If people do not spend time together, they don't learn from each other. They don't cooperate. And, maybe, they don't even trust each other. This is not surprising, because to become trustworthy people first have to know you.

Truly, people *may* not want to socialize, they may think – and even correctly – that they have nothing to learn from other people in their local community. However, plenty of empirical evidence shows that socio-spatial planning *does* have an effect on their preferences. Ghettos and urban sprawl do not tend to enhance mutual trust and widespread cooperation. Neither do dull suburban middle class residential neighborhoods bereft of shared buildings, recreational areas and informal meeting places – neighborhoods where you cannot even distinguish one house from another, as Privet Drive in Little Whinging in the Harry Potter books.

5.2. The virtuous circle of the creation of bridging social capital

The cases presented above clearly point at the close relationship between physical and social cohesion – between the geographic space for social relations and the type and quantity of these relations. Further, they indicate a specific causal relationship: 'Socially' designed meeting places in the form of community centers (acting as 'town-country magnets', cf. Howard) are conducive to physical cohesion, which again tends to foster widespread networking and social cohesion within the single local community. As shown in the case studies, this leads to collective goods such as high-quality institutions including a modern, well-functioning public school, no (or few) criminal youngsters hanging out at street corners, widespread cooperation

between various professional, associational, social and age groups leading to high inter-group trust (i.e. generalized trust, cf. Rothstein & Uslaner 2005 and Uslaner 2008).

The increased number of regular face to face meetings also involves increased learning and formation of human capital within the local community and, ultimately, rising house prices and demographic sustainability. Presumably, this again may have a beneficial effect on social networking in a good circle. In contrast, lack of meeting places tends to lead to lack of regular face-to-face interaction and collective evils in a vicious circle, something which ultimately may end up in depopulation and closing down of villages. The good socio-spatial circle conducive to collective goods such as bridging social capital is illustrated in the ideal model (Figure 8).

Source: Slide from a powerpoint presentation shown at a citizens' meeting in Lystrup, May 9, 2007.

Figure 8: "The Park of Motion".

As we have seen, large inclusive meeting places providing collective goods have historically been most widespread in high-trust countries like Scandinavia and the Netherlands. It is therefore tempting to point at these countries' historical legacy of norms of democracy, equality, mutual trust and cooperation as an explanation for the fact that so many community centers are now being founded in exactly these countries.

Needless to say, history is rich of examples of physical planning leading to unintended and undesired results. Another reservation could be that the empirical examples in this paper are taken from villages. However, it might be argued that urban areas with high concentrations of immigrants may profit even more from large-scale multifunctional centers, *if* these houses are able to deliver the services people need and, in practice, can attract all groups (and not only the majority group). Again, as in the 'contact hypothesis' literature, it is necessary that researchers and practitioners discuss the *optimal conditions* for successful intergroup meetings.

As such the paper should primarily be seen as a novel, although preliminary, contribution to a social capital literature in which the spatial approach generally – and the socio-spatial planning perspective specifically – have been largely neglected. Such an approach gives us hope that public authorities in close collaboration with local citizens can actively contribute to produce the collective good of social capital across social, cultural, political, religious and ethnic lines or, more correctly, build a physical environment aimed to foster bridging social capital. This said, more research is needed in order to document to which degree multifunctional centers actually provide the collective goods of social cohesion and integration; which circumstances give the best incentives for *all* groups in a community to join in, including architecture, location and organizational design.

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Table 1. Lystrup Multi-functional Center: The four 'boxes'.

Housing	Private houses, specialty shops, wellness
Trade	A shopping center
Culture	Library, health care center, municipality service center
Sports	Handball, badminton, football, as well as the sports branches 'of the future' (according to the wishes of the local population)