

## Tilburg University

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*Published in:*  
European Journal of Homelessness

*Publication date:*  
2014

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Karsten, N. (2014). Are 'fair share' policies fair to the homeless? A critical assessment of distributive siting policies in the Netherlands. *European Journal of Homelessness*, 8(2), 15-40.  
<http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/feantsa-ejh-8-2-web.pdf>

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# Are 'Fair Share' Policies Fair to the Homeless? A Critical Assessment of Distributive Siting Policies in the Netherlands

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› **Abstract**  *Policymakers' fears of an increased concentration of marginalised and disadvantaged groups in already vulnerable urban neighbourhoods have prompted recent measures to combat the spatial concentration of human service facilities. In many cities, distributive siting policies have aimed to achieve a more equal distribution of homelessness facilities across areas. This article provides a critical assessment of the 'fair share' criteria that are in use in Dutch siting policies. It brings to the surface the normative and political nature of these criteria that often remains implicit in such policies. The research shows that policy is dominated by discourse focusing on the potentially negative effects these facilities may have on surrounding neighbourhoods in terms of safety and security. As a consequence, the perspective of homeless people is in danger of being overlooked by policymakers, risking a reduced accessibility to service facilities. This article develops an analytical framework that can be used to study fair share siting policies, and provides policymakers with guidelines for assessing where services should be located.*

› **Keywords**  *Fair share, urban planning, service facility siting, social mix, NIMBY, homeless shelters*

## Introduction: Spatial Concentration of Homelessness Facilities<sup>1</sup>

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Studies show that service facilities for homeless and other marginalised and disadvantaged people are often established in deprived urban neighbourhoods (Gaber, 1996; Wolch, 1996; Takahashi and Dear, 1997; Lobao and Murray, 2005). The reasons are threefold. First, the clients of such facilities tend to be already over-represented in such areas. Second, there are a greater number of cheaper properties available in deprived areas, which makes them financially viable for care agencies. Third, opposition to these types of facilities tends to be weaker in deprived areas, and policymakers tend to follow plans that will result in weak resistance (Wolch, 1996; Takahashi and Gaber, 1998; DeVerteuil, 2006; Culhane, 2010). As a consequence, human service facilities become spatially concentrated.

There is a fear among both scholars and policymakers that such concentrations have negative implications for the quality of life in already socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and this has inspired policymakers to “address the problematic concentration of homelessness facilities” (Culhane, 2010, p.853). It is argued that the spatial concentration of marginalised and disadvantaged people fosters processes of social exclusion and reduces social cohesion (Holt-Jensen, 2000). Consequently, the disadvantages for those who are already economically marginalised are believed to become compounded (see Busch-Geertsema, 2007). Also, it is believed that high concentrations may negatively affect the balance of social mix in neighbourhoods, which may result in further deterioration in the quality of life (see Lee and Price-Spratlen, 2004; Busch-Geertsema, 2007). There is a view that social diversity fosters individuals’ capacities to be self-sustaining and also maintains the vitality of a local community in the longer term (Arthurson, 2012). The fear, therefore, is that spatial concentration of homelessness facilities might lead to a situation in which vulnerable neighbourhoods reach their limits in terms of the number of disadvantaged groups they can accommodate, leading to the unsustainability of these areas.

Several local governments in the Netherlands have expressed such fears in recent years. Their cities have witnessed the emergence of ‘unbalanced’ and ‘unequal’ distributions of human service facilities that are seen to negatively affect, both socially and economically, more vulnerable neighbourhoods (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2003; dS+V Rotterdam, 2006; Municipality of Amsterdam, 2006; Municipality of Enschede, 2009). For example, the municipality of Rotterdam, the Netherlands’ second largest city with 610 000 inhabitants, has stated that some of

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for the constructive comments on an earlier version of this article, which is a revised and updated version of the 2010 article (in Dutch): Karsten, N. (2010) Eerlijk zullen we alles delen, jij een beetje meer dan ik, *Ruimte & Maatschappij* 2(2) pp.23-43.

its urban neighbourhoods have reached or even crossed the limits of their 'absorption capacity' for socially and economically underprivileged people and cannot be expected to house additional service facilities (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2003; 2009). Similarly, a number of other Dutch municipalities have expressed the need to ensure that human service facilities will not harm the urban carrying capacity (e.g., Drechtsteden, 2007a; Municipality of Enschede, 2009; see also Evans and Foord, 2007).

In response to this challenge, local governments have developed distributive siting policies for homelessness facilities. These include residential as well as support services for people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. Crucially, the definition of what constitutes a human service facility is subject to controversy, and this lies at the heart of this paper. The relevance of distributive siting policies increased in 2003 when it was established that the Netherlands was suffering from a shortage of housing for homeless people. An interdepartmental working group, published a report, 'Social Relief is Clogging Up', which concluded that there was a shortage of appropriate accommodation, and that this affected access to care and support (House of Representatives, 2007-2008, 29 325, no.25). Similar findings emerged from a series of annual reports monitoring social relief published between 2000 and 2005 by the influential Trimbos Institute, the National Institute of Mental Health and Addiction.

In light of these reports, the Dutch Cabinet aimed to expand housing provision for homeless people (House of Representatives, 2003-2004, 29 325, no.1; see also House of Representatives, 2007-2008, 31 200 Ch. XVIII, no.2). On 7 February 2006, this plan eventually materialised when the four largest municipalities of the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht: the G4), together with the relevant ministry, agreed to provide "an extra impetus for tackling the problem of homelessness" (Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport, and G4, 2006, p.5). Their aligned vision was "to improve the living conditions of people who are homeless (or in danger of becoming homeless) and, in doing so, to substantially reduce the disruption and criminality that is often associated with their behaviour" (2006, p.5). The plan was soon ambitiously expanded to include 39 smaller cities (see Hermans, 2012).

Although the exact implications in terms of the number of required facilities had not yet been determined in 2006, it was already clear that the policy's ambitions would mean that a substantial number of new facilities would have to be created by 2010. The city of Rotterdam alone required 19 new facilities for its estimated 1 740 homeless people. The number of facilities required raised concerns about the spatial concentration of these services and the effects this would have on the quality of life for all. This triggered local policymakers to develop a distribution plan

with regards to setting up facilities among the city's 13 decentralised district governments (dS+V Rotterdam, 2006). This was based on the concern that the large number of facilities, the combination of different types of facilities and the spatial concentration of those facilities would negatively affect the quality of life in some urban neighbourhoods (dS+V Rotterdam, 2006; 2007). In response to similar worries and following the Rotterdam example, many Dutch cities started to develop similar policies for the distribution of homelessness facilities that aimed to spread newly-established facilities across urban areas (Van Bergen and Van Deth, 2008).

## **Towards Fair Share Policies**

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There are a number of euphemistic labels that are used to indicate the relative overrepresentation of homelessness facilities in certain areas. Some policy documents discuss the 'unbalanced' distribution or 'unequal distribution' of facilities (Drechtsteden, 2007c). Similar terms include 'unfair', 'uneven' and 'unjust'. Others speak of a 'disproportionate' or 'undesirable' concentration of facilities (House of Representatives, 1997-1998, 25 682; Municipality of Amsterdam, 2006; Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2006; Municipality of Rotterdam, 2008; Municipality of Enschede, 2009). These are similar to the labels used to describe the principal aims of the siting policies. Many policy documents discuss aims of fostering a 'dispersal of facilities' (Municipality of Zwolle, 2014; see also DeVerteuil, 2006) or of a 'dilution' thereof (Florijn, 2011), where others champion a 'de-concentration of facilities' (see also Biesma *et al.*, 2012; Vanderstraeten, 2004). Others aim for a 'good' distribution (House of Representatives, 2005-2006, 29 325, nr.8; Municipality of Enschede, 2009; Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport, and G4, 2011) or a 'better' distribution of services (Court of Audit Municipality of Leeuwarden, 2013; Van den Handel, 2013). Yet throughout other policy documents, more normative substantive terms are used, such as 'balanced' (Drechtsteden, 2007b), 'proportional' (Van Bergen and Van Deth, 2008), 'equal' or 'fair' (Karsten, 2012). Despite differences in language, these siting policies share a central aim of dispersing homelessness facilities combined with an appeal to a normative principle of distribution. In social geography, such siting policies are commonly known as 'fair share approaches' (Rose, 1993; Valletta, 1993; Weisberg, 1993; Gaber, 1996; Lejano and Davos, 2002). The basic rationale behind such strategies is that 'everyone gets their share' (see also Drechtsteden, 2007c).

The reasoning behind fair share siting policies is made up of four strands, which are often interwoven by policymakers. First, fair share policies are driven by the desire to sustain a viable social mix in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, as discussed above (e.g., Municipality of Maastricht, 2008). Second, some policymakers intrinsically value the fair distribution of facilities across their municipalities, believing that it

is unjust to distribute facilities unequally (see Karsten, 2013). Third, it is believed that an uneven distribution of human service facilities may present critical problems in terms of access to services (Wolch, 1996). Fourth, policymakers expect fair share policies to reduce the amount of social and political opposition to the planned allocation of service facilities sites (e.g., dS+V Rotterdam, 2006). It is believed that fair share policies increase local acceptance of controversial facilities among neighbourhood residents by calling on citizens' willingness to tolerate a facility when others are also doing their part (see Municipality of Groningen, 2003; Municipality of Utrecht, 2005; Van Bergen and Van Deth, 2008). Indeed, it has been demonstrated that citizens do find the fair share argument appealing (Karsten, 2013).

### **The Fairness of Sharing**

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One characteristic of fair share siting policies is the recognition that location decisions are essentially political and non-rational in the sense that such decisions necessarily imply normative considerations (Holton *et al.*, 1973; Dear, 1974). As Rose (1993, p.99) put it: “[Location] decisions necessarily rest on subjective and political evaluations of competing values that cannot be satisfactorily resolved by rules, no matter how subtly drafted”. In practice, ‘fair distribution’ functions as a normative principle that guides location decisions.

However, a problem with fair share policies is that, often, they do not recognise that the concept of fairness itself is essentially subjective. Policymakers sometimes speak of an “objective distribution” (House of Representatives, 1997-1998, 25 682), or of “truly and wholly objectified” or even “objectively fair” distributions of facilities (Karsten, 2010, p.39). Similarly, Wolch (1996, pp.651, 665) speaks of “basic fair-share planning principles” without providing any further discussion. Such claims fail to recognise that there is no objective standard of fairness. Stone (2002) shows that many contrasting distributions are possible, all of which could be regarded as ‘fair’ in the sense that they satisfy the basic principle of giving everyone their share. For individual members of a group, the implications of different fair share criteria are substantial. Depending on what criteria are used, group members risk getting everything, nothing or any conceivable share in between. This is why Rose (1993, p.99) notes with regard to the fair distribution of human service facilities: “Although everyone might agree that fairness is a goal worth striving for, views of how to define the term differ widely.”

Current Dutch fair share policies mirror the diversity of conceptualisations of a ‘fair distribution’ of human service facilities, even though they all adhere to the same basic principle that ‘everyone should get their share’. In practice, fairness means something very different in the Rotterdam policy than it does in the Enschede and

Hilversum policies. These differences, however, remain largely implicit. The current article provides a qualitative content analysis (Robson, 2002) of selected policy documents that shows the diversity in measures of fairness. The remainder of this article focuses on policies developed between 2003 and 2009 in the run-up to, or under, the action plan. Here, there is a particular emphasis on cities with over 100 000 inhabitants, since these have developed more formal municipal-level distributive siting policies. The aim of this article is not to provide a complete overview of all the siting policies that have been developed, but to consider the range of variations within policies. This selection technique is known as the diverse case technique (Gerring, 2007). The analysis is limited to policy documents that outline the criteria underpinning siting policies and government evaluations thereof.

Since fair share policies are common throughout Europe and indeed elsewhere (e.g., Vanderstraeten, 2004), the results have wider implications for policymaking. Although policy documents from outside the Netherlands were not analysed, the analytical framework employed is applicable elsewhere. The analysis also draws on experiences with fair share policies in other countries.

## A Critical Analysis of Current Dutch Fair Share Policies

A point of departure for all fair share policies is that each of the participating actors is entitled to its 'due share' of 'something'. Fair share policies are essentially a matter of distributive justice. The fact that homelessness facilities are more often perceived as a cost than as a benefit does not change the underlying question of what constitutes a socially just allocation of goods and facilities for homeless people. In the following sections, a basic analytical framework is used to explore fair share policies by bringing to light the distributive norms that underlie each of the policies. As such, the remainder of this article analyses six characteristics of Dutch siting policies, clustered around three fundamental questions: 'Who shares?', 'What is being shared?' and 'What makes a 'fair' share?' The analysis elaborates on the variety of answers to these questions that can be found in siting policies. For each siting policy that is analysed, the sections below identify the entities among which the facilities are shared, the entities that are exempted, the shared objects, the unit of analysis, the basic measure for fairness that is employed and possible additional criteria that are in use. Table 1 depicts the analytical framework.

**Table 1. An analytical framework for siting policies**

| Who shares?                   |                          | What is being shared? |                         | What makes a fair share? |                            |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Participating entities</i> | <i>Exempted entities</i> | <i>Shared object</i>  | <i>Unit of analysis</i> | <i>Basic measure</i>     | <i>Additional criteria</i> |

### ***Who shares? Participating entities and exempted entities***

The first question the fair share policies have to deal with is among which entities are the facilities to be shared. Since fair share policies address issues of spatial planning, this initial question is mainly a geographical one: which areas are eligible for a facility?<sup>2</sup> As such, the choice of geographical level is crucial (see also Busch-Geertsema, 2007). Siting policies can be applied on the national, regional, municipal or even sub-municipal level. The current article focuses on the municipal level, as this is the level where siting policies were to be developed under the 2006-2009 action plan. The policies identified display considerable variability.

A common approach for Dutch cities is to distribute facilities among existing political-administrative entities. The two largest cities in the Netherlands – Amsterdam and Rotterdam – have used their now disbanded decentralised district government areas [*stadsdelen* and *deelgemeenten*, respectively] as a basis for sharing out newly-established facilities (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2006; Municipality of Rotterdam, 2006). In both cities, it was agreed that each of these entities would have to accommodate its fair share of homelessness facilities.

Other Dutch cities lacked such formalised sub-municipal authorities but often used somewhat similar semi-institutionalised administrative areas that are seen as ‘natural’ social-geographical entities; this has been the usual approach of the Dutch government for some time. The municipality of Utrecht, for example, distributed facilities amongst its districts [*wijken*], each of which was expected to house a facility (Municipality of Utrecht, 2005). Likewise, the municipality of Enschede used its neighbourhoods [*buurten*], which are one level below districts, to distribute facilities. The municipality of Rotterdam has also recently switched to neighbourhoods (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2012b). The municipality of Amsterdam, in its more recent policies, has used existing distinctions between postcode areas in its siting strategy (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2013; see also DeVerteuil, 2006). The approach of the municipality of ‘s-Hertogenbosch differed markedly in the sense that it did not use existing entities for sharing out facilities, but instead defined five new ‘search areas’ in its siting policy that did not match any existing divisions (Municipality of ‘s-Hertogenbosch, 2009; 2010).

The demarcation of the boundaries of geographical entities is relevant since it can significantly affect location decisions. Facilities that are geographically close may fall into different administrative entities, resulting in existing pressure appearing less problematic than it actually is. This, in turn, may influence what counts as an area’s fair share of new facilities. This situation occurred in the area around the ‘s-Graven-

<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that, in some cases, facilities are not distributed among entities and entities are not defined. In such cases, the proximity to other existing or proposed facilities may guide location decisions, see for example (see, e.g., Lobao et al., 2005).



dijkwal in Rotterdam, a road that divides two districts. Both districts initially considered siting their facilities on the 's-Gravendijkwal, which would have resulted in an undesirable concentration of facilities (see also dS+V Rotterdam, 2007). A similar problem occurred around the borders of a number of neighbourhoods in Enschede, where the sharing out of facilities between neighbourhoods did not necessarily prevent the concentration of facilities (Municipality of Enschede, 2009).

In addition to the demarcation of borders, scale is also important, both in terms of absolute geographical scale and in terms of the number of inhabitants. The Rotterdam districts, for example, have on average more than 45 000 inhabitants, whereas the Enschede neighbourhoods have no more than a couple of thousand inhabitants. This significantly affects the number of available locations within a designated area. More importantly, when larger territories are used, they often contain very different areas that are diverse in terms of their social mix or population density, and so there is still a risk of concentration, which can negatively affect the absorption capacity of particular areas (Rose, 1993; Wolch, 1996). Such a scenario became apparent in the Rotterdam district of Kralingen-Crooswijk where, in the opinion of local political executives, the western part of the district was in danger of becoming disproportionately burdened, even though policymakers accepted that the district as a whole would have to accommodate its share of the facilities (Karsten, 2013).

In spatial distribution formulas, scale is thus a crucial factor, even though it is difficult to determine the optimum scale for siting policies (Busch-Geertsema, 2007). In effect, every societal problem has its own scale, and this is dependent to an extent on context (Dahl and Tufte, 1973). What is clear is that existing political-administrative entities often fail to coincide with the areas in which concentrations of human service facilities occur, making them less than ideal as a basis for distributing facilities when de-concentration is the principal aim.

A second question that is important to consider in relation to the 'who shares' question is whether or not certain areas should be exempted from having to house new facilities. In the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, for example, it was decided that the city centre was not eligible for new facilities because it already had a high concentration of human services (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009). Similarly, the municipality of Enschede (2009) excluded four neighbourhoods where "the traffic light had turned red". In the experience of local political executives, it would not have been fair to oblige these areas to house additional facilities. In contrast, executives in Maastricht announced that none of its neighbourhoods would be excluded from their distribution policy in advance. Policymakers in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht took this approach one step further by explicitly announcing that every designated area would have to house a minimum of one

new facility (e.g., Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2006). There were both ideological and politically-strategic aspects to such decisions. For some policy-makers, it was a normative implication of the adage 'everyone gets their due share', where others saw that it would be easier for politicians to 'sell' a facility when everywhere else was also participating (Karsten, 2013).

The question as to whether certain areas are to be exempted from having to house new facilities is important in the sense that if the spatial concentration of facilities is the guiding principle, some areas could be eligible for an exemption. Without exemptions, 'fair' siting policies may lead to an increased concentration, and hence a reduced de-concentration, of facilities, while at the same time making it more likely that facilities will be established because the policy has a better approval rating. Such implications of fair share policies provide a clear illustration of the need for political evaluations of competing needs and values in relation to the decision-making process on locations.

### ***What is being shared? The shared object and the unit of analysis***

A second point of departure for all fair share policies is the principle of 'sharing'. The question of what is to be shared becomes, therefore, particularly acute. The answer is not as straightforward as it would seem. The first issue is the facilities that should be included in the fair share policy and the facilities to be left out. The question of what constitutes a human service facility often gives rise to a lively debate (see, for example, Kuppens *et al.*, 2013); for example, does the term cover assisted living centres for former addicts as well as facilities that provide actual care to addicts? In the Netherlands, there is a general consensus in relation to the understanding of what human services are included in distributive siting policies because most cities use the same policy framework (at least in relation to the action plan). Although there is still some room for interpretation, the siting policies that have been developed generally apply to social relief for well-defined 'target groups' and cover both residential as well as support facilities for people who are homeless, or in danger of becoming homeless. These groups also include addicts as well as people with psychiatric illnesses (see Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport, and G4, 2006). However, even when there is a common understanding of which types of facilities qualify for the fair share policy, the question of what is being shared remains open to interpretation. Two questions are involved, namely: what objects are being shared and what is the unit of analysis? Since these two questions are closely interrelated, specific siting policies, rather than the more abstract questions, are discussed below for purposes of clarity.

The municipality of Rotterdam decided to distribute facilities in absolute numbers. Since it needed 19 new facilities, the proverbial pie was divided into 19 equal slices, each of which referred to a location. The numerical aspect was thus put first. The

search for locations commenced before it was determined what type of facility and what type of clients the district had to accommodate. The goal was to maximise flexibility in the siting policy (dS+V Rotterdam, 2006; see also Weisberg, 1993). The municipality of Tilburg adopted a different approach when it developed a dot density map of human service facilities in its territory, which was used to justify concrete location decisions. The map contained not only the locations of existing facilities, as a Rotterdam map would have, but also indicated their size in terms of their relative capacity. However, this map was not used to calculate the relative load that each neighbourhood carried.

**Figure 1. Dot density map of human service facilities: Tilburg**

Source: Municipality of Tilburg, 2008, p.5



The municipality of Enschede (2009) incorporated similar measurements in its fair share policy by not using the number of facilities in its calculations, but rather the size of the facilities in terms of beds or clients. Other than Tilburg, though, Enschede assigned facilities to particular neighbourhoods and used the relative load carried by each of the neighbourhoods as a criterion in its siting policy.

**Figure 2. Capacity of human service facilities in the Stadsdeel Noord district of Enschede**



Source: Municipality of Enschede, 2009, p.40; numbers refer to different neighbourhoods

The choice for any of these models can have a significant impact on location decisions because, depending on what measurement is used, the relative distribution of facilities among areas can differ significantly. An arbitrary but not atypical example is the Enschede neighbourhood of Lasonder 't Zeggelt which, in 2009, accommodated only 20 percent of the district's facilities but accounted for almost 60 percent of the district's capacity for social relief. Such differences are largely due to the fact that a single facility can house between one and a couple of hundred clients and the fact that facilities for individuals, other than in Enschede, are often excluded from calculations. Thus, the calculation method used can determine eligibility for new facilities.

In addition to the absolute number of facilities or their capacities, there are also questions surrounding what is being shared. The municipality of Hilversum (2010) has explicitly stated its intention to achieve a more equal dispersal of facilities that have 'detrimental effects on their surroundings' [*overlastgevende functies*] across the city, effectively meaning that this government body was distributing what could be considered inconveniences to the mainstream population. The Delfshaven district government (2007) in Rotterdam developed a similar but more fine-grained approach, which focused on the risks and opportunities of different types of facilities, through which emerged an inventory. The district government argued that self-supporting units for drug addicts involved more risk than supervised day centres for similar clients. By juxtaposing the risks associated with different types of facilities and the government's abilities to control them, it developed a 'colour image' reflecting its risk assessment of each type of facility, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Colour image of the risks of different types of human service facilities**

|   | VDB | ZAB | ZB+ | IBW | BKW | SPN |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Drug addicts                            |     |     |     | N/A |     |     |
| Other addicts                           |     |     |     | N/A |     |     |
| Victims of domestic violence            |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Psychiatric patients                    |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Teen mothers                            | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |     |     |
| Youth                                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Persons with an intellectual disability |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Children                                |     | N/A | N/A | N/A |     |     |
| Asylum seekers                          | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |     |     |
| Ex-convicts                             | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |     |     |

Source: Delfshaven district government, 2007, p.10; top row contains different types of facilities, abbreviated in Dutch

The district government subsequently used the risk assessments to analyse the concentration of human service facilities in different parts of its locality, on the basis of which it assessed the eligibility of various areas for new facilities (Delfshaven District Government, 2007). In contrast to some of the other siting policies discussed, this strategy incorporates the type of facility in its initial assessment of the eligibility of areas and the suitability of particular locations. It maintains that different types of facilities have varying effects on the quality of life in a neighbourhood, and that a numerical measure of fairness – in terms of the number of facilities or in terms of the number of beds – is therefore inadequate. Such considerations are largely absent from the other policy documents included in this review, which overlook the types of facilities in determining what a fair share is.

### **A missing perspective?**

Whereas the Tilburg and Enschede siting policies respectively distribute facilities and people, the Hilversum and Delfshaven policies distribute inconveniences and risks (see also Lejano and Davos, 2002). All of these are legitimate answers to the question of what is being shared in fair share policies, but they have important implications for what is seen as fair distribution and for where new facilities are to be located. What becomes apparent when we analyse the background to these answers is that the perspective of neighbourhood residents dominates. Although access to services for clients is often mentioned as one of the reasons for adopting a distributive siting policy (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2006; Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2006; Prins Alexander District Government, 2007; Municipality of Maastricht, 2008), this is not translated into criteria that determine how facilities are to be distributed. What is not distributed in these fair share policies is access to care. In the discourse on fair share siting policies, each facility or bed represents a unit of inconvenience, or a share of burden, rather than a unit of access to care for homeless people. Thus, the implications of fair share policies for client access

remain unclear, largely because this issue is rarely discussed openly in policy documents. In individual location decision processes, this issue is sometimes brought to the fore (as in the Schijnpoortweg and Zichtenburglaan cases reported in Karsten, 2013), but it is not integrated into siting policies in the Netherlands.

This situation prompts concerns, because distributive siting policies regularly have negative consequences for the clientele of such facilities (Busch-Geertsema, 2007). Studies have shown that while the geographical positioning of service facilities can improve client access, it can also decrease access and consequently worsen the problem of homelessness (Lobao and Murray, 2005; Bosch Meda, 2009). Although the fair distribution of facilities across cities may be preferable from the perspective of neighbourhood residents, it is not necessarily preferable from the perspective of the facilities' clients (see also De Kam, 2003). Since the effects of Dutch siting policies on client access have not been systematically reviewed, this is a concern. In their attempts to improve the living conditions of people who are homeless, Dutch municipalities have associated sites of homelessness service provision with a potential threat to the quality of life of others. As such, rather than distributing the positive good of access to care, policymakers are distributing the negative good of disorder (see also Farrell, 2005).

A potential explanation for this particular framing of the siting issue is the increasing importance of public security in popular discourse. With this, social issues are increasingly being perceived as matters of security (Wood and Shearing, 2007). As a consequence, the aim of accommodating homeless people becomes one of resolving security issues (Van den Handel, 2010), which pushes the care aspect of these policies into the background (Geldof, 2006). Even though human service facilities rarely cause persistent security problems, the common framing is aligned with citizens' perceptions of homelessness (Farrell, 2005; Schively, 2007; Van den Maagdenberg *et al.*, 2008; see also Van den Handel, 2010). Reframing the issue to being more a question of what is the best overall solution, both for the homeless and for neighbourhood residents, could result in a very different answer to the question of what is to be distributed in fair share policies and, consequently, could considerably affect what everyone's fair share of facilities is thought to be.

### ***What makes a 'fair' share? Measures of fairness***

The third question that fair share policies have to tackle is: what is everyone's 'fair' share? Rose (1993, p.98) duly notes that "the desire to achieve a greater degree of 'fairness' in locating various city facilities is more easily articulated as a political aspiration than codified as a set of regulations governing the placement of facilities as diverse as libraries and sewage treatment plants". What is fair, and which siting criteria contribute to arriving at a fairer distribution of facilities, are political-normative questions *par excellence*. From this perspective, it is somewhat surprising how rare

political debate on fair share criteria is, as Rose (1993) observed in the case of New York City. Current Dutch debates similarly lack discussions about what actually counts as a fair share. Locational conflicts over facilities for homeless people in the Netherlands tend to focus on the reasonableness of the siting of concrete facilities, rather than on the choice between alternative locations. Policymakers tend to frame siting decisions as technical and non-political in an attempt to avoid public debate on the exact location. In other words, the defence of controversial location decisions in the Netherlands often rests on technical and situational grounds rather than on political-ideological arguments (Karsten, 2013). This reduces the possibility of disagreement and the issue is thus effectively depoliticised.

This strategy mirrors Amy's (1984, p.584) observation that "[politicians] often find it safest to justify controversial decisions on technical grounds (...), and thus conveniently avoid the riskier and trickier task of justifying those choices on moral or political grounds." This approach resonates with one of the core aspects of consensus democracy, namely the depoliticisation of issues (Lijphart, 1968). In their explanations and justifications of siting decisions, political executives downplay the political and non-rational nature of location decisions. This neutralises the potential for political dispute to the extent that neighbourhood residents believe that technical and situational justifications provide reasonable explanations for location decisions. This finding contrasts with McGraw *et al.*'s (1993, p.290) finding that "principled justifications – appeals to normative principles to support the claim that a controversial policy decision was the right thing to do – have consistently emerged among the most effective accounts, resulting in higher levels of satisfaction and more positive evaluations of the official than other types of explanations."

Nevertheless, to the extent that it is debated, the level of apparent agreement between policymakers and citizens as to what constitutes a fair share is substantial. While distributive siting policies differ considerably in what is used as the numerator in mathematical calculations of a fair share (facilities, beds or risks), almost all calculations use the absolute number of inhabitants of an area as the denominator. An area's fair share is commonly calculated by dividing the number of units that are needed by the number of inhabitants of that area. Fairness is thus defined in terms of an equal share per person (e.g., Municipality of Enschede, 2009; Municipality of Rotterdam, 2012b). The reasons for this method are twofold. First, population density is commonly used as a standard in determining the pressure that is put on the quality of life in a particular area (Holt-Jensen, 2000; see also Arthurson, 2012). Second, and perhaps more importantly, this particular measure of fairness enjoys the firm support of citizens (Karsten, 2013), as it is generally perceived, at least in the Netherlands, as a reasonable standard for calculating fair shares. This measure is of course not 'objectively fair'; it, too, rests on a decision that is essentially political. Some policymakers, for example, will raise the question of whether the

distributive standard they use to determine fairness in siting policies should incorporate the fact that cheaper real estate properties are available in some areas. A concentration of facilities in such areas would therefore free up additional means (e.g., Municipality of Hilversum, 2010).

Even if this is not seen as a question of fairness in terms of carrying capacity, it certainly raises the question of how the normative value of fairness should be understood, i.e. how considerations of fairness should incorporate or be balanced against considerations of efficiency, as there is fairness, too, in ensuring that the way in which goods are divided maximises the benefits to those who need them most. Even if one sticks to fairness in terms of carrying capacity, policymakers will still have to balance this against competing values, such as the value of access to care mentioned earlier. In determining the carrying capacity, a major criterion in fair share policies, some policymakers have argued that it would be better to use the quality of life in an area or its absorption capacity as the main measure of fairness rather than the number of people who are faced with the burden (see Busch-Geertsema, 2007). This understanding of a fair share could increase the effectiveness of siting policies in terms of maintaining the sustainability of disadvantaged areas.

## Rotterdam's Updated Approach

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The siting policy that the municipality of Rotterdam has developed over recent years, in conjunction with care agencies, housing associations and others, is one of the more finely-tuned attempts to deal with the various possible standards of fairness. Already in 2006, the local government was using five different measures in its calculation of fairness (Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2006). First, a minimum of one facility was to be situated in each district. The remaining facilities were to be distributed on the basis of a measure of fairness that used the number of inhabitants as its main criterion. Shares, however, were adjusted on the basis of the number of facilities a district already housed. Further, two corrections were made based on the quality of life in the district in terms of safety and security and on an area's previous obligations to house facilities.

In the current siting policy, three criteria remain, but the calculation has dramatically changed. The minimum of one facility per district has been abandoned and facilities are now distributed among neighbourhoods. Further, in the calculations, the number of facilities has been replaced by the capacity of facilities. The correction for previous siting obligations has also been abandoned. In the current policy, shares are still calculated on the basis of the number of inhabitants but the basic figure this produces is then corrected for quality of life, using both the Rotterdam Safety Index<sup>3</sup> and the

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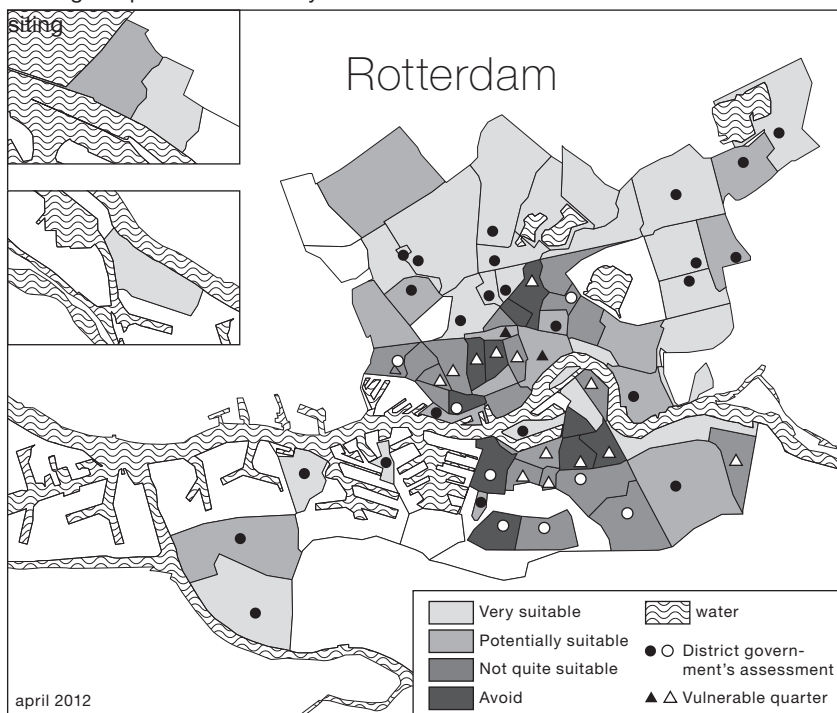
<sup>3</sup> <http://www.rotterdam.nl/veiligheidsindex2014>



Rotterdam Social Index<sup>4</sup> (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2012b). This produces a colour scheme (Figure 3) that indicates the eligibility of neighbourhoods for additional facilities, which is then supplemented with additional (contra-)indicators.

**Figure 3. Eligibility of Rotterdam neighbourhoods for additional human service facilities**

Zoning map service facility



Source: Municipality of Rotterdam, 2012a; colours reflect the eligibility of neighbourhoods for additional human service facilities, ranging from 'very suitable' (light grey) to 'avoid' (dark grey). The circles indicate district governments' additional assessments of the eligibility of particular areas. The triangles indicate vulnerable areas that have been the focus of local policies.

Between 2006 and 2012, the meaning of what constitutes a fair share of homelessness facilities thus changed substantially in Rotterdam. This has also substantially influenced the eligibility of different parts of the city for new facilities (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2012a). Unfortunately, the effects of this change on the quality of life in different areas have not been systematically evaluated to determine whether the desired outcomes have been achieved (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cos.nl/sigt/>

## Discussion

Table 3 summarises the main characteristics of Dutch distributive siting policies for homelessness facilities that have been discussed in this article. Although all of these policies adhere to the same normative principle that everyone should get their fair share, they show considerable diversity in the meaning ascribed to the concept of fairness.

**Table 3. Characteristics of Dutch siting policies for facilities for the homeless**

| Siting policy                     | Who shares?             |                                  | What is being shared? |                  | What makes a fair share?                                |  |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---|--|
|                                   | Participating entities  | Exempted entities                | Shared object         | Unit of analysis | Basic measure   | Additional criteria  |
| <i>'s-Hertogenbosch - 2009</i>    | Designated search areas | City centre and vulnerable areas | Detrimental effects   | Facilities       | One per area  | -  |
| <i>Amsterdam - 2006</i>           | District governments    | None                             | Detrimental effects   | Facilities       | One per area  | -  |
| <i>Delfshaven district - 2007</i> | Districts               | A number of neighbourhoods       | Detrimental effects   | Risks            | Facilities per inhabitant                               | Existing burden  |
| <i>Enschede - 2009</i>            | Neighbourhoods          | A number of neighbourhoods       | Detrimental effects   | Capacity         | Capacity per inhabitant                                 | Existing burden  |
| <i>Rotterdam - 2006</i>           | District governments    | None                             | Detrimental effects   | Facilities       | Minimum of one per area, then facilities per inhabitant | Existing burden, safety and security, previous obligations |
| <i>Rotterdam - 2012</i>           | Neighbourhoods          | None                             | Detrimental effects   | Capacity         | Capacity per inhabitant                                 | Quality of life  |
| <i>Utrecht - 2005</i>             | Districts               | None                             | Detrimental effects   | Facilities       | One per area  | -  |

Dutch social relief policies have produced mixed results in terms of their main goal of improving the living conditions of people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless and, in doing so, to substantially reduce any perceived public disruption and criminality that is often associated with their behaviour (Van Bergen and Van Deth, 2008; Federation of Shelters, 2009; Hermans, 2012; Van Leerdam, 2013). Unfortunately, the outcomes of these fair share policies in terms of the quality of life in Dutch cities have not yet been systematically analysed. One of the problems is that although 'distribution' or 'dispersal' are often mentioned in policy documents, their impact on actual location decisions often remain unclear, since the final decisions often come down to individual decision-makers 'weighing up' the suitability of locations (Karsten, 2013). Consequently, it is not always possible to determine whether the ambition to distribute facilities across a city has played a role in actual

location decisions (see, e.g., The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008). What is beyond doubt is that the policies that have been implemented have decreased the concentration of facilities, or at least have helped to avoid further concentration. It is, however, much less clear whether these policies have resulted in fairer distributions, as intended, since the measures of fairness used often remain implicit.

The analysis presented above demonstrates that the question 'What is a fair share?' has at least three distinct sub-questions: 'Who shares?', 'What is being shared?' and 'What makes a share 'fair'?' A content analysis has shown that the answers emerging from various policies and municipalities differ substantially and that this has important implications for what is believed to be fair distribution and for where new facilities are to be located.

If we accept that location decisions are essentially political, the Dutch situation, as well as those elsewhere, seems to lack a debate on these issues. While fair share criteria "can be disputed endlessly without yielding a generally accepted standard" and "may provoke more conflict than [they solve]" (Rose, 1993, p.99), the political-normative character of siting policies remains largely implicit. It seems that the lack of debate can be explained by decision-makers' strategies to depoliticise location decisions and by the fact that the measure of fairness that they have implicitly adopted, namely the number of facilities or beds per inhabitant of an area, enjoys the general support of the population. The approach adopted by policymakers fits well with the discourse among neighbourhood residents, since it is congruent with their wishes and demands and/or value patterns (see Lees, 2004). While the concept of distribution among inhabitants is in itself embraced by citizens, location choices are not readily accepted without supported justifications (cf. Culhane, 2010, p.853).

One of the dangers of this discourse is its focus on safety risks and the potential for disorder commonly associated with homelessness, which has come to dominate distributive siting policy decisions. In fair share policies, the perspectives of neighbourhood residents tend to overshadow the perspectives of homeless people, which goes against the idea that "any effort to address homelessness effectively must consider the perspectives of people who are homeless in the design of various solutions" (Culhane, 2010, p.855). Current siting policies distribute the detrimental effects for the surrounding neighbourhood of homelessness facilities as opposed to distributing access to care for the facilities' clientele (see also Geldof, 2006). Indeed this could be to the detriment of access to care, and fair share policies may increase "the obstacles a mobility challenged clientele must surmount" (Lee and Price-Spratlen, 2004, p.5). In contrast, some fair share policies in other countries have been designed to maximise client access by looking at which areas have the strongest need for facilities (see Wolch, 1996). Although the effects of the Dutch fair share policies in this respect have not have been analysed, other studies warn that

there is a risk that such policies reduce the accessibility of homelessness facilities for their clients when they do not take the perspectives of homeless people into account. “Organised attempts to address homelessness will succeed only to the extent that ameliorative resources are allocated in a manner roughly consistent with the spatial configuration of the phenomenon” (Lee and Price-Spratlen, 2004, p.5). In their attempts to improve the living conditions of people who are homeless, policymakers have produced fair share policies that run the risk of overlooking the perspective of homeless people themselves. This makes the question ‘Fair to whom?’ particularly pertinent.

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