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Social caretakers and preventing crime on public housing estates by R.B.P. Hesseling

Since 1960 the Netherlands experienced a considerable rise in the number of medium and high-rise developments (e.g. tower blocks and flats with staircase or gallery access). In general, these estates are publicly owned, either by social housing organizations or local authorities. In the Seventies the disadvantages of this kind of housing were more and more recognized (Coleman, 1985). The estates are anonymous and vulnerable. The semipublic areas (e.g. entrancehall,

stairways, cellar-boxes and elevators) are difficult to control and residents do not feel responsible for these areas. Furthermore, flats are considered unsuitable for families with young children. The presence of different lifestyles often gives rise to social conflict. During the last decade many urban estates experienced physical and social deterioration. A lot of estates are poorly maintained. Some estates show a high turnover of the population and a concentration of socially disadvantaged groups such as minorities or single-parent households on income support.

Pollution, vandalism and crime increased. Residents are fearful of crime and they value the living conditions negatively. Also the dwellings in these estates become difficult to let and the number of void property increases.

Several studies (Schuerman and Kobrin, 1986; Skogan, 1990) have shown that disorder and crime are important factors in the decay of many housing estates or even complete neighbourhoods, and it is generally accepted that a broad approach to reduce these problems is necessary (NACRO, 1989). Several design and social measures are needed to reduce crime and to improve living conditions.

The presence of a caretaker is seen as an indispensable element in such an approach. The Dutch government therefore decided several years ago to promote the employment of caretakers. This promotion has been a consequence of the governments policy view that next to the criminal justice system, society as a whole should be activated in the prevention of crime (Society and crime, 1985). In 1988 three Ministries (of Justice, of Home Affairs and of Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment) subsidized, on a temporal basis, the appointment of 150 social caretakers in 130 housing estates all over the country. They supplemented the 700 more traditional caretakers already working in the public housing sector. In comparison with the more traditional caretakers, the social ones were to lay more emphasis on patrolling the estate in order to deter vandalism and crime, and to maintain contact with the residents.

The subsidy was given to social housing organizations and local authorities (the public housing sector). Besides, the subsidy would only be provided if the appointment of a caretaker would be part of a more encompassing set of measures to tackle the problem. The subsidy lasted for three years and consisted of a decreasing contribution in the labour costs of a caretaker: the first year 50%, the second year 30% and the third year 20% up until a maximum of 50,000 Dutch guilders per caretaker on an annual base. The whole project cost the government 7 million Dutch guilders. During this three year period the housing organizations and the residents could get accustomed to and see the results of the presence of a caretaker. After this period the labour and other costs of the caretaker would have to be paid by the housing organizations and the residents themselves. Halfway 1990 over 60% of the 150 social caretakers was employed on a permanent basis by the various housing organizations.

The evaluation study

The more or less simultaneous introduction of so many social caretakers gave an unique opportunity for an evaluation study. Therefore the Research and Documentation Centre (Ministry of Justice), in cooperation with two national organizations on housing policy (the Nationale Woningraad and NCIV, Koepel voor woningcorporaties) studied the effects of the introduction

of social caretakers on vandalism, crime and the rental position of the estate (Hesseling et al., 1991). Because of the large number of estates the study has been restricted to a sample of 28 housing estates all over the country. In these estates, with different physical and social characteristics, 30 social caretakers (including two women) with different job responsibilities were employed. Besides the appointment of a social caretaker, other kind of measures have been implemented as well. Because of these differences, the evaluation study can be described as a nonequivalent control group design where the treated group receives differing amounts of treatment (Judd and Kenny, 1981, p. 104). Systematic information on vandalism, crime, the living conditions, the desire and motives to move, the social control by residents, the measures implemented besides the appointment of a caretaker, etcetera has been collected. This data collection took place prior to the appointment of the caretakers at the end of 1988 (pretest) and again in the first months of 1990 (posttest). The data have been obtained by different means like two household surveys with respectively 2,800 and 2,700 respondents, police records on crime, and interviews with caretakers and representatives of the housing organizations. Finally, written information has been obtained on the size and the design of the estates, the other implemented measures and the position of the estates on the housing market.

Characteristics of the estates

It is well-known that both design features and social characteristics of the residents influence crime and other problems in housing developments (Newman and Franck, 1980). The data show that the 28 estates differ substantially in size (e.g. number of buildings and dwellings), design (e.g. tower block or flats with staircase access) and the composition of the population (e.g. age, socio-economic level). Therefore, a typology has been made on the basis of some social and design characteristics of the estates (representing the situation at the end of 1988).

Four estates are primarily built for 'young people'. These estates with housing for young people are dominated by single-person households consisting of persons under 30 years old and a very high moving rate: almost half of the residents move within one year. One estate is exclusively built for the 'elderly', people of 65 years and older.

Six estates are characterized by a relatively high proportion of 'traditional families' (two-parent households with children). In addition, many residents have a low level of education and/or are nonnatives. A relatively high proportion of residents live on the estate for more than five years.

Eight estates are inhabited by the 'new households'¹. In these estates one will find an overrepresentation of two-person households consisting of young adults (18 to 29 years old)

¹ Studies show that these days the traditional family has lost its dominant position in Dutch society in favour of the new households: single persons, people living together without children and single-parent households.

with a medium or high level of education. The moving rate of these estates is relatively high.

Nine estates have a relatively high proportion of single- and two-person households. Although also inhabited by new households, these estates differ in certain respects from the previous group. There is an overrepresentation of residents between the age of 30 and 64 years. Many residents have a mean level of education, and these estates are situated in relatively 'decent' neighbourhoods as compared to the other ones.

This classification has been refined and a distinction has been made between high-rise estates (five stories and more) and medium high estates (two, three or four stories). The high-rise estates all have gallery accesses. The medium high estates can have different means of access: gallery, staircase, deck or corridor. On the basis of both the social and design characteristics eight groups can be distinguished:

- two high-rise estates with traditional families;
- four medium high estates with traditional families;
- four high-rise estates with new households;
- four medium high estates with new households;
- five decent high-rise estates;
- four decent medium high estates;
- four estates with housing for young people and
- one estate with housing for elderly people.

A global comparison shows that crime and other problems go hand in hand with the type of estate at the end of 1988. In general, the problems in the housing for young people and the estates with traditional families are relatively big. The problems are moderate in the estates with the new households and the decent estates. The problems in the housing for the elderly are relatively small. In this article the changes that occurred for each type of estate, since the appointment of the caretakers, will be described.

The social caretakers

The job of caretaker is not entirely new. Since the mid of the nineteenth century many housing projects had functionaries keeping watch over the dwellings and the residents.

Depending on the period the job specification varies. For example, in the previous century many ex-army officers worked in housing projects built for the working-class. They were responsible for collecting the rent and for the 'civilization' of the poor, illiterate residents.

The task of a caretaker, however, is completely different. Social caretakers have various job responsibilities. They keep the building(s) clean or supervise the cleaning by others; they control and repair the technical facilities, patrol the estate to deter vandalism and other crime and maintain contact with the residents.

During the evaluation study the exact time-spending of the social caretakers has been registered. The 30 caretakers spent on average a third of their working time on cleaning activities in or around the semipublic areas of the building. Patrolling the estate (especially in the semipublic areas) takes 25% of the time. They spent 17% of their time keeping contact with residents and handling social problems. Almost the same amount of time is spent on controlling and repairing the technical facilities. In the remaining time the caretakers do other work, like the administration, consulting the supervisor, training, etc. The data also show that independent of the kind

of activities the caretakers spent on average more than 50% of their working time in the semipublic areas.

The job activities of the social caretakers have been compared with the activities of the more than 700 caretakers already working in the public housing sector. The data show that the social caretakers spent substantially less time on cleaning and maintenance. They spent, however, two and half times more of their working time on patrolling the estate and maintaining contact with the residents. It can be concluded that the caretakers on problem estates lay more emphasis on the social aspects of their work in comparison with their more traditional colleagues.

As stated earlier, the estates differ in size. This difference has been expressed by the factor 'caretaker density' (the number of caretakers in comparison with the number of buildings and dwellings). Three groups of estates can be distinguished. In eight estates the caretaker density is low. They have an average of seven buildings and 426 dwellings per estate. Ten estates have a medium caretaker density (five buildings and 204 dwellings). Finally, ten estates with an average of two buildings and 136 dwellings have a high caretaker density. It is obvious that in estates with a high caretaker density relatively more work can be done.

The study shows that in many respects caretaker density is an important factor. It is found, for example, that there is a relation between caretaker density and the time-spending of a social caretaker. In the small estates (with a high caretaker density) most working time (40%) is spent on cleaning activities. In the large estates (with a low caretaker density), however, the social caretakers spent most time (almost 50%) on surveillance and contact with the residents. The social caretakers in the medium-sized estates spent their time almost evenly on maintenance, cleaning, surveillance and contact with the residents.

The size of the estate also has consequences for the contact between the caretaker and the residents. The posttest household survey revealed that almost every resident knows that a social caretaker is working on the estate. There is, however, a strong relation between caretaker density and having had contact with the caretaker. In the estates with a low caretaker density only 59% of the residents has ever spoken with the caretaker. In the estates with a medium or high density these percentages are respectively 71 and 81.

The other measures

Apart from the appointment of a social caretaker, other measures have been implemented as well to reduce crime and to improve the living conditions on the estates. The amount, kind, intensity and period of implementation of the measures varied per estate. A majority of these measures (58%) were intended to improve the semipublic areas (e.g. reducing the accessibility of the buildings and cellar-boxes, redesigning the entrance, using damage-resistant materials, painting the walls, improving the lighting). Twenty percent of the measures were directed towards the residents (e.g. making flat regulations, changing letting policy, organizing informative meetings, stimulating residents' associations, intensifying the involvement of the police). The other measures related to the dwellings (13%), the surroundings of the estate (8%) and the neighbourhood in general (1%). Some of these measures (like reducing access to the

Table 1: Changes in the percentage of residents complaining about frequent disorder in the 28 estates

	Pretest	Posttest	Change
Pollution	70	62	-8
Graffiti	60	43	-17
Damaging property	52	33	-19
Nuisance	45	40	-5
Drug related events	18	16	-2

buildings) could have had a direct impact on crime and the living conditions on the estate. Other measures (like changing letting policies) may have a possible impact in the long term. The impact of some measures on crime and the living conditions have also been investigated in the study.

Social disorder on the estates

A lot of estates are confronted with events Skogan (1990) describes as social disorder: pollution, vandalism and nuisance. The consequences of these events are well-known. They induce fear of crime, lower the quality of the living conditions and give the estate a depraved look. In the two household surveys the residents were asked how often various forms of social disorder occurred on the estate. The answers to these questions were grouped into five categories. Table 1 summarizes the changes that occurred after the caretakers had been working on the estate for one year. It should be stressed that the questions only measure the resident perceptions of the frequency with which these events occur. Like many studies, our evaluation showed that pollution of the area is one of the most frequently cited problems. Before the appointment of the caretakers, 70% of the residents complained about the frequent pollution of the estate (e.g. people depositing litter, torn mattresses and other junk). One year later frequent pollution has decreased according to eight percent of the residents. Although the situation has improved, frequent pollution still takes place according to a majority of the residents.

Another major problem is vandalism. In public housing estates, most vandalism is committed in the semipublic spaces of the building rather than in the individual dwellings. The results show a substantial reduction in the number of residents complaining about vandalism in or against the semipublic spaces. 17% less residents complain about frequent graffiti on the walls of the building. Frequent damaging of property in or around the semipublic areas has decreased according to 19% of the residents.

Nuisance can take various forms: noisy neighbours, visible quarrels between people, youths hanging around and making rumour or lighting small fires. In 1988 45% of the residents complained about frequent nuisance. One year later this is 40%. Finally, frequent drug related events (selling drugs and addicts hanging around) is the least mentioned problem. A small minority of the residents (18%) complained about these events in 1988 and this hardly changed since the presence of the caretakers.

The reduction in vandalism and to a lesser extent in pollution and nuisance is reflected in the appreciation of the living conditions by the residents. The percentage of the residents satisfied with the tidiness of the estate went up from 34% in

the pretest to 56% in the posttest. The percentage residents who are satisfied with the social behaviour of others went up from 58% to 67%.

So far, we have only looked at the overall picture and it is important to know whether there are differences at the level of the individual estates. In respectively 21 and 19 estates the proportion of residents complaining about destruction of property and graffiti went down significantly ($p < 0.05$; one sample Chi² test). For pollution this is the case in half of the estates. Nuisance went down significantly in 12 estates and drug related problems in five estates.

The changes in the different kind of estates are as follows. In the high-rise estates with traditional families pollution, nuisance and drug related events are on an average level in 1988. Relatively many residents complained, however, about vandalism. Since the presence of the caretaker there has been a clear reduction in vandalism and nuisance, which resulted in a fair increase in the appreciation of the living conditions. The four medium high estates with traditional families are more or less comparable to the high rise estates in the pretest. After one year, however, the situation has hardly changed. The introduction of a caretaker did not lead to any substantial improvement.

Both the high-rise and medium high estates with new households are characterized by relatively much pollution and vandalism. The presence of a caretaker has led to a substantial reduction of vandalism. This is reflected too in the considerable rise of the appreciation by the residents of the tidiness and the behaviour of others.

The problems in the decent estates are relatively few and the introduction of a caretaker coincided with a reduction in vandalism. There is an increase in the appreciation of the tidiness, although not very strong. This is not surprising given the fact that already many residents were satisfied with the situation before the caretakers started to work.

The estates with the housing for young people are confronted with very high levels of disorder in 1988. Especially, selling drugs and the presence of addicts were major problems. The presence of a caretaker resulted mainly in a reduction of vandalism. The improvements are, however, not as strong as compared to the other estates. Nevertheless, the amount of residents satisfied with the tidiness and the behaviour of others has increased considerably.

There is little vandalism and nuisance in the estate for the elderly. It is situated in an old neighbourhood being renovated. This is probably the reason why many residents complain about litter and other junk in the streets. Moreover, they are confronted with drug problems caused by outsiders. Since a caretaker and a security guard (during the evening and night) work on the estate, there has been a very strong reduction in these drug related problems. Most residents are

Table 2: Changes in the percentage of crime victims in or around the 28 estates*

	Pretest	Posttest	Change
Residential burglary	5.4	6.3	0.9
Graffiti on the dwelling	7.7	7.4	-0.3
Damaging the dwelling	7.9	7.6	-0.3
Theft from cellarage	14.7	10.0	-4.7
Theft from letterbox	11.5	10.4	-1.1
Bicycle theft	17.1	16.0	-1.1
Theft from car	16.3	12.2	-4.1
Damaging property	20.7	16.8	-3.9
Violence**	6.4	8.4	2.0

* The percentages for bicycle theft, theft from car and theft from cellarage are based on the number of owners.

** Violence is measured by combining responses to three questions about simple assault/threat, robbery and sexual assault.

satisfied with the tidiness of the estate at the end of 1988, but still an increase of appreciation on this topic can be seen. A very important question is whether the different outcomes can be attributed to the various ways in which the caretakers have been deployed.² Firstly, the findings show that the reduction in nuisance is significantly related to caretaker density: in the smallest estates a greater proportion of the residents are of the opinion that nuisance has decreased than in the largest estates. Secondly, the results indicate that if caretakers spend more time on cleaning activities, the reduction in pollution, graffiti and drug related events is greater (the increase in the percentage of residents satisfied with the tidiness is also positively related with caretaker density). These findings also explain why no significant changes were found in the medium high estates with traditional families: they are all very large and the caretaker spends little time on cleaning activities. Summarizing, the results indicate that the kind and extent of change in social disorder depends heavily on the way in which the social caretakers have been deployed. In most cases frequent vandalism (in the semipublic areas) has been reduced according to the residents. Reductions in pollution will only occur when the caretakers spend a lot of time on cleaning activities. To tackle nuisance the estate should not be too big (high caretaker density). With a few exceptions the caretakers seem to have had no systematic effect on drug related events. It should be stressed however, that only a small minority of the residents complain about these events.

Crime

Most criminal acts require, besides an offender and a target, the absence of capable guardians against crime (Cohen and Felson, 1979). The presence and natural surveillance of residents can be seen as one form of capable guardians. A lot of studies show that the residents of multi-dwelling housing estates generally exercise little social control. Furthermore, the design characteristics of many housing estates impedes the possibility to exercise social control in the common spaces. It is assumed that the presence of a caretaker

intensifies the amount of social control and as a consequence minimizes the chance of potential offenders committing crime. To answer the question which changes in crime have occurred, we used police records on crime and questions about victimization in the two household surveys. In this article we restrict our attention to the outcomes of the surveys. The residents were asked if they had been personally victimized by several types of crime in or around the estate over the last year. In table 2 the overall results of the pretest and posttest are presented.

The findings show that the residents of the estates become primarily victims of damaging personal property (e.g. bicycle, car), bicycle theft and theft from cars. A second group consists of the offenses that occur in the semipublic areas of the building: theft from cellarage and theft from letterbox (in most estates the residents have a cellarage in the basement of the building and the letterboxes are generally situated in the entrance/stairway hall of the building). Vandalizing the dwelling, violence and residential burglary cause the lowest number of victims. After one year especially the number of victims of theft from cellarage, theft from car and damaging property has been reduced. Burglary and vandalizing the dwelling has hardly changed. Finally, an increase in violent crime has occurred.

Again, we looked at the changes for the individual and different types of estates. At this level, the distribution of the separate offenses becomes highly skewed. Therefore the offenses are reduced to four categories³: burglary/vandalizing dwellings, theft from cellarage/letterbox, other property crime (bicycle theft, theft from car) and other vandalism. The findings show that theft from cellarage/letterbox decreased significantly ($p < 0.05$, one sample Chi² test) in eleven of the 28 estates. For other vandalism, other property crime and burglary/vandalizing dwellings, the number of estates where these offenses went down are eight, six and five respectively. From these results it can be concluded that especially theft from cellarage/letterbox has been reduced after one year. Nevertheless the percentage of residents satisfied with the safety, in relation with crime, has increased from 51% in the pretest to 63% in the posttest. This suggests that simply and

2 Other analyses show that the changes in social disorder in one year do not correlate with the number of some other measures taken shortly before or during 1989 or the social control exercised by the residents.

3 In most estates the number of victims of violent crime is too small to make a reliable comparison. For this reason, violence has been excluded from the subsequent analyses.

Table 3: Average indexnumber* (1988= 100) for theft from cellarage/letterbox related to caretaker density and reducing access to the building (N= 26)**

Reducing access	Caretaker density		
	Low	Medium	High
No	75	104	59
Yes	71	66	50

* Indexnumber = (posttest percentage / pretest percentage) x 100.

** Two estates are removed from the analyses. They have only a few victims and even small changes result than in an extreme large indexnumber.

solely the presence of a caretaker leads to a better sense of safety of the residents.

In the different kind of estates the changes (although in a lot of cases not significant) are as follows. The high-rise estates with traditional families are confronted with a lot of crime, especially theft from cellarage/letterbox. The presence of the caretakers has resulted in a very strong reduction of these offenses and other vandalism. In 1988 the four medium high estates with traditional families did have a relatively high level of crime as well. As with social disorder the situation in these large estates has not changed since the presence of a caretaker. The high-rise estates with new households have average crime levels. There are relatively few residential burglaries. There has been a reduction in theft from cellarage/letterbox after the caretakers have been working for a year. In the medium high estates with new households the level of crime is comparable with the high-rise estates with the same households. There are, however, relatively many victims of residential burglary as compared to the high-rise estates. Only a slight reduction in the number of victims has occurred since the presence of a caretaker. Criminality is relatively low in the decent high-rise estates. Compared to the other kind of estates there has been a substantial reduction in theft from cellarage/letterbox. In the decent medium high estates crime is on an average level. Compared with the high-rise estates residential burglary takes place more often. Just as in the decent high-rise estates, the presence of a caretaker has gone hand in hand with a substantial reduction in theft from cellarage/letterbox.

The highest crime levels are found in the estates with housing for young people. In 1988 almost two thirds of the residents became victim of crime. Recent research has also shown that high concentrations of young, single, transient residents often coincide with a concentration of problems (Hope and Foster, 1991). The presence of a caretaker only resulted in a clear reduction in theft from cellarage/letterbox.

The lowest crime levels are found in the estate for the elderly. In spite of the presence of the caretaker the number of victims has increased in 1990. It is not clear from our data why this unexpected change occurred.

The question can be raised if the different outcomes are in any way related to the way the caretakers have been deployed. It can be hypothesized that especially a high caretaker density raises social control, thus leading to less crime. First, we have seen that the smaller the estate, the more residents have been in personal contact with the caretaker (thus reducing the anonymity). Secondly, it can be assumed that in smaller estates it is easier to spot and deter potential offenders than in larger estates (whether the

caretaker is cleaning, doing maintenance or patrolling the estate). Our hypothesis is only supported for theft from cellarage/letterbox. A high caretaker density means stronger and significant reductions in these offenses.

Besides the appointment of a caretaker, other measures have been taken too on the estates. One of these measures concerns reducing access to the buildings. The data show that in ten estates the implementation of this measure was completed just before the caretakers started to work. The results show that this measure has had a positive but moderate effect on the reduction of theft from cellarage/letterbox. Although expected, no effect was found for burglary/vandalizing dwelling.

Finally, we looked at the effect of the different combinations of caretaker density and reducing access. As can be seen in table 3 especially the combination of a high caretaker density and reducing access to the building has lead to a substantial reduction of these offenses.

So far, it can be concluded that mainly under the condition of a high caretaker density the attendance of a caretaker resulted in a reduction of theft from cellarage/letterbox. Furthermore, the improvements are greater if the access to the building has been reduced too.

Nevertheless, in some estates a significant reduction in burglary/vandalizing dwelling, other property crime and other vandalism has occurred. A lot of other factors could be responsible for these changes. In the study one of these factors, the social control by the residents, has been explicitly investigated. In this study social control has been operationalized by asking the residents first, whether they are looking out for suspicious people and secondly, what they actually did when they saw crime committed on the estate. Before the caretakers started to work 33% of the residents frequently looked out for suspicious people. One third of the residents has been confronted with crime (without being victimized themselves) and 67% of these residents have in some way intervened (calling the police and/or stepping up to the scene of crime alone or with others).

Furthermore, the different analyses point to the finding that higher and stable levels of social control are associated with relative greater reductions in crime. These relations are, however, very weak. Only for burglary/vandalizing dwelling a significant relation ($r = -0.59$, $p < 0.05$, $N = 25$) was found between the proportion of residents watching for suspicious people (in 1988) and the reduction in the number of victims in 1989. Our study indicates, however, that the higher level of this kind of social control (in the estates where burglary/vandalizing dwelling went down) probably has been a response to higher levels of burglary/vandalizing dwellings in

Table 4: Changes in the rental position of the estates

	1986	1987	1988	1989
Mean moving rate	23.32	22.41	22.41	20.49
Mean percentage of empty dwellings	2.99	3.55	3.60	4.95
Percentage of residents who want to move	-	-	27.30	27.71

the preceding years.⁴

In summary, the results indicate that the presence of a caretaker only had an effect on the offenses that occur in the semipublic areas (theft from cellarage/letterbox). This effect only takes place under the condition of a high caretaker density and will further be reinforced when the access to the building is reduced as well. The appointment of the caretakers did not have a systematic influence on other types of crime.

The position of the estates on the housing market

The rental position of estates refers to the demand for dwellings in those estates. When the demand is low the position of the estate on the housing market is weak. In this situation the moving rate of the population is relatively high, many residents have a desire to change house and in some estates a lot of dwellings are unoccupied for a long period of time. Studies show that disorder and crime often go hand in hand with a weak position of the estate on the local housing market, sometimes leading to a spiral of decay. So far, we have seen that in many estates there has been an improvement of the situation. Therefore, it is interesting to see what has happened to the rental position of the estates. The rental position of the estates has been measured by several indicators (see table 4). For the period 1986-1989, we looked at the moving rate of an estate (percentage of dwellings changing of tenants in one year) and the percentage of void property at the end of each year. Besides, in the two household surveys the residents were asked if they want to change house and, if so, why.

The moving rates of the 28 estates are high in comparison with the national figure (in 1986: 14.4%). Since 1986 the moving rates have slightly decreased. This trend occurred, however, all over the Netherlands. In this period an overall increase in the demand for housing became manifest. With a stable housing stock this development lead to a shortage on the housing market. So fewer people of public housing estates were able to change house. Subsequent analyses show indeed that the moving rates of the 28 estates have not changed systematically after the introduction of the caretakers. Only in the five decent high-rise estates a substantial reduction in the moving rate took place from 27% in 1988 to 22% in 1989. In these estates a lot of other measures, besides the appointment of a caretaker, have been implemented before and during 1989. So it can be assumed that only under the condition of a very broad approach a real

reduction in the moving rate will occur.

The percentage of void property has increased since 1986 with more than two percent. This increase is mainly caused by the developments in a few estates with a very bad position on the housing market (with percentages of unoccupied dwellings exceeding ten percent). If these estates are excluded from the analyses the results show that the situation has hardly changed. On this aspect too, the introduction of a caretaker has not lead to any substantial changes after one year. If we look at the residents who have a desire to move the same picture emerges. The percentage of residents who want to move has not changed between the pretest and posttest.⁵ Only in the two high-rise estates with traditional families a significant reduction in the percentage of residents wanting to change house was found (from 28% to 19%). Although the desire to move has not changed in general, there has been a notable shift in the motives of those wanting to change house. The percentage of residents who say that vandalism and other crime are one of the reasons for moving (three reasons could be given at most), declined from 32% in 1988 to 26% in 1990. Other motives (e.g. concerning the dwelling or the wish to buy a single-family house with a garden) have become more important. This result can be considered as a positive development. The negative reasons to move (vandalism and other crime) become less significant and the usual and normal reasons gain in importance. All in all, with a few exceptions the rental position of the estates has not improved substantially. A lot of residents still want to change house. There has been, however, a positive shift in the motives to move. Vandalism and crime are less often mentioned by the residents as reasons to leave the estate.

Summary

The Dutch government stimulated the employment of social caretakers on public housing estates. Besides other measures, they should contribute to the prevention of crime and the improvement of the living conditions on these estates. From the evaluation study it can be concluded that social caretakers have a positive effect on the problems that occur in or around the semipublic areas: pollution, vandalism, nuisance and theft from cellarage/letterbox. This is reflected too in the strong increase in the number of residents satisfied with the tidiness of the estate and the social behaviour of others.

In general, these effects only take place or are stronger under the condition of a high caretaker density (which also implies a

4 Elsewhere it has been reported too, that higher crime levels could lead to more social control (e.g. Greenberg et al., 1982, p. 82).

5 For the housing of young people, the estates with the new households and the housing for the elderly this result is not really surprising. Very young people and two-person households generally have a very high rate of mobility. Given their age it can, furthermore, be expected that most residents in the housing of the elderly will not change house anymore. So no substantial changes in the number of people who want to move can be expected in these kind of estates.

greater accent on cleaning activities). Furthermore, for theft from cellarage/letterbox especially the combination of a high caretaker density and restricting access to the building means a substantial reduction of these offenses. In other words, the estate should not be too large (approximately 150 dwellings) to gain profit from the presence of a caretaker on these topics. That hardly any effect is to be expected from a low caretaker density has been illustrated by the situation in the large estates with traditional families. In these estates no substantial changes occurred since the presence of a caretaker.

After one year the findings show that the social caretakers have, in general, no effect on the more serious forms of crime, like residential burglary or violence. Nonetheless, more residents are satisfied with the safety, in relation with crime, on the estate. This could mean that on this aspect the presence of caretaker on its own is already positively valued by the residents.

Despite these improvements in most of the estates the number of residents who want to move has not changed very much after one year. Other figures also show that the position of the estates on the housing market has not improved significantly in a period of one year. The motives of the residents who want to move changed, however, in a positive direction.

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