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## Neighbourhood Governance - A Study on Regeneration

### **Abstract**

*This paper elaborates on the question of governance in deprived European neighbourhoods. Results from a case study in a Danish neighbourhood built in the period around 1970 are presented. We look into how neighbourhoods function e.g. the myths and the realities of the tenants' democracy and integration policies in relation to housing, work and education. The paper is based on work for a European research project "Neighbourhood Governance – Capacity for Social Integration". The aim of the project is to identify and assess possible new governance structures to combat social exclusion in contemporary Europe.*

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### **Background**

This paper is partly based on research growing out of two EU-funded projects carried out in collaboration with partners within the European Union research programmes. The research was carried out in the period 1997-2004. The research programmes were 'Targeted Socio-Economic Research (TSER) Programme' and 'Improving the Human Research Potential and Socio-Economic Knowledge Base Key action: Improving the Socio-Economic Knowledge Base: Challenges to European Welfare Systems European Construction and Multi-Level Governance'. Results from the first project 'Social Exclusion in European Neighbourhoods - Processes, Experiences and Responses', have been reported in Madanipour, Cars and Allen (1998), Allen, Cars and Madanipour (2000) and in Vestergaard (2000). Results from the second project 'Neighbourhood Governance – capacity for social integration' can be found on the web site:

<http://www.infra.kth.se/SB/sp/forskning/index.html>

### **Introduction**

There is increasing policy concern about the processes of social exclusion throughout the European Union (Allen et al 2004). In many countries, rapid changes in social conditions can be observed. Wider social and economic gaps are emerging among various population groups so that while some groups benefit from increasing economic and cultural integration within the European Union, others face increasing difficulties. Over the past few years, substantial groups of citizens have been caught within a vicious circle that is

taking them more and more deeply into poverty. There are many explanations for this development. In the context of globalisation and structural problems in the public economies of Western European countries, much has been exacerbated by recession. EU member governments see the consequences of poverty, marginalisation and increased polarisation as a problem with very high priority on their national agendas. However, in parallel, there is a realisation that the EU strategy of economic integration could make these problems worse. Both EU and national policy makers are, thus, interested in monitoring the scale of the problem and promoting policy measures to reduce its incidence.

Studies of social exclusion processes in deprived neighbourhoods in the end of the 1990s have formed a base for focusing research on neighbourhood governance in a number of European countries starting in 2001. The Neighbourhood Governance project was aiming at describing the structural changes in society and their impacts on social conditions. These descriptions constituted a base for rethinking and improving social strategies and governance, in order to combat social exclusion. Questions were not only on how and what kind of improvement programmes were implemented but also on who was delivering the programs and how residents were involved.

An important empirical base for the Neighbourhood Governance project was two rounds of interviews. The main objective of the first round (summer 2002) was to identify problems, or situations, that are fundamental when it comes to improving living conditions and endorsing social integration, and from that describe the governance arrangements necessary to combat the problems identified. The second round (spring 2003) aimed to use the results from the first round as a base, when focusing on how to develop governance actions to meet the needs of the residents.

This paper analyses and draws conclusions on social exclusion processes and governance arrangements in a Danish neighbourhood. Here residents, professionals and local politicians were interviewed to discover, firstly, the problems in the neighbourhood and, secondly, how to develop governance actions to meet the needs of the residents. A bottom up approach was used when trying to identify whom the residents perceived as the actors in the neighbourhood, how and with whom initiatives were taken and how the actors operated. Important aspects were also how residents regarded the situations and the methods they used for solving problems. We also looked into who set goals for the neighbourhood, how this was done and how formal and informal governance structures overlapped and interacted. The Danish case is a neighbourhood at the western outskirts of city of Helsingør in the wider metropolitan area of Copenhagen. Closer documentation on the Danish case study can be found in Christensen and Vestergaard 2002a, Christensen and Vestergaard 2002b and Christensen et al 2003.

### **Choosing the neighbourhood**

The motive for the European project was based on the main assumption that resources allotted to deprived neighbourhoods are used inefficiently and often not in response to the residents' needs (Allen et al 2000). In the Danish case this inefficiency can to a large degree be identified as a lack of ability to target the relevant area for improvement initiatives in a sufficient manner. So far local and national founded initiatives had mainly been targeted at the estate of Vapnagård, being an easy, well prepared and willing case for

improvement initiatives. At the same time the two other estates in the neighbourhood, Nøjsomhed and Borupgård, more or less had been left behind in their own lack of initiative or inability to attract resources. Also Vapnagård had a relatively well organised and functioning tenants' democracy while the situation on Nøjsomhed and Borupgård was much less convincing. Here local conflicts between different factions of tenants, the tenants' boards and the housing associations were persistent and dragging out for years. While Vapnagård was a success and promoted as a national showcase on how deprived large housing estates can be improved, the two neighbouring estates were left to a strange mix of oblivion and frustration and occasional press focus on negative incidents.

### **The concepts - social exclusion, social integration, neighbourhood, governance and neighbourhood governance**

In this paper the concepts social exclusion, social integration, neighbourhood, governance and neighbourhood governance are defined as follows:

*Social exclusion* is a process that impedes individual participation in and access to mainstream society and its resources and options. Exclusion is a process where some are excluded but much more are in the process of being excluded.

*Social integration* is conceived as a process, consisting of three cumulative stages (Allen et al 2004):

1. participation
2. interaction
3. Integration.

The idea is that participation (that is being present in public space and public forums) is a prerequisite for interaction and that interaction (which implies communication and the exchange of ideas) is a prerequisite for integration, which in its social aspect has been interpreted as the sharing of common values and norms or principles of behaviour. However, the latter interpretation of social integration seems too limited in contemporary multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies. A more common interpretation promotes the idea of *accommodation* or understanding to describe a socially integrated system. This idea implies that members of the society are considerate of each other in their actions and eventually influence each other's meanings and behaviour. Such a condition asks for the acknowledging of the rights and obligations of the 'others' and thus for '*respect*' for other groups.

A *neighbourhood* is a place – it is purely a spatial definition and implies no particular community of interest among its inhabitants, other than that they live in that area.

The concept *governance* covers the whole spectrum of the various formal and informal relationships which makes an entity function. It covers not only the overt structure – such as the governing board of a company or the council of a municipality but the relationships between the various actors which affect the outcomes. Who influences who, who really makes the

decisions, does the entity operate as a whole – these are all questions relevant to its governance.

*Neighbourhood governance* is the way a place functions. In neighbourhoods with a fragmented form of governance, many formal and informal links may seek to overcome that fragmentation.

### **The Neighbourhood – a place where people live**

Thus Nøjsomhed, Vapnagård and Borupgård is a *neighbourhood* in the sense of being a place – it is purely spatially defined and implies no particular community of interest among its inhabitants, other than that they live in that area. At the same time the *neighbourhood* has defined boundaries, it cannot be considered in isolation; its relationship to its surrounding areas and the wider city and region are equally important for understanding how it functions and the people who live there.

### **Social exclusion in European neighbourhoods**

Every neighbourhood is situated in a specific geographical and societal context and is unique. Nevertheless, seen from the outside, deprived neighbourhoods almost seem to be somehow alike even if they are located in different European cities. They often have or have had the same modernistic design and are often located at a distance from attractive urban facilities or in central enclaves closed in by roads, canals, train tracks or the like. Outdoor areas are vandalised and not cared for. Compared with so-called attractive neighbourhoods there is plenty of children outdoors. Common indoor areas often need care. The trained observers can often read their location on a city map or identify them just by driving by on the city ring road. They are neighbourhoods of decline and displacement. Those in decline are traditional working class neighbourhoods hit by industrial decline, while neighbourhoods of displacement are where redevelopment or housing management processes has created concentrations of transient populations. Statistically these neighbourhoods score high on the relative number of children, single parent households, households on temporary social benefits, missing or fragile participation in the labour market on the part of the residents, turnover of residents etc.

Are the residents unhappy? In a Danish context surveys among the residents will show that around 90 per cent of them will indicate general satisfaction with living in the neighbourhood unless very extreme incidents of bad behaviour or a criminal character have become normal (Christensen et al 1993, pp 121-123).

But as soon as you go inside and begin to study the neighbourhood and talk with residents and key persons, you learn the unique history of how life has developed in this neighbourhood. Political neglect of local problems and passiveness always has a special local version. Also you learn who has the power now, how battles have been won and lost, who are the good guys and who are the 'baddies' inside and outside, what the hopes and visions for the future are. Each neighbourhood also has its own special version of how situations involving adolescents get out of control, dissatisfaction with local schools, how the police is not available when needed, or how once acquired a bad reputation, often unfairly, stick to the place. Each individual has an own agenda. Some residents concentrate on their own life as well as the life of their family. Others also engage in activities and responsibilities in the neighbourhood and wider society. Neighbourhood residents are aware and

have developed a picture of the reasons for discrimination and stigma (Børresen 2000a, 2000b).

Personal visits in the period 1998 to 2004 to eight of the ten European case study neighbourhoods (see also Allen et al 2000) confirmed this impression of unique places in their own specific contexts with individual versions of general problems that repeat themselves from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

The ten neighbourhoods all share concentrations of some form of vulnerability and have higher unemployment rates than their surrounding areas. A declining profile is often accompanied by a breakdown in social relations like racial tension, fear of crime, tension between old and new residents and withdrawal from public. This is paralleled by a breakdown in the relations between the neighbourhood and the world outside with lack of political participation, stigma, mutual mistrust, crime and lawlessness.

A common feature is also that there is often a wide gap between what is most wanted and needed by the residents in the neighbourhoods and what is delivered by housing management organisations, welfare systems and general public services. Available services often do not meet local needs.

Finally, there is a very significant issue about the kinds of social organisational resources which residents would like to see in their neighbourhoods. In many areas, the kinds of facilities addressing problems like money advice and substance abuse are seen as further indicators of stigma. They are judged as a contribution to the continued stigmatisation of the neighbourhoods. This can also be the case for costly physical renovation projects, high profile policing and temporary community activation projects. They are not appreciated if they contribute to the continued stigmatisation of the neighbourhood.

There is, as stressed in Allen et al (2000), a kind of poignant NIMBYism in the rejection of these facilities. It is poignant because the residents of these neighbourhoods are precisely the group that is least powerful in preventing the location of these facilities, which are seen as 'necessary' in the neighbourhood by the urban authorities responsible for the area. On the other hand, residents are quite unanimous in wanting *improvements* of the basic resources that should be available to them: rubbish collection, normal policing, maintenance of landscaping, footpaths and roads, housing repair systems, local schools and day-care facilities, access to public and private services and transport etc.

## **The Danish case study Neighbourhood**

### *Description of the Neighbourhood*

The neighbourhood consists of three social housing estates, which are *Nøjsomhed*, *Vapnagård* and *Borupgård*. They are different types of industrial system build apartment blocks arranged around green spaces. The neighbourhood is situated on the western outskirts of the city of Helsingør in the wider metropolitan area of Copenhagen. It is a post-war extension of the city planned according to modernistic principles like separating motor traffic from residential areas and built by three different local housing associations in the period from the mid 1960s until the mid 1970s.

The three estates comprise 10 per cent of the total housing stock in the municipality and 33 per cent of the local social housing stock. Compared to the municipality of Helsingør there is nearly three times as many residents with non-Danish citizenship in the neighbourhood and it can be estimated

that this figure can be doubled when including residents with a second-generation immigrant background. The population in the neighbourhood is relatively young with an overrepresentation of children and young people and an under representation of the elderly above the age of 67. Single person households and especially single parent households are also over represented in the neighbourhood compared to the municipality. The same holds for residents on an early pension and residents above the age of 17 on non-permanent transfer payments like sickness payment, cash benefits, activation payment etc. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Social indicators for the neighbourhood and Helsingør, 2000

	Neighbourhood	Helsingør
Dwellings 2000-1-1	2,590	27,063
Population 2000-1-1	6,004	59,492
Foreign nationals	20%	7%
Foreign nationals under 18 years	23%	9%
Population Structure 2000-1-1:		
0-17 years	32%	21%
18-66 years	61%	65%
Older than 66	7%	13%
Pensioners below the age of 67, 2000-1-1	66%	43%
Transfer incomes/benefits 2000 1-1:		
All types of transfer incomes/benefits	70%	52%
Cash benefit	20%	6%
Unemployment benefits	11%	7%
Temporary social benefits	41%	23%
Permanent social benefits	30%	29%
Single, no children	40%	37%
Single with children	15%	7%

Nøjsomhed constitutes 456 dwellings and was ready for occupation in 1964. It is a modern park development with three and four stories as well as high-rise blocks with a view to the city and the Sound.

In the beginning Nøjsomhed was inhabited by mainly Danish families with small children. However, these families have moved out of the estate, extensively. Especially, in mid 1990s residents moved out like an *exodus* due to renovation and steep rent increase as the housing estate did not have any accumulated reserves for renovation and restoration. This exodus resulted in many vacant dwellings, which meant that one could be offered an apartment from one day to the next. At this time being, refugees and immigrants were in demand of a dwelling. Hence, newcomers to Nøjsomhed became ethnic minority groups such as Gypsies and refugees from Yugoslavia and Palestine. Additionally, Danes in acute housing need often due to major changes in their life situation moved into Nøjsomhed.

Nøjsomhed is considered to be in a socially critical situation characterised by social unrest, insufficient integration of ethnic groups and lack of abilities

to deal with the current situation. Nøjsomhed bears some of the characteristics that a ghetto has and it is a troublesome housing estate facing tremendous problems anchored in fundamental social processes such as segregation, class division and current local housing shortage.

The second housing estate Vapnagård has 1719 dwellings and was first occupied in the end of the 1960s and the beginning of 1970s. The master plan for building Vapnagård was to build a new modern city inhabiting 5000 individuals and providing different kinds of services and business facilities. However, this master plan was abandoned, and in 1968 it was decided to build a more modest housing estate with multi-storey type buildings. The first three stages of the building project were to build housing blocks, while the final and fourth stage was to construct a high-rise service house for old-aged people, child-care facilities, leisure-time facilities and shops etc. But this last facility stage was not carried out.

When the building project was finished, a housing estate stood tall offering well-planned apartments suitable for families with children. However, the housing estate soon became reduced to an isolated dormitory. The first residents to move in were primarily locals with Danish and Turkish backgrounds often moving out from urban renewal areas. Furthermore, individuals living in the wider area and working in the metropolitan area of Copenhagen were among the first residents. An enthusiastic sentiment among the first residents was identifiable but soon the social hardship accompanied by an increase of unemployment rate in mid 1970s, and lack of social infrastructure took over and became a tremendous burden for the residents. A negative image, which was aggravated by technical problems and influenced by administrative and managerial problems in the housing association, emerged.

The residents met these difficult challenges, and through the tenants' democracy they initiated a long process of doing initiatives and realising them. They succeeded in building up a local and decentralised management organisation, developed improvement plans including social measures and started negotiating conditions for implementation with local and national housing authorities.

During the last 15 years the negative image of the estate has thus been changed. The perception of Vapnagård as a large housing estate with a lot of problems has been replaced by a perception of Vapnagård as a nice place to live compared to other large housing estates. It has got an image of being a place that has changed and improved social conditions while it has got worse in the two comparable neighbouring estates. Vapnagård is valued for its many cultural and social activities. However, lately a sense of lack of community and an impression of insufficient integration of ethnic groups have occurred as problematic issues.

Finally, Borupgård, as the third housing estate, with 415 dwellings is divided into two independent sections. Borupgård I have 178 dwellings and was inhabited in 1973 and Borupgård II with 237 dwellings were inhabited in 1976. The two sections have own section boards and local caretakers. It is by outsiders perceived as one single estate but the residents are very clear about Borupgård consisting of two individual sections.

Primarily, the dwellings are terraced houses suitable for families with children. There are also smaller apartments often placed at the end of the 50 long blocks. From the beginning the rent level at Borupgård was relatively high. This meant that especially families with children and individuals eligible for rent subsidies moved in and that the turnover of residents has been quite

high in some periods. Due to the high rent level the municipality has not used the estate for households in acute housing need.

Borupgård has not accumulated reserves to maintain a sufficient housing standard. Therefore, technical problems and related indoor climate problems have emerged. Several plans to renovate the housing estate have been made, but none so far has been carried out. To a large extent this must be related to insufficient management accompanied by ongoing conflicts among the two elected section boards, the local caretakers and the main board of the housing association.

### *Identified problems*

The first round of interviews with residents identified a number of problems that require a neighbourhood solution. In the second round of interviews key actors' perceptions and views were employed to elaborate problems that were revealed in the first round of interviews. The problems concern social inequality of and social isolation among youngsters, an increased gap between Danes and immigrants, unemployment due to integration problems and in general the problems of bridging the neighbourhood and the rest of Helsingør.

### Social inequality among youngsters

This inequality concerns socio-economic and cultural processes. There are distinctive differences related to families' different possibilities to support and provide activities and goods for children. Furthermore, the social inequality is related to differences in social capital, as there are major differences between youngsters in how to interact and participate in social activities. Some youngsters have never been taught certain basic social capabilities. This manifests itself in conflicts in schools, institutions and so on between professionals and these youngsters, and among the youngsters themselves.

The social inequality is part of an increased ethnic segregation of youngsters related to schools and leisure activities. First of all, there are differences related to parents participation in school matters. There is an extended cooperation between schools and parents, however immigrant parents seem harder to encourage to participate in such cooperation, as some immigrants' customs are that the school carry the responsibility for the children. As a Dane with foreign background describes it:

*"Many immigrants for instance from Turkey perceive the school's responsibility for the children in the way that the child's bone belongs to the parents, whereas the flesh belongs to the school".*

This difference between immigrants and Danes brings the children in different position, which is parallel to those children from Danish families who are neglecting the cooperation with the school. One of the three elementary Schools serving the neighbourhood is going to initiate a project called *Parents Room*, a forum for, especially, ethnic parents as a mean to obtain a closer cooperation between these parents and the school. Furthermore, the project aims at building up a greater understanding among ethnic parents of how the Danish school system works and how parents are expected to participate in their children's school matters.

Furthermore, there is an inequality related to the use of recreational facilities. It is common practice for Danish families to enrol their children in recreation centre after school. However, there is a tendency that many parents from Arabic, Middle Eastern and African countries do not follow this

practice often because they are not used to this option. In this respect, there is a *difference in customs*. However, the difference must also be seen in relation to the fact that many immigrant families are dependent on welfare allowances, and hence meet *economic difficulties*, as the benefits they receive are not sufficient to cover the fee to these recreation centres. Although the Danish welfare system is organised in such ways that less affluent families have possibilities to apply for a no-fee vacancy, many immigrant do not. This is often because they are not aware of this possibility.

When an immigrant family at some point gets employed and, subsequently, the economic free scope increases this does not imply that children get enrolled in a recreation centre. This is often due to an attitude concerning the fact that if the elder children did not attend such leisure facilities none of the children at all should though the family can afford it. Parents do not want to treat their children differently.

The Danish system is not able to act on this variety of children's capabilities and competencies. At this point the kindergartens, schools, after-school centres are to become aware of how to deal with this inequality and to tune knowledge to the youngster in order to overcome the inequality and to break with the social reproduction. The institution, Vapnagårdsparken (recently renamed Villa Fem), has initiated a programme to deal with this circumstance, and the teachers are to pay attention to children's different needs and to teach children basic knowledge about how to participate and interact with other.

#### Social isolation among teenagers

A major problem relates to a lack of contact between adults and youngsters. There seem to be an increased number of youngsters, with Danish and immigrant background, which are left alone and on own devices. This creates a vacuum that the youngsters take advantage of as a free scope to act. Sometimes a *different sense of justice* is identifiable which happens to put the youngsters in conflict with the law.

When a *lack of contact between youngsters and parents* is visible in Danish families, it is often single parent families. Due to being left alone, children grow up with little knowledge about how to interact with other. Teachers observe this in the way children communicate. Quite often they have an unsuitable way of approaching each other, and often disagreements are settled with trashing.

This lack of support from both the parents and the system can be seen as a result of the individual rationality today. The lack of community spirit affects the children when no one wants to take responsibility for their upbringing. Today a great deal of the parents both Danish and ethnic expect the school to take responsibility for not only the educational but also the social upbringing of the children. But schools are not made to carry out this task and the vulnerable children are at a great risk as becoming dropouts or left behind.

#### Increased gap between Danes and immigrants

Like most countries Danish integration policies are proclaimed to have failed. In 1990s, the then government was criticised for having a too laid-back attitude towards putting forwards demands to immigrants such as learning Danish, getting a job and participating in Danish customs. The current government has decided to act on the never solved integration problems. As a consequence integration policies have undergone restrictions such as

inviting fewer immigrants, rising the age for immigrants to get married, and cutbacks on welfare allowances to immigrants as a mean to encourage them to find a job.

This development in integration policies does not seem to bridge immigrants and Danes, and the environment seems more hostile between immigrants and Danes compared to earlier times. In addition, September 11 (2001) and the Iraq-war have not made integration easier, on the contrary, bridging between Danes and immigrants seem even more complicated nowadays.

In many immigrant circles the current political action on integration matters are viewed as a political marker to indicate that integration of immigrants does not deserve special attention. In many parts of society conflicts arise out of these perceptions: In schools, recreation centres, labour market, and on the housing estates.

Conflicts relate for instance to the removal of mother-tongue courses on council schools. From the city council's perspective the removal is grounded in financial priorities due to the financial frame set out by the government. However, many immigrants perceive this removal of mother-tongue courses as political hostility towards immigrants. According to a local politician with immigrant background a consequence is that children most likely will experience difficulties in communicating with parents and grandparents, and the rootlessness many youngsters already experience will only increase.

Another conflict is between schools' evaluation of immigrant children's readiness to attend to regular school classes and parents' perception of their children. Many immigrants view that the maturity tests to evaluate a particular child's ability to attend regular school are inadequate due to cultural bias. Immigrants experience that their children are declined school attendance on wrong premises.

These two conflicts make the immigrants displeased with the treatment of their children and the consequence is that some parents move their children from the council school to the Arabic School located in the neighbourhood. An unfortunate side effect is that the gap between Danish and immigrant youngsters increases. Many professionals as well as immigrants are aware of this side effect. Yet several immigrants view the side effect as less important compared to the capacities their children achieve on the Arabic School.

In Helsingør, and especially on Nøjsomhed, there is a large Gypsy population. It seems that integration policy tuned to the Gypsy population is insufficient. The tendency is that both the municipality and the residents have given up on Gypsies, as they are perceived culturally very different from the rest of the population in the neighbourhood. Also Gypsies are perceived as citizens who do not want to become full members of society. However, there are no empirical data indicating this and this perception might be grounded on myths and speculations.

A local politician accentuates that the first and second generations of immigrants are out of reach in terms of integration. These two generations have been left on own devices, and now they stick to their own ones. Therefore, it is much more advantageous to assure an integration policy for third generation of immigrants according to this politician. Hence, the children should be the centres of orientation. A severe problem is therefore that the schools are left alone with these issues. They experience the culture clash everyday between both the children and the parents in the neighbourhood.

## The labour market and immigrants

In the first round of interview residents with a foreign background describe difficulties related to entering the labour market, as they find it hard to be offered a job. Moreover, they find it hard to demonstrate they have the right qualifications to obtain a job, and if they are in job activation they often experience that they have to do a job that do not match the qualifications they have. This, however, is not only related to immigrants as most citizens on job activation experience a mismatch between qualifications and the actual job.

It appears that there is a lack of readiness in the Danish system to make use of or to take advantage of the professional and vocational qualification people with non-Danish background might have obtained before they arrived in Denmark. Also the increasing unemployment in Denmark makes it harder to get job with poor skills.

The regular entrance to the Danish labour market is often through individual initiative or networking. This means that personal contacts to people, like family members, neighbours and friends, being active on the labour market is very important for getting a job or moving on to a new job. Likewise, a personal introduction to potential employers can be very important.

People lacking such contacts, as is often the case with persons with an immigrant background, are often unemployed and depend on the organised, public system to get a job. The authorities handle the employment situation by demanding that unemployed get into a job. If it is not possible for the unemployed persons to find a job on their own initiative they have to participate in job activation. Those having regular employment for a period of 18 months can qualify for unemployment insurance. Persons not covered by unemployment insurance are through the Job House – an institution for employment and job activation under the Social Service Department - offered a special training job or some kind of job activation as a condition for receiving social benefit. In some cases people get the possibility to have further education. Persons covered by unemployment insurance get unemployment benefit for a limited period. If they do not find a job they also have to be activated. This happens through an institution at the county level (Arbejdsformidlingen - AF) connected to the Ministry of Employment. AF also has the function to help job seekers to find jobs as well as helping employers with acquisition. Professionals working in the job placement institutions have built up relations to potential employers and find they are able to open doors for people that would have difficulties getting a job on their own. This relation is longer term and is a matter of trust according to a professional informant working with activation. An immigrant in the neighbourhood puts it like this:

*“To create a success it will require a greater effort. An effort to inform the residents and show consideration for them that is very important. Most important is a coordination of this effort. And to optimise this coordination it would be profitable to have some kind of experience-based committee or something like that”.*

A Social Co-ordination Committee where both employer and employee is represented could play an outgoing part in enhancing the understanding of which opportunities there are in taking on an immigrant. Also it could help preparing the immigrants about the working culture in Denmark as it is often

quite different from what they know. This knowledge could help them become integrated in the labour market.

#### Lack of bonding between neighbourhood and society

The first round of interviews showed in general that the residents like their housing estate and that the surroundings have a lot of prejudice towards the neighbourhood and perceive it as a low status area. This makes some residents feel embarrassed when they are communicating with other citizens in Helsingør and have to tell where they live. Some of the rumours of the neighbourhood are related to crime. However, the crime rate in the area is not higher than the in the rest of Helsingør. When people living outside the area come to visit Vapnagård especially, they often become surprised to see that it is a very nice area. However, a major problem is that most people living outside the neighbourhood have no reason to enter any of the estates in the neighbourhood, as there are few service functions and activities to participate in.

#### *New institutions of governance*

The Danish welfare society is founded on a decentralised and corporative welfare model in which the bottom-up perspective is immanent. Networks are generally open and democratic as for instance tenants' democracy (cf. Sehested 2002). The Danish urban and regional politics is carried out in between hierarchy and network. Often the state makes regulations and laws framing the local development. These regulations and laws are often oriented toward the content of how local politics should be performed which is seen as typical for the hierarchical way to steer (ibid).

The hierarchy is also present when it comes to the added significance of the representative democracy such as the tenants' democracy. Though residents are difficult to mobilise to participate in tenants' democracy, they still support the tenants' democracy as authority. Likewise, residents accept that city council, county, and government are the ultimate authorities to decide how the city and the country are to be ruled. There are of course disagreements about how these decisions are made and on what grounds but the city council's, county's or government's right to make a decision is never questioned.

In this respect, it is important to focus on the process between the mandate that individuals give elected individuals via the representative democracy, and the political solutions that the elected make. This process needs to take into considerations that individuals participate in new and more informal ways. The appeal for individuals to participate in informal forums is in the flexibility when to join a forum. Most residents do not want to be obligated to put in a steady and long-term commitment. This is not a particular feature describing residents in the neighbourhood, it is a much more common, societal feature nowadays. In this respect, the system has to be ready to meet individuals from this perspective. A tendency is that individuals living in socially vulnerable or deprived neighbourhoods are expected to participate in forums such as traditional tenants' democracy, political parties, clubs, organisations, etc. though the patterns for participation has changed. This seems paradoxical: Why think that individuals living in these areas aspire to participate in such forums if individuals from other areas do not?

Hence, governance arrangements based on open, informal network in which actors can join in and out, enjoying equal responsibility and respect

need to be further developed. However, in order to develop these arrangements there has to be some professionalism involved, as professionals are the only persons to anchor a process and make sure the process is continuing. The implication of this is not that the arrangements have to have a hierarchical steering mode as horizontal steering of the arrangement partly sustained by professionals is more likely to be adequate. However, there are risks related to these of kind of arrangements if politicians are represented. In current arrangements it can be identified that when local politicians or bureaucrats are represented in networks, they can force their formal authority on the network, as the hierarchical way of steering still is very manifest. Hence, the development of governance is in need of new democratic principles and new democratic institutions that are to take into considerations that steering conditions are to be developed into network steering. The great challenge lies in developing mechanisms and structures so that they can hold all different groups, including immigrants, organisations and individuals with an interest in the neighbourhood.

An ethnic city councillor suggests an Information Desk to create a better dialogue between residents, especially immigrants, and municipality. He says,

*"Well I have mentioned that we need some kind of information desk. So whenever there is something from the municipality then individuals can put forward a proposal to this office and then be guided how to move along in the system. I have suggested this, however the city council says that it is too expensive in salary and so on. And that is why they say no".*

But these financial savings might in the very end become more expensive for the system than if there were made some investments in projects like this above-mentioned one. Lack of communication sustains individuals in their marginalised position, which costs the system much money every year. There seems to be a need for a more flexible approach how to organise things and loosen up this very bureaucratic thinking. The municipality could consider being more *proactive* in stead of acting when the damage is done.

### **Conclusions: Make space for the individual in the collective**

Policies and programmes have been and to a large degree still is based on universal planning in the sense that one problem is solved by one solution no matter how the context or conditions are. However, identifying problems, challenges, and current solutions related to the neighbourhood indicate a need to move away from universal ideas and instead combine collective means to a broad defined framework in which there is space for contextual conditions. Solutions have to be distinct, but distinct solutions anchored in collective means and a collective framework.

Furthermore, it seems crucial that housing and social programmes replace the problem-identification-logic with a view on problems as constructive conflicts and challenges where there is no single, predefined solution but a solution that emerges during the process of tackling conflicts and challenges. When tackling conflicts and challenges it is important to acknowledge the variety of perspectives from residents, professionals, spiders (local key persons) and municipality on the neighbourhood and to bring these perspectives into play instead of advancing one perspective. Solutions, planning, decision-making, and subsequently, governance

arrangements have to recognise differences and make space for these differences.

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