

## The quest for a social mix

*The Copenhagen experience*

Alves, Sonia

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# THE QUEST FOR A SOCIAL MIX – THE COPENHAGEN EXPERIENCE

Sónia Alves

Instituto de Ciências Sociais  
Universidade Lisboa

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# Two predominant academic perspectives

- Social mix is a remedy for social exclusion, therefore a tool for social integration.
- Social mix is a euphemism for state-led gentrification.

# Controversies on social segregation

- Bringing together on a single site a population homogeneous in its dispossession strengthens that dispossession, notably with respect to culture and cultural practices (Bourdieu, 1999).
- Enclaves of households belonging to the same social group (ethnicity, income etc.) are not in themselves a problem, especially when they are perceived positively (Young, 2002).

# Lack of consensus

- The concentration of underprivileged families hinders opportunities of social integration (cf. peer effects, public service resources, stigmatisation);
- Residential proximity can favour contact, but does not necessarily promote social cooperation and a positive flow of capital from the middle class to the lower class (van Gent & Musterd, 2013).

# Research aims and methods

- To examine the perceptions and beliefs of urban planners, policy makers, and academic regarding ideas and policies of social mix in Copenhagen.
- Face- to- face interviews with 14 officials and academics involved in policy-making, implementation, or evaluation of housing policies.
- The interviews were carried out in Copenhagen from May to July 2014.

# The relevance of the context in which the research was conducted

- CPH: capital of a country that is among the most equal in the world in terms of both economic and social parameters (Alves, 2015);
- The left-wing municipality of Copenhagen has implemented a series of initiatives that aim to enhance the quality of life in disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- A positive view of diversity that emphasizes: “the advantages of diversity and striving to create a city with room for diversity” (Andersen et al. 2014).

# Segregation in Copenhagen

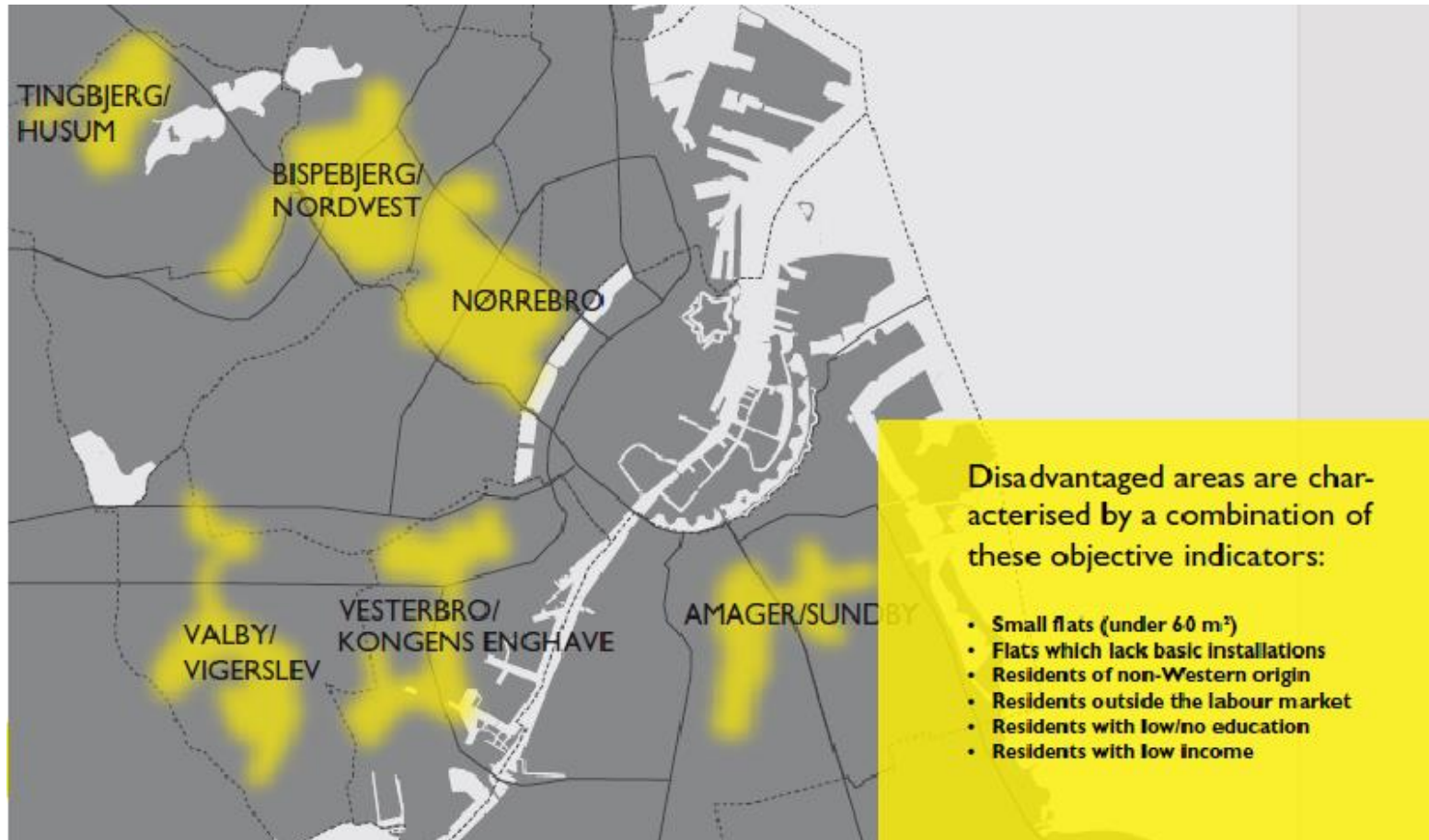
- Increasing concentration of low-income households in certain areas (Alves & Andersen, 2015);
- Increasing income segmentation in housing markets (Skifter- Andersen);
- Segregation and spatial inequality interacts because concentrations of low-income groups and ethnic minorities make these neighbourhoods less attractive.



# Disadvantaged areas in Copenhagen

- The Municipal Planning Strategy for 2010 identifies six areas according to criteria that combine a number of physical demographic and economic indicators;
- These areas are the target of preferential treatment in terms of extra- resources and better sector cooperation in the municipality.

# Six disadvantaged areas / area 2011



# The Policy for Disadvantaged Areas of Copenhagen

Emphasizes the need to foster a diverse and yet cohesive and safe city with room for all

Policy for Disadvantaged Areas of Copenhagen (2011: 7)



One of the city's greatest strengths is its diversity and the differences that exist between its various districts – and this diversity is a strength on which we will continue to build. But children who grow up in Tingbjerg must have the same opportunities of a good childhood as children who grow up in Østerbro, and for example we cannot accept in the long run that residents in the north-western part of the city live seven years shorter than residents of the city centre.

# Three different generations of Danish urban renewal policy

- 1930s and 1940s the policy of inner cities was mainly to demolish older housing of poor quality and to construct new housing estates. Later came a phase of architectural conservation but still only about places and physical structures not about people.
- 1990s - implementation of experimental area-based programmes in which links between social and physical interventions started to be realized.
- Since 1997 approaches that combined aid to both people and places and democratic processes of decision-making and implementation.

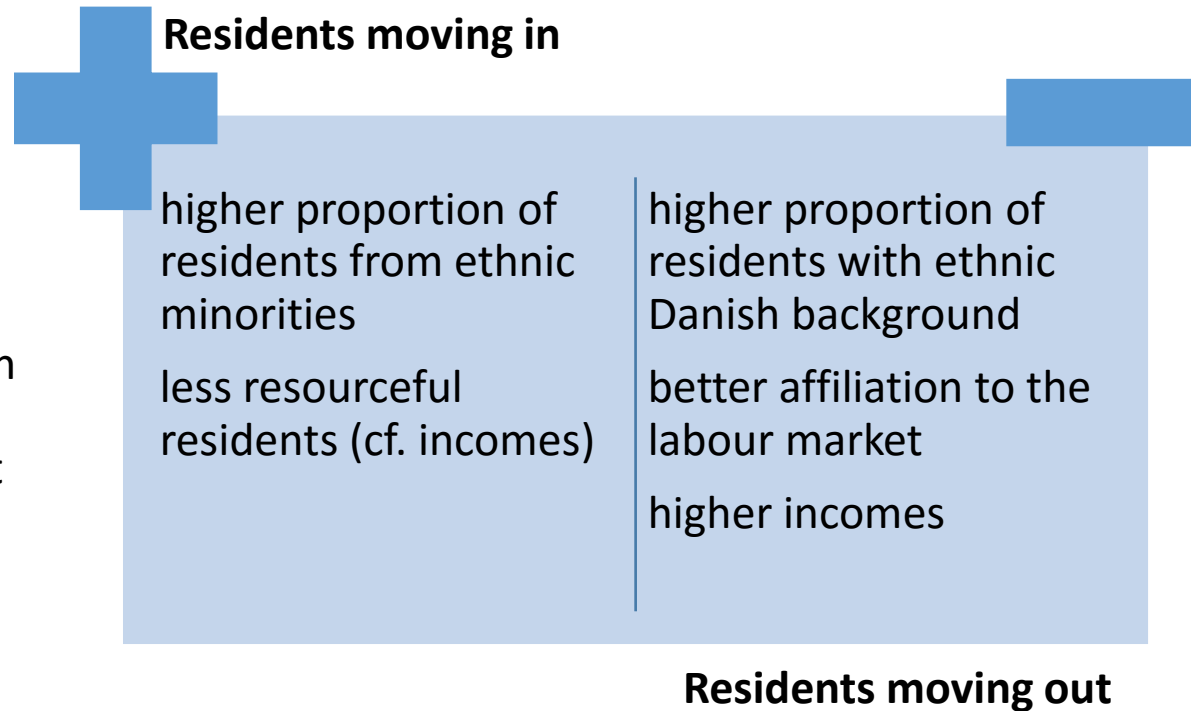
# The example of Kvarterløft (1997)

- Prevented further negative escalation of the social, physical, and economic development of the estates (Skifter-Andersen, 2002).
- The renovation of buildings, public spaces, and community centres changed the image of the neighbourhoods, reducing the number of empty flats and problems of crime and vandalism.
- The reduction of rents compensated for what would otherwise be rent increases due to physical renovation and displacements.

# The relationship between area-based intervention & social mix

Using Danish longitudinal data on the individual level for 1989–2006;

Christensen (2015) found that area-based intervention had no significant effect on social mix neither in respect to mix of educational background, employment mix, income mix nor ethnic mix.



# Social geography in Copenhagen

- is the final outcome of a myriad decisions taken by organizations, authorities, private firms and individuals (Andersen 2012).
- Housing policies and urban planning affect:
  - the supply, price and quality of dwellings;
  - the attractiveness and distribution of different forms of tenure (cf. renting, ownership etc.) within the city;
  - Accessibility for the various social groups according to different criteria income, education, etc.

# 1. How do you understand and define social mix?

- I would define it as mix of people of different income levels, education levels, and maybe you could cite even more elements.
- Social mix is when different kinds of people can live together in a quarter. Social mix is a balance between social groups.
- Social mix is a political idea/concept (it is ideological and not based in facts (...)) there is actually no evidence to support the fact that social mix is better than no social mix.



## 2. What type of segregation is the most problematic in Copenhagen?

- I think socio-economic inequality is the most difficult thing, because you can see immigrants that are able to have a career, they find jobs but if socio-economic inequality persists then they also a problem.
- Definitely the socio-economic is more important in Copenhagen, (...) but there is an overlap of the economically disadvantaged neighbourhood and areas where there is a concentration of ethnic minorities.

### 3. What concerns and assumptions inform ideas of social mix in CPH?

- We have to admit that if the concentration of needy people is too high it won't work, so we have to find models of holding onto people with resources.
- If you look at a city and look at the all economic forces that there is in a city, you can see that if there is no regulation, rich people will chose the best and most exciting places and poor people will live in the worst places.

#### 4. Can you identify initiatives that have been implemented to counteract spatial segregation?

- There is a great deal of pressure to follow market wishes but because plots are so scarce in Copenhagen we are in the luxurious position of being able to make a number of demands through our planning authority. That is also a political priority.
- We negotiate the public interest which is done not by force but by bilateral agreements. They want municipal cooperation in planning, authorization to build, and we negotiate a particular amount of social housing.

4. Can you identify initiatives that have been implemented to counteract spatial segregation?

- When there are more than 40% of people outside the labour market, we halt the influx of people from the municipality waiting list, and there is only access through the ordinary waiting list.
- This is what we call flexible allocation rules for renting, it basically means that if you have a job or are under 35 or over 55, or recently divorced then you can skip the list and go to areas we usually consider socially disadvantaged.

# Conclusions

- Some scepticism about mixing policies;
- A general consensus that the most problematic type of segregation in Copenhagen is the socio-economic;
- A general consensus regarding the need of initiatives that promote area-based and city-wide social mix.

# Conclusions

- The use of the planning system to promote mixed communities in regard to income and housing tenures (also in affluent neighbourhoods);
- In new developments, though site-by-site negotiations and agreements, the need to deliver affordable housing, also to those in worst conditions;
- In deprived neighbourhoods, though area-based regeneration and flexible forms of tenant allocation.

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