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The 'Ghetto' Strikes back: Resisting welfare sanctions and stigmatizing categorizations in marginalized residential areas in Denmark

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Abstract

The Danish social housing sector is currently being restructured by national strategies that seek to combat so-called "parallel societies". These strategies entail especially two things: (1) tearing down and/or privatising social housing in marginalized and vulnerable neighbourhoods and (2) repressive strategies of governance which focus on ethnic minorities, restricting their choices of schools, kindergartens and interactions with social services. Our argument in this article is that despite strong attempts to enforce top-down repressive and discriminatory policies, the "ghetto" continually "strikes back" in a double-sense: Firstly, the Danish policies meant to combat "ghettoization" and "parallel societies" re-create these as statistical (and governable) categories, and secondly, local housing organizations, community workers and residents engage in a struggle from below where they employ tactics to resist the most repressive elements of these urban policies. We show through empirical examples from different neighbourhoods in Denmark, how this struggle from below generate resistance in three forms: they rework classifications and understandings of the neighbourhood; they attempt to generate resilience and increase coping of marginalised groups in the face of punitive state policies; and they mediate recent tendencies to a more punitive state, and mediate and translate active forms of resistance of residents, thereby rewriting scripts of citizenship. We argue that these forms of resistance attempt to change state space production *from within*.

Keywords: local community work, vulnerable neighbourhoods, resistance, sanctioning welfare

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore practices of *resistance* in marginalized residential areas in Denmark. Specifically, we want to show how welfare sanctions and stigmatizing categorizations of marginalized residential areas become resisted both by local residents and local community workers operating in these marginalized areas. Shortly put, marginalized residential areas in Denmark are politically demarcated as spaces of relegation (Wacquant, 2016) as "isolated parallel societies" (Regeringen, 2018) through a complex amalgamation of state policies involving multiple actors, including local authorities and local community work. At the same time, residents and professionals are actively involved in practices and tactics of classification struggle (Tyler, 2015, 2018) in which this production of space (Lefebvre, 2009) is resisted from below (Sisson, 2020).

Local community work can be defined in the Nordic context as a complex series of locally anchored practices, guided by policies, which aim to tackle advanced marginality by area interventions. Often these interventions seek explicitly to develop the capacities of the local communities, the capacity of local governors (the assemblage of professionals from public authorities and NGOs) and the capacity of neighbourhood space (Fallov, 2013). Whereas community work is often, internationally, something that grows organically from various local communities, local community work in Denmark is different. Local community work here is best described as area-based interventions performed through partnerships between municipal actors and housing organisations and set in motion by state-policies which designate particular areas as marginalized "ghettos". On the one hand, then, local community work in Denmark reproduces the political productions of vulnerable neighbourhoods, and in that sense contributes to the territorial stigmatization (Wacquant, 2007) of such places. On the other hand, we also want to show that this representation is too simplistic. Local community work also represents proactive, if fragile, ways of changing state production of spaces *from within* (Fallov et al, 2017).

Conceptually, we understand resistance as class struggles from below in which there are multiple dimensions: Katz (2010) has developed a three-fold distinction between resilience, reworking and resistance in order to understand the subtleties of people's practices of resistance in everyday life. Resilience refer to autonomous initiatives to increase coping in everyday life. Reworking aims to alter the conditions by reworking practices and spaces. Whereas, resistance refer to more conscious forms of opposition (Katz, 2010). It is important that classification struggles form part of all three forms of resistance. Thus, when we talk about resistance we are referring to these multidimensional forms of practices.

We begin by briefly describing our methods, and then providing the historial context for local community work in Denmark. We focus especially on recent political initiatives centred on the idea that Denmark is beset by "parallel societies" and "ghettos". Following this, we outline different theoretical perspectives on categorizing neighbourhoods as objects of area-based intervention. We then discuss the practices which categorize vulnerable neighbourhoods as "ghettos". We argue that these practices are "ways of seeing" vulnerable neighbourhoods that affect local community workers' "ways of doing". We then move on to three sections analysing examples of how local community workers and housing associations engage in struggles from below. We show how they through different practices that aim to rework classifications and neighbourhoods, build resilience and capacity development, and mediate in resistance. These examples highlight how local community workers deploy different tactics to deal with designation of territorial stigma stemming from policy categorizations and mediate, albeit not alleviate, effects of poverty and marginality.

Methodological considerations

The empirical data we draw on in this article consist of ethnographic material from two consecutive qualitative research projects, which all revolve around understanding the role and practices of local community work in the Danish context. The main part of the empirical material were gathered between December 2014 and December 2018, by the main authors and one research assistant. During this work, we followed the practices of local community workers in six different projects, located in different geographical

areas in Denmark of different sizes, thus spanning both big housing estates outside Copenhagen and smaller pockets of local social housing elsewhere in the country. Thus, the study spanned different forms of urban settings and, consequently, different urban contexts. In the first project we conducted 35 interviews in total with local community workers and residents from across these six different neighbourhood regeneration projects, and with representatives of housing organisations. Local community workers are mostly employed full time as project officers in the neighbourhood regeneration projects, and can in some instances be partly employed by the municipality and partly by the housing association or a NGO. We also conducted approximately 350 hours of participant observation. In the second project, we revisited one of the areas and conducted here five new interviews spanning local community workers, housing associations and residents. All interviews and field notes were transcribed.

For the purpose of this article the material was re-coded and analysed with focus on answering the research question: How can we, seen from the perspective of local community work, understand reactions to Government policies in vulnerable neighbourhoods, and how can these reactions be understood as forms of resistance. This meant that we re-analysed the material with focus on ways of seeing the neighbourhoods and how these ways of seeing (classification struggles) affected the practice and professionals' ways of doing. More specifically we coded the material looking for what forms of resistance emerge (bearing in mind the three-fold definition of resistance as rework, resilience and resistance (Katz 2010), how the professionals relayed critique and understandings of the classifications of neighbourhoods and residents, and how they experienced that residents react to these forms of classification. We could re-use our existing material because the ghetto debate has been ongoing since early 2000s and culminated in the recent Government strategy (Regeringen 2018) outlined below. We supplemented our existing interview and observation material with examples of resistance from recent news paper articles to get a broader spectrum of resistance tactics involved. The latter will serve mainly as examples of tentative responses to the most recent policy changes.

The "Ghetto Strategy" in a historical perspective

The recent strategy called 'The National Strategy to fight Parallel Societies' (Regeringen, 2018), colloquially known as the "ghetto strategy", is the culmination of a development in local community work in Denmark in which there is an increased focus on concentrations of ethnic minorities, physical changes as a way to provide a better social mix, and increased professionalization of local community work moving it closer to social planning. Hermansen (1975) distinguishes between three forms of community work: local community development (sometimes taking the form of community action) focusing on bottom-up development, local community organization strengthening institutionalised approaches locally with involvement of voluntary forces, and social planning. Danish local community work has its roots in the Settlement movement (local community development in Hermansen's terms (1975). Later during the 1960s and 1970s, local community development became more explicitly involved in political agitation for the right to 'the good home' and the betterment of living conditions in deprived neighbourhoods.This involved political advocacy in relation to slum clearance and empowerment practices (Ebbe & Friese, 1985; Fallov & Nissen, 2018).

In the 1980s, local community work moved from experiments to recognized professional methods and local community initiatives spread to many vulnerable areas via state supported funding to housing organisations. At this time, the ambivalent role of local community work was already highlighted in an evalution of their work in the sense that the mere presence of local community workers is an extension of the social control of authorities to the private and semi-public spheres of local communities (Adamsen & Fisker, 1986). It was in the 1990s that local community work achieved its break through on a national scale with the projects stemming out of the Urban Committee 1993 and the neighbourhood regeneration schemes initiated from 1996-2008 (Ejrnæs et al., 1997). Later carried on in several rounds of local revitalization plans (Boligsociale helhedsplaner (2006- present). Thus, since the 1990s there has been a process of professionalization of methods and mainstreaming of approaches to local community work (Mazanti, 2002; Vestergaard et al., 1999) which has moved the characteristic of Danish local community work from its early combination of local

community development and local community organizing to a combination of local community organizing and social planning (Fallov, 2010b, 2017; Vincenti, 2009). Thus, the desire to legitimize approaches and mainstream results in municipal practices may have come at the expense of experimentation and local flexibility and freedom.

In recent history, concentrations of ethnic minorities have, politically, become a sign post of lacking social cohesion (Børresen, 2002; Fallov, 2010b). Tied to this development is a strong policy narrative running through consecutive policy rounds associating the good urban life with social mix. Interventions and funding have prioritised physical renovations with the ambition of turning run-down neighbourhoods from mono-functional areas to multi-facetted and attractive neighbourhoods improving their status on the housing market (Schultz Larsen, 2014). Here local community work has been an add-on focusing on improving neighbourhood image, and improving bridging and linking forms of social capital (Fallov, 2010a; Kearns, 2003). Thus, tying local community work ever closer to frameworks of social planning.

Local community work in Denmark is closely interwoven with the state and with the belief in welfare policies amending local expressions of social problems (Fallov, 2010a, 2017). Additionally, local community work has from its early roots played a role in the cartography and bio-political ordering of vulnerable neighbourhoods (Fallov & Nissen 2018). However, the close ties to professional social work and state policies is a feature that marks the difference between Danish local community work and local community work in the Scandinavian countries (Sjöberg & Turunen, 2018; Turunen, 2009), where local community work, for example in Sweden, has retained the activist roots. All local community work is political as it engages with the production of space. However, the degree of the close interaction with political frames and collaboration with both state and municipalities also marks local community work in Denmark as different from local community work in Anglo Saxon and southern European countries. However, we would argue that the influence from the cross-national tendencies toward workfare and its marriage to a more penal state (Wacquant, 2008a, 2008b) is common across national and local contexts for community work. Wacquant has shown in his comparative study that

the centaur state produces spaces of relegation marked by territorial stigma in which social groups with few resources are hemmed in in secluded neighbourhoods because they lack potential for social mobility. The Danish vulnerable neighbourhoods become similarly to those Wacquant have studied in France and USA viewed as vectors of social disintegration (Wacquant 2016), which services to obscure the concentration of poverty and social exclusion. However, Danish areas differ in three important aspects. Firstly, they are generally in better condition that social housing in many other countries and with greater resident satisfaction. Secondly, they are characterised by demographic turbulence and greater social mobility due to the Danish educational system and relatively higher levels of social security (see also Jensen and Christensen 2012). Thirdly, although police presence is a constant political issue the police effort is coupled tightly with Danish social services. Thus, these neighbourhoods are rather penetrated by state presence. Wacquant argues that such neighbourhoods are 'anti-ghettoes' due to their ethnically heterogeneous composition, their lacking shield capacity and their penetration by state presence (Wacquant, 2008b, see also ; Schultz Larsen, 2011, 2014). We have argued (Birk and Fallov 2020) that the interstitial position of the local community workers enable them to perform as a – at least partial – corrective to territorial stigma (see also Sandbjerg Hansen 2019).

The problematization of neighbourhoods with concentration of ethnic minorities have taken hold in the Danish media debate since the early 2000s legitimizing official rhetoric around "ghettos" (Frandsen & Hansen, 2020). Thus, the "Strategy to fight Parallel Societies" is based on a political agreement across the political spectrum. This policy divides vulnerable areas into three groups: "Vulnerable neighbourhoods", "ghettos" and "hard ghettos". Vulnerable neighbourhoods meet at least two of the following four criteria:

1. The proportion of residents aged 18-64 without relation to either the labour market or educational system exceeds an average of 40% over the past two years.

2. The proportion of residents convicted of violation of *the Penal Code*, *the Gun Law* or *the Act on Euphoriant Substances* amounts to at least 3 times the national average when calculated as the average over the past 2 years.

3. The proportion of residents aged 30-59 that only has a basic education exceeds 60% of all residents in the same age-group.

4. The average gross income for residents aged 15-64 in the area (excluding students in further education) is less than 55% of the average gross income of the same group within the region.

A vulnerable neighbourhood with at least 1,000 residents, out of which the proportion of immigrants and descendants from non-western countries exceeds 50%, is listed as a "ghetto". The neighbourhood becomes characterized as a "hard ghetto" if it has been listed as a "ghetto" for four consecutive years (for the years 2018-2020 it is five consecutive years). Being listed as a "ghetto" and especially as a "hard ghetto" limits how municipalities and housing associations can handle flexible allocation of social housing and impedes on the autonomy of municipal planning. The strategy requires a physical restructuring of the so-called "ghetto areas", including a reduction of social housing in "hard ghettos" to a maximum of 40% of current numbers. Consequently, local municipalities and social housing associations have to tear down thousands of social housing units, or sell them as owner-occupied flats, or private rentals. Moreover, the social dimensions of the strategy imply, among other initiatives, double sentencing for crimes committed within these areas, that parents in the "hard ghettos" are forced to send their children to pre-school child care, and that municipalities have to have an advanced job centre effort in the areas.

Perspectives on making the ghetto a governable object

The ghetto-list, its consequences and Denmark's general treatment of ethnic minorities have been critiqued and explored by several scholars. This work has commonly argued that the Danish ghetto is product of bureaucracy and politics, rather than an empirical reality (Schultz Larsen, 2011). In a genealogical analysis of

urban policies in Denmark, Frandsen and Hansen (2020) argue how, marginalized residential areas in the 1990s were considered part of a wider societal and urban dynamic; that the status of an area as marginalized could not, and should not, be seen as an exclusively local problem. In the 2000s, however, urban problems started to be seen as problems essential to the particular local neighbourhood, i.e. "parallel societies". Other critiques have been aimed at the racialization of the list, which makes social problems (such as unemployment) a problem specific *to* ethnic minorities (Fallov, 2010a). This literature shows the illegitimacy of the "ghetto"-stamp on an empirical, scientific level, while demonstrating how this category may be useful for policy it is a scientifically problematic and misleading label.

Birk (2016, 2018) has drawn on governmentality studies and science and technology studies to explore the ghetto list as a political and material artefact. The school of governmentality studies, drawing widely on Foucauldian analyses of power and governance, argues that for a population to become governable, it has to be turned into a governable object, a task which often happens through census statistics (Hacking, 1982, 1991), or other similar inscription devices. In this style of thought, calculation is a productive technology of government in the sense that its calculations enable particular modes of thinking (for example, that an area is a "ghetto") and consequently modes of action as well (e.g. that ghettos must be intervened upon) (Rose & Miller, 1992). This style of analysis is interested in how the list emerge as a governance device and what effects it generate as such. Birk (2016) argues that the simple descriptive statistics used in these policies become indicative of different forms of ordering life in these neighbourhoods and that the list flattens the particular social, historical, economical and geographical differences that exist between the areas demarcated in this way as "ghetto" or "non-ghetto" areas.

Drawing these perspectives together, we may say that the perspective from STS shows us how the ghetto-list is a tool for governance producing these areas as spaces that can, and should, be intervened upon by the government. From critical sociological and anthropological analyses we learn that the legitimization of area-based interventions are part of wider historical trajectories of integration/ exclusion, and discrimination. We

argue that the Danish "ghetto"-policies should be analysed through this dual critical stance: it is necessary to understand the list as an empirically imprecise (even fallacious) category, as a case of discrimination and repression that target ethnic minorities in particular, but also as practical assemblages that form ways of seeing and ways of doing interventions. We will below show how these ways of seeing and doing have unintended consequences that risk leading to further marginalisation, particularly of those groups that do not easily find their way onto the path of employability. Thus, we insist that it is important not only to analyse these strategies of relegation from the top down but also concern ourselves with the practice of local community work. To understand the impact of such policies we must analyse its resonance on the ground, and what forms of resistance and classification struggle that local community workers and residents enact.

"Small margins – big consequences" - Classification struggles reworking the "ghetto"

The political complex surrounding Danish local community work, and the ways of classifying particular neighbourhoods and their populations, inevitably affects the practice of local community work. However, this does not necessarily mean that they completely accept or take on the political rhetoric. On the contrary, our data shows that people were quite aware of both the limitations and even arbitrariness of the ghetto lists. For example, take this interview with Tim, who was a consultant for the National Organization of Housing Associations:

> Tim: So, about the ghettolist, you need to know that in reality, the ones of us [in the housing associations] who know the numbers, we know […] that there might be 100, 120 and not 25 marginalized areas in Denmark. This is because of the marginal limits […] for example, there's a lot of areas that have 48% [of the population] outside the labour market, but you need 50% to get on the list […] It's completely irrelevant, and maybe some of the areas with 48% unemployed are less well functioning as an area, compared to the ones with 60% unemployed […]

Tim critiques how easily the numbers might fluctuate to classify an area as a ghetto. The opinion in his organization was that the list itself was worthless for local community work, and that it was only useable for political purposes stigmatizing areas that were already moving in downward spiral.

The list is based on the extensive data about the Danish population that is tracked and supplied by Danish Statistics, the national and centralized statistics agency, which have a very large amount of data about its citizens. Since the very inception of the list there have been pockets of resistance towards the statistics used In 2017, this resistance centered on the accuracy of the data about "educational backgrounds" (see Birk & Elmholdt 2020, for an elaborated analysis of this). If a certain number of residents do not have educations, then the area has a higher risk of being placed on the list. But due to many residents of these areas being immigrants or refugees, their education is rarely registered. This means that local community workers have been trying to improve the data, so as to paint a more accurate picture of their area. In the area Solbakken, in the city Odense, local community workers in 2019 went door-to-door to collect evidence from local residents about their educational backgrounds, in case this had not been registered by Danish statistics (Strandfelt & Christiansen, 2019). As the local municipal officials said at the time, the data from 2019 would be part of the list in 2020, and only a small number of residents might cause them to be registered as a "ghetto" for the fourth year in a row, which would re-classify the area as a "hard ghetto". Here, local community workers engage in a classificatory struggle as part of their work. The same thing happened in Bispeparken in Copenhagen (Ellekrog, 2019), and similar stories of protests against the list regularly pop up in Danish media. Such forms of struggle from below result in more than changed conceptualization, since classification as a "hard ghetto" lead to demands of extensive changes of the physical layout of the neighbourhoods. Thus the real world effects of this classification, for example, will reduce the number of local community workers that it is possible to have in one area (Interview with Peter, project leader, neighbourhood regeneration project, area H).

These examples are intriguing, *because* local community workers, the local housing associations, and even the local municipal administrations (including some local politicians) engage in classification struggles (Tyler, 2018) against the "ways of seeing" the neighbourhoods and their social problems produced by the ghetto list and the policy framework. Such classification struggle might not restructure the policy framework, but when they succeed they push against the classification of particular neighbourhoods, which rework the possibilities for local community practices. It sends strong signals to residents and assemblages of state and local authority officials about the legitimate ways of seeing local dynamics and local developments. These struggles from below (Sisson, 2020), as we see them, play out as tactics on the ground, such as the on-going and difficult work of securing employment for local unemployed residents, or the work of going door-to-door to talk to people about their educational backgrounds. Following Katz's (2010) definition, their resistance tactic is that of reworking, as they are engaging in the classification struggle that rework the neighbourhoods and the management of possibilities of local community (Fallov, 2013).

Resilience, capacity building, and tactics of changing marginal positions

Local community work maintains its roots in empowerment and community development by initiating and facilitating small-scale projects developing the capacities of residents and thus the resilience of the neighbourhood. We have examples of local community workers training women to find their way around on their own (Interview with Tina, local project officer, neighbourhood regeneration project area G), and teaching women to bike to increase their mobility (observations neighbourhood regeneration project area T).

In many instances, these types of projects are tactics to alleviate the effects of the introduction of restrictive workfare policies. The 'Strategy to Fight Parallel Societies' forms part of an assemblage of policies that introduce possibilities of sanctions for job-seekers and a set of cuts in the entitlements for people on cash benefits in Denmark. These forms of restrictive workfare policies are meant to increase incitement for (re)entering the labour market. However, they hit the vulnerable areas relatively hard as there is a higher

concentration of people on the lowest forms of benefit transfers (the immigration benefit is 75% lower than normal cash benefit).

An economic councillor working in one local community project, explained to us that the introduction of reduced benefit rates and the ceiling over total amount of benefits meant that many of the poorest and most vulnerable residents face evictions. She offers individual counselling where she helps them adjust their budget. However, it is not always possible to find the money for them to stay in their homes. She told us that these sanctions have 'terrible consequences. You give those that have the least even less possibilities' and that such repressive policies 'force them out in inhuman situations" (Interview with Lis, economic councillor, neighbourhood regeneration project area H).

Even though local community workers work to mediate the sanctioning and repressive elements of recent policies, and to improve individual families' coping strategies on ever smaller budgets, they are not able to make the effects disappear (See also Birk and Fallov, 2020). In the same area, there is an initiative that provides the inhabitants of a vulnerable neighbourhood with excess food from supermarkets and restaurants for a low price. The local community worker who facilities the food project explained how she was surprised at the amount of people needing this almost-free food, as reduced benefits have undermined basic security for people on immigration benefits. She explains further:

> … the challenging thing in community work and working with volunteers is how to make other people attend. This is the key thing with the food project, because all of the sudden someone new is there and then you get a chance to talk about what is going on and hand out some leaflets (Interview with Hannah project officer, neighbourhood regeneration project area H).

The food project thus gives her the opportunity to nudge residents in the direction of the projects and assistance provided, for example in relation to economic guidance, or other activities. As such, the project becomes part of a tactic which mediates the marginal position of the residents. It is also, crucially, a tactic

which deals with the paradox that those residents that are most visible for local community workers are not necessarily the people with the most severe social problems or need (Fallov, 2013).

Another example of how local community workers deploy tactics to mediate the effects of the recent ghetto strategy is via home visits aimed at improving parenting skills (a contentious issue in and of itself).

The project leader explains:

> Typically the schools have interviews with families of concern, and our offer will be introduced to these parents…Then we start a process with the families [starting with an open conversation where parents can set their agenda]. We have had focus on truancy. We can see that language and time to read with the children, while setting limits for screen time and ensuring good lunch packages are themes that the school point to. It can be mundane everyday things, but it's important for generating a good learning environment for the children (Interview with Peter, project leader, neighbourhood regeneration project area H).

The local community workers deploy their own methods in order to increase the coping ability of vulnerable families on some of the same issues that are also tackled in policy strategies. However, from a political level they are tackled through sanctioning parents on their child support if families have high rates of truancy, lack in language abilities, or refuse to send their children to kindergarten. By utilizing their networks with local schools, local community workers get access to families who might otherwise not be visible to them. This indicates the tendency for 'community organization' (Hermansen 1975) that characterizes local community work in Denmark, as we have outlined in the historical section. It is an indication of the multiple ways that local community workers utilize their local organizational networks to support families and other groups in need through small everyday oriented tactics.

We term these forms of practices as resilience (Katz, 2010) as they focus on tactics to develop capacities of residents in the face of harsh conditions. Moreover, the school parents example indicates that local community work plays a role in building local 'professional resilience' (Fallov & Blad 2018) by generating

synergy between local organizational resources that often work towards their own end or with sectoral logics.

Local resistance against strategies of relegation

Even though local community work has developed a role where they are less pro-active and activist in their practice, local community workers still have to navigate the politics of space production (Lefebvre, 2009). One of our interviewees relayed how lack of local protest is a product of the territorial stigma produced in the assemblage of media and politics. This alineates residents from democratic participation. At the same time, she argued that direct agitation was not in her role as a local community professional:

> In Copenhagen and Aarhus [the two largest cities of Denmark] they have made demonstrations and such things, but I do not experience that kind of thing here, not at all. People are not politically interested, apart from that they do not feel that they have a 'voice'. They do not feel represented by the political system, and this means that they do not demonstrate or put themselves forward for local elections. That makes me wonder. It is, moreover, not my role to be political. So if they come to me for advice regarding a demonstration, then I can relay what they do in Aarhus, but I cannot mobilize them for rebellion that is not my role (Hannah, project officer, neighbourhood regeneration project area H).

This exemplifies how local community workers can exist in an ambivalent position where they on the one hand should facilitate the development towards active citizenship and engagement (Fallov, 2013) while on the other hand have to mediate in the 'scripts of citizenship' (Isin, 2009). Although, some of the local community workers possibly find ways to agitate more openly on behalf of or for their residents, it also becomes an important role to translate more open forms of protest into something that is seen as legitimate voices from the perspective of the policy system (Fallov & Birk 2020). Tim from the National Organisation of

Housing Associations explains, for example, how he understands the behaviour of some of the young residents.

> …then there is the forms of 'counter citizenship', people react when they are in a marginalized position. It is typically young people, we talk about here, who are citizens, but it could be other groups. They smash things up…if you see the municipal youth club on [name of street] it is built for young people in [name of neighbourhood] it is super fancy made by a fancy architecht with a grass roof, and anyway the windows are always smashed, why?... you see these persistence acts by 'counter-citizens' who really hate the public authorities, hate Denmark, and so on (Tim, consultant, the National organisation of Housing Associations).

Local community workers then have an important role in translating this form of anger and feelings of powerlessness, which result in what Tim in the interview calls acts of counter-citizenship, into other forms of affective resistance. They assist the young people not only by generating reflection about their motives for these alternative scripts of citizenship, but also by assisting the writing of new ones that are deemed more legitimate by the authorities. Or, one could say, in order to harness the energy of the young people into something that actually change their marginal position, albeit maybe one small step at the time.

Another local community worker explains how the young people she works with have a diffuse anger directed at the world, often understood by themselves as caused by public discrimination. She relays here:

> This [the diffuse anger] can have an unfortunate effect. I think we have a job in trying to understand, then we can agree or disagree, but to suggest: 'why is it that you feel that you have to reject the world?', 'what can you do?', and 'how can you express your dissatisfaction, or complaints?'….we can help them in suggesting that you can actually do this and this (Interview with Sonja project leader, neighbourhood regeneration project area S).

The Ghetto "strikes back" in several ways. Sometimes this takes the form of counter-citizenship; of lashing out at anything and anyone that symbolizes their anger. Local community workers intervene in these

expressions of powerlessness trying to turn them into something that will be listened to. They get an important role not only in facilitating the rewriting of the scripts of active citizenship, but also in mediating in the way that the system reflects upon forms of resistance by residents, and how they react to space production from above.

Concluding discussion

Over the last two decades, changing governments in Denmark across the political spectrum have consistently implemented a series of urban policies which demarcate particular neighbourhoods as not just socio-economically marginalized, but as *problematic.* These policies contribute to the on-going stigmatization of these places as "ghettos", and by relegating the problems of such areas to a characteristic of resident behaviour and attitude they contribute to the legitimization of more sanctioning forms of welfare. Local community work in Denmark is inextricably intertwined with these policies. At one level, then we are pointing out the consequences of the state's symbolic power and how public authorities and other professionals are involved in these practices of relegation (Wacquant 2016). This is a well known point, described well, for example, by Bourdieu et al (1999). However, it is important to repeat these points through a dual stance: where we both pay attention to how classification systems become important "ways of seeing" and limits "ways of doing" local community work. We do this as to draw out the normative implications of these policy complexes and forms of categorization for the lives of residents in vulnerable areas designated as "ghettos". The close relation between local community work and the state in Denmark means that their practice is fraught with tensions and ambivalences. Their close relationship to public authorities – a striking difference in comparison with community work in many other places – underpins Danish local community work with resources that are not found in other contexts more vulnerable to the harsh winds of neoliberal austerity politics (see Fallov & Blad, 2018b). However, the marriage to public authorities still favours behavioural and individualistic interventions rather than long-term structural perspectives. Such perspectives are needed to

bring the combating of poverty to the fore of the production of space. Jones et al (2020) show, for example, how austerity policies in the UK exacerbate structural inequalities and territorial stigma. Whereas, Mead (2018) in an Irish context shows the continual depence on state policies, which activate community citenzenry. Such activities will, as we have also shown above, also contain the seeds of resistance.

Thus, it would be too simplistic to see local community work in Denmark as beholden to shifts in social policies towards greater sanctioning workfare. Their everyday attention to the needs of vulnerable residents should not be reduced to the left hand cleaning up of the domination of the right hand of the state (Bourdieu, 1999). The practices of local community workers also represent important forms of everyday tactics to negotiate structures of domination and forms of knowledge and reflection that can form the basis of present and future resistance. They are engaged in practices which should be seen as forms of 'struggle from below' (Sisson 2020) that aim to change state production of spaces (Lefebvre 2009) *from within*. Utilizing Katz' destinction between resilience, reworking and resistance as different dimensions of everyday practices of resistance, we have shown how local community workers deploy tactics of reworking by attempting to change or prevent forms of classification. They engage in what Tyler (2015) terms classification struggle negotiating official categorization. Local community workers are involved in building resident capacities and neighbourhood resilience. These practices involve balancing tensions between empowerment and social control. As Kirkness (2014) have shown in relation to the French context, such practices might not have the power to change structural inequalities on their own, but mobilize the pride and coping tactics of residents facing stigma. Moreover, local community workers mediate in the different forms of resistance, and assist through their situated knowledge (McLeavy et al 2021) residents in writing new scripts of citizenship (Isin 2009).

We can hope that these insights from local community work can inform other parts of social work, much the same way as the experiments of the 1970s were appropriated by other areas of social work. Local community work is central to the roots of the "sociatry" (Branco 2018) of social work, and the challenge is whether it can use its partnership with municipal professionals to build professional resilience to policies of relegation,

rather than emulate its territorial stigma and retreat into a defensive position. We have shown that local community workers deploy tactics that mediate in the effects of state policies to generate greater local resilience with innovative approaches to the everyday life of residents at the centre. Our hope is that such practices and tactics will serve to strengthen a proactive position of social work in the face of exclusionary and discriminatory politics.

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