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Countering Spatial Alienation: Social Work in a Stigmatised Neighbourhood in Copenhagen, Denmark

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Introduction

Like so many other larger cities around the globe, Copenhagen (Denmark) has been transformed in tandem with the advanced urban marginality and the politics of gentrification that have concentrated stigmatised populations in segregated areas of the city (Andersen 2002, Larsen & Hansen 2008, Wacquant 2008, Larsen 2014). The policies applied to manage the "social ills" of the post-industrialised society have been closely connected to the neoliberalisation (Peck & Tickell 2002) of the traditional Danish welfare state. Accompanied by symbolic denigrations of the poor and the immigrants (especially in racialised and xenophobic categories such as the "un-integrated Muslim" living in a "parallel society"), this has involved the introduction of workfare policies, including welfare cutbacks and the conditioning of benefits on certain behaviours (especially applying for every job available) (Kvist & Greve 2011). It is connected to the introduction of New Public Management in every sector of the state, enforcing micro-management of otherwise highly skilled welfare workers (measuring the outcome of welfare, controlling details, standardising interventions, etc.) (Sehested 2002). Furthermore, despite the so-called "Scandinavian exceptionalism",[1] the gradual transformation of welfare into workfare has gone hand in hand with *prisonfare* (Wacquant 2009). Even though the incarceration rates for adults are low compared to other countries, Denmark and Copenhagen have experienced a tightening of the policies regarding crime, enforcement of zero tolerance, safety zones and so on (Nilsson & Delica 2015).

However, rather than consisting of a withdrawal to a "minimal state," as hailed by neoliberal ideology, the actual process of neoliberalisation takes the form of a *remaking* of the state in which the state's aims and capacities are being harnessed and utilised in new way (Wacquant 2009, Soss et al. 2011). Thus, in targeted urban areas – publicly disgraced as "ghettos" or "exposed" areas – the restructuring of urban politics and neighbourhood regulation (toward entrepreneurial projects based on short-term contracts) has also involved state funding for urban renewal projects and residential social work (Andersen & van Kempen 2003). In Copenhagen, the so-called "neighbourhood-lifting" projects, which were introduced in the mid-1990s as slum clearance were replaced by holistic approaches to urban planning (Vagnby & Jensen 2002), involved not only renovations of buildings, apartments and surroundings but also a widening of community-based social work (van Gent et al. 2009).

In this article, I investigate the points of views of social workers on a poor neighbourhood in Copenhagen known as the Northwest; the only district of Copenhagen included in every municipal project of urban renewal since the mid-1990s. I analyse how different types of pedagogical agencies have intervened in this degraded and denigrated neighbourhood in the last 20 years or so, and I discuss aspects of political, pedagogical and spatial (de)alienation

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[1] See Pratt (2008a+b) and Ugelvik & Dullum 2012 for discussions.

and (de)commodification inherent in the interrelations of stigmatised places and social pedagogical interventions.

1   The Northwestern case

The neighbourhood known as the Northwest borders on the municipality of Copenhagen and is part of the district Bispebjerg. It developed from around the beginning of the 1900s when the city of Copenhagen annexed it, along with the other villages and areas surrounding Copenhagen. From the beginning of the 1900s until the 1950s, the population rose very rapidly from some 5,000 to 70,000 and then started to decline like the rest of Copenhagen. Today, it has 40-50,000 inhabitants depending on where the borders are drawn.[2] A long strip running through the middle of the area constitutes the old industrial anchor, and blends with some of the "old, speculative housing" of the late 1800s and early 1900s. In contrast to this, the area otherwise consists of neo-classicistic and functionalist apartment complexes made by well-known architects especially during the period from 1930 to 1950. During the first 50 years of existence, a strong sense of local identity developed in the neighbourhood, especially connected to the working-class workplaces and prestigious apartments – and with Social Democrats living in the area writing proudly about the cooperative organisations in the neighbourhood. From the 1950s onward, the population decreased in the Northwest as well as in Copenhagen, while the greater periphery of Copenhagen was built, offering cheap, small row houses. Then, through a combination of social factors, the neighbourhood started dilapidating.[3] Demographically, the first residents got older while new categories of immigrants entered. Economically, the industrial plants and workshops gradually closed, accelerating through the 1970s and 1980s[4]. Politically, the segregation of the urban hierarchy and ideological promotion of private ownership accelerated the social divide. Symbolically, as many of the residences were social housing and small apartments, the area became known as a "municipal dumping ground for problem categories", involving a concentration of unemployed, mentally ill, the elderly and immigrants in the Northwest. In the beginning of the 1990s, the Social Democratic newspaper (along with several other media) described the Northwest as "the worst area in the country".

Today, the Northwest has the lowest average income in Copenhagen and the highest degree of unemployment (around 20% compared to around 6.1% for the Greater Copenhagen), and is known in symbolically denigrating terms as North-leather-west or North-worst (since the invention of the so-called ghetto list in the 2000s, it has been marked by a state-sanctioned stigma, with a handful of apartment blocks on the list every year). Even in media-driven popularity polls, the neighbourhood comes in as the least attractive neighbourhood in Copenhagen (also among the people living there). However, it still holds fragments of the "old" working-class pride, which hand in hand with the creeping gentrification (spawned by its relative proximity to the city centre, the cheap apartments and low degree of isolation compared to other "problem areas", and the direct effort of the state and the municipality to regenerate the old industrial city in the direction of a creative economy by inviting "creative" firms into the old industrial buildings) and direct efforts of the local council leads to counter-

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[2] Compared to the 700,000 inhabitants in Copenhagen (incl. Frederiksberg), 1,300,000 in the Greater Copenhagen and 5,700,000 in Denmark.

[3] For a similar account of the Paris "red belt," see Stovall 2001.

[4] Between 1971 and 1983, 54% of all industrial companies and 64% of all occupational positions in the Northwest disappeared, compared to 49% of the companies and 53% of the positions in Copenhagen as such, and 3% of the companies and 11% of the positions for the whole country (Orientering fra Københavns Statistik 1985, p. 4-7).

symbolisms such as "north-best" and the change in the official naming of the administrative territory as Bispebjerg.

2   Spatial alienation and state transformation

According to Wacquant (2008), the characteristics of the advanced marginality of the post-Fordist era – the fragmentation and desocialisation of wage labour, the disconnection of the poor from the economic conjunctures, the rise of precarious jobs and inequality, and the spatial concentration of poverty – have fostered a transformation of the organisation and experience of space itself. In his comparative sociology, Wacquant shows how, since the end of the 1970s, the working class neighbourhoods in Europe and the inner city ghettos in the US have been gradually reduced from communal 'places' bathed in shared emotions and joint meanings, supported by practices and institutions of mutuality, to indifferent 'spaces' of mere survival and relentless contest, battlefields, stigmatised territories commonly known as dangerous, no-go areas. In the ideal-typical case of Europe, Wacquant suggests that this "dissolution of place and spatial alienation", this loss of a "humanized, culturally familiar and socially filtered locale" with which marginalised urban populations identify and feel at home and relatively secure is further enhanced by the wilting of the old socio-cultural organisations of the working-class neighbourhoods and their superseding of (semi)public organisations.[5] Wacquant explicates that the policy responses to the new marginality have varied from country to country on a spectrum from criminalisation to politicisation, but contrary to the US withdrawal of the social state, European states in general have deployed a wide range of urban development programmes in the stigmatised areas.

This has also been the case in the capital of the Scandinavian welfare state Denmark, Copenhagen. Since the mid-1990s, a main policy response to this form of urban marginality has been different kinds of area-based interventions and urban renewal programmes funded by either the municipality or the state, but largely also by the tenants of social housing themselves (Kristensen 2002, Agger & Larsen 2009, Nielsen 2010). Hand in hand with the general expansion, professionalisation and universalisation of pedagogical tasks (more children in day care, longer schooling, formalised leisure activities, etc.), the rise of so-called "preventive measures" and a widening of other welfare and therapeutic institutions, this has led to a larger number of social work activities in the area (see also Cohen 1979). Every urban renewal programme launched by the city of Copenhagen has included the Northwest, and about 56% of all the jobs in the Bispebjerg district relate to the state, indicating a veritable injection of social work in the poor urban neighbourhood. As one social worker told me: "We're so many social workers in this neighbourhood that we are stumbling over each other." Another one said: "Really, the greatest task is actually to coordinate our activities."

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[5] For an introduction to the analytical framework of territorial stigmatization, also see Wacquant et al. 2014. For a selection of analyses of the different ways residents cope with their stigmatized residence, see Auyero 1999, Jensen & Christensen 2012, Slater & Anderson 2012, Kirkness 2014, August 2014, Pereira & Queirós 2014, Queirós & Pereira 2018.

Distribution of jobs, 2015	Bispebjerg		Copenhagen	
Health care, cultural and leisure activities, teaching and education, public administration, police and other social institutions	12,387	56%	127,601	35%
Commerce, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and other services	5,058	23%	100,615	28%
Transportation, industry, construction, utility services	1,176	5%	32,591	9%
Publishing, television and radio, telecommunication, IT and informational services, financial counselling and insurance, real estate, research and counselling, advertising, and other business services as well as unknown	3,669	16%	103,968	29%
Total	22,290	100%	364,775	101%
Drawn from Tables 57.1 and 57.2, work places according to branch and residence, The Copenhagen Statistical Bank				

To understand the pedagogical forms of this injection of state into the poor urban neighbourhood, and especially the social workers' efforts in relation to the (de)alienation of the place and its people, I draw on an interview sample of some 25 social workers active in the Northwest in either universal or area-specific organisations.[6] In the following, I investigate how the different types of welfare agencies intervene in the Northwest, and how their pedagogy has been formed and transformed, in relation to the state, from a so-called traditional Scandinavian welfare state towards a more neoliberal governing of urban marginality. I aim to conduct an analysis of the general pedagogical form of these agencies. Despite internal differences, which relate to institutional position, age, education and experience, I focus on the more or less shared professional ideal, that is, on the categories through which they express their sense of bureaucratic position and professional autonomy, their description of what they do or are supposed to do, and on their understanding of the neighbourhood and of the residents.

3   Reading bureaucratic demands

The experience of being in a public-bureaucratic system is, first of all, expressed through descriptions of the "political focus". One social worker, for instance, says that "there are some political winds blowing which you have to relate to, right. At the moment, you cannot really say culture too loud. Instead, you should say things like entrepreneurship, employment-enhancing, stuff like that." In the same way, another social worker says that "at the moment, everything is called co-creation" or "the innovative way of thinking", the focus being on "user-involvement" and on "helping or keeping people in their home instead of placing them in institutions." Others describe the current as "evidence-based methods", talking about "documenting" and "measuring" in order to make "faster decisions about whether the intervention has an effect." In other words, there is a very vivid experience of the

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[6] The interview sample is part of a larger research project funded by the Independent Research Fund Denmark (DFF, grant number 4180-00281), which focus on the socio-historical production of the Northwest from the point of view of the state, the pedagogical agencies and different generations of residents, stretching back to 1885 onwards. Of the 25 social workers, 15 are women and 10 are men, spanning in age from late 20s to late 60s. In order to secure the anonymity and identity of the individual social worker, of which some hold unique positions, I have omitted personal details in the presentation.

"tendencies", the "political awareness and supervision", and the "themes that influence our way of working".

If the social workers largely are aware of the political currents inherent in the transformation of the welfare system, the currents do not affect them in the same way. Some social workers describe their working conditions as being good due to having "political tailwind", whereas others experience "headwind". For instance, a pedagogue from a "drug-treatment institution" says that "in the old days", the treatment was more "free and creative", in the hands of the institutions themselves, whereas "now it's more framed" by the central administration, "and the money is reduced". If the first group speaks of symbolic and material resources "floating" their way, and of having "no obligations to document anything" and the leeway to "do whatever we want", the latter describe that things are "tight", and that new requirements are "difficult" to meet based on the old budget funds.

While the momentary political "winds" divide the social workers, they all speak of different forms of "threats" related to the management and an ever-changing, unstable bureaucracy. This is most explicit in the accounts of being "threatened by closure" [lukningstruet], restructuring or budget cuts imposed by management or politicians. One social worker describes how the institution was "almost shut down" due to "municipal restructurings", but that a "resourceful group of citizens" who managed to "get through to the politicians" saved it. The social workers positioned close to the central administration in more established institutions (such as the school, day care or benefits office) generally seem more inclined to experience a loss of autonomy, while the social workers in more unstable or project-based institutions (such as staffed playgrounds, youth counsellors and community workers) experience greater autonomy, but also a constant need to justify their existence and get new funds due to the "fluffy" and temporary nature of their job. "I understand the managers," one social worker said, because "this work cannot be easily measured" in ways satisfactory to the "new ways of managing budgets".

However, if the threat of closure, budgets cuts and restructurings, the general tightening of governance, the need for documentation of the effects of the activities and the general legitimation of the institutions are quite tangible, the social workers also describe the experience of a more vague threat of "the development". This is partly expressed through the "classic" critiques of street-level bureaucrats of "becoming bureaucratic" (Lipsky 1980). This is expressed in phrases like being "strangled" or "drowned in bureaucracy", "being municipal-like" [kommunal], or as fear of "box-thinking" and the bureaucratic desire to "formalise", which "drains" both energy and initiative. Closely related to this are fears of what the bureaucracy might do to the citizens. One social worker calls it "grotesque" that the "municipal system" is so hard to navigate that "one needs help to get help." Some say that "sometimes, we forget that these are people in need of help." Generally, the social workers speak of "the danger" in standardisation "that puts the citizen in a machine" and which (mis)leads them into "forgetting the ethical aspects" and that every citizen is a unique subject. "I fear," one counsellor says, "that we'll just get a case handed, you know, 'here, you just take that one', right […] instead of knowing more intimately the local community and the residents."

The social workers generally express insecure and mistrusting expectations in relation to political and administrative intentions. They have a clear sense of the direction of change within the bureaucratic field, saying that "everything points toward that", and "it is just a matter of time, then we'll get hit by that too", expecting their situation to get worse. Just as

the social workers' working conditions vary according to institutional position, their responses to the alienating threats of the changing bureaucratic system seem to vary according educational background. Generally, academics, who by the happen chance of their trajectory have landed in a position as a social worker, seem more inclined to accept and appreciate the managerial language and governing.

Pernille, for instance, an anthropologist who had difficulty getting an academic job, found a temporary job in an urban development project 20 years ago and is now working in a therapeutic institution managing a national evidence-based behavioural criminal youth training project imported from the US. She says the following:

> It changes over the years, the focus, you know, according to what is modern or popular in social work and therapeutic trends and such. Now it is that evidence-based stuff that is hot, and so that is what we do. Luckily, we have methodological freedom, right, as opposed to others. […]

> *So it is not an administrative demand that you have to work evidence-based?*

> No-no. We are the lucky ones, right. Because the caseworkers have to do what they are told. But we have methodological freedom. Well, it is not completely optional. They [the managers] asked if we wanted to have this special training [in an evidence-based method]. […] I still have a good status, where I can choose what I want to do, what it makes sense to work with in terms of methodological approaches. But let us see how long it lasts. […] There are many stories of [the evidence-based method]. I think [sighs], well, I am not someone who is 100% the one thing or the other [method]. But I think it is really exiting working evidence-based. I also think it has been a good input to the Danish tradition of social work. […] Back in the days it was like, you got a basic education in social work and then you had complete methodological freedom and you felt your way, sensed what to do, and I think it has been a good development that we gather data and set goals and evaluate. It is much easier when you use these manuals and do something that is comparative. It has been hard to introduce and implement, looking to the US and borrowing some of their plans. I have prepared a lot of group sessions and programmes, and have made up exercises and stuff myself. It has been really good, but it is really hard to measure, right.

Whereas some social workers express recognition and acceptance of the political currents and managerial transformations and a certain degree of indifference towards contemporary philosophies and methods, most social workers also express fierce critique of the system and describe the various ways they are trying to bend the rules to compensate for the "ills of the system" and remedy the "bureaucratic nonsense". Jannik, for instance, an experienced youth counsellor, says the following:

> Sometimes, you don't have to panic too much when new decrees fall from above, because sometimes it fits into what you are already doing, and then you can turn it into a new legitimacy and maybe get extra funding. It's all about being creative within the conditions that are mapped out. Sometimes, you can turn things upside down, and instead of making it a problem, well, try to see the possibilities in this or that.

Thus, the social workers describe their attempts to set up "dialogue bazaars" to provide an overview of the different institutions and to coordinate efforts. They go beyond the specific mission to help navigate the municipal offers and demands; they extend the standard number

of seats in the institution; they are "flexible" in terms of the official age limits for attending activities and so on.

If the creative use of the leeway and autonomy connected to the position and institution are common among most social workers, then mobilised critique and political representation seem delimited to the old-timers, the formalised networks and the agents close to the local council. The descriptions of the mobilisation of joined forces against the threats coming from the bureaucratic administration are exemplary in the story of the heroic figure Niels Bay, who was playground pedagogue and manager of the Degnestavnen playground for some 20 years.[7] Circulating among a variety of social workers, the story goes that a support group backed Niels when the municipality and the area renewal agency wanted to change the playground against the wishes of Niels. In the end, he had "worn out nine architects, and he got his way." This experience of success in mobilising and joining forces is exemplary of the sense of cohesion, solidarity and "network mentality" in the Northwest, especially highlighted among the oldest social workers. "It wasn't just Niels who benefitted, we all did," one social worker says. "We learned that we could stir things up," another one adds, "and a sort of common professionalism rose from this experience." As the story indicates, this commonality explicitly values a somewhat militant, anti-bureaucratic stance that hails the ability to "think outside individual boxes", whether they are professional or political, and commitment to the neighbourhood.

4   The friendly state: empowerment, motivation, activation

The pedagogy of the social workers varies according to the different functions and positions of their institutional settings. However, when the social workers describe *what* they do, why and how they practice their social work, almost all highlight the very strong cultural ideal of friendliness and the warm atmosphere of *hygge*.[8] Describing their institutional ideal, the social workers stress that they strive to make it "cozy and nice and safe", to create a place where "citizens with problems of loneliness can come and socialise and feel that they are seen, and where there is someone who cares about and for them specifically, as an individual, a human being." They use categories like "family", "equality", "mutual respect", "being present in each other's lives", "respecting differences", "care", "having fun and being serious", "play", "love" and "support". As a youth worker says, we have "a basic love for these kids that makes us able to include them despite their [craziness/failures]."

This traditional welfare friendliness relates to the voluntary nature of participation in many of these pedagogical activities and institutions; the participants choose to enrol in or commit to the institutional practices rather than the institutions which they are assigned to or which are forced upon them as punishment or as a condition for receiving benefits. However, it is also a core signal of the ideal relations and forms of interaction that they are to be homelike, intimate and personal. Furthermore, this ideal of the friendly or familiar atmosphere and the "free choice" also relate to the many strategies of persuasion that the social workers apply in order to get the target group to "choose" the help or the activity offered. Many of the social workers tell of the free will of the citizen to "say no to our help", but they also highlight the persistent efforts to "become known in and familiar with the neighbourhood", "knowing what's going on" in order to be able to offer the "hot activities", and to "create informal

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[7] Portrayed in the documentary "Pas på nerverne" (René Bo Hansen, 2005).
[8] This is a category highly used by Danes and in the marketisation of Denmark. Jenkins (2011: xiv) describes it as a "desirable social atmosphere or feeling, characterized by small-scale settings, informality, relaxed intimacy, and inter-personal warmth."

settings to lure them in" (as a youth counsellor says about offering hot chocolate milk to the young boys on the street). The social workers generally speak of being "soft in our method" and of having "no agenda" when meeting for a coffee. "We go a long way to get them in," the outgoing and outreaching social workers say, and "They cannot just sit at home and rot. So, we are patient and persistent, it can take months just to get past the doorstep, or just to get in touch, and we're not dangerous as we come with counsel and advice."

If the social workers go a long way to invite or lure people into their activities and institutions, participation is conditional and not without boundaries, just as friendliness is not to be confused with the tolerant acceptance of every kind of behaviour. However, when social workers describe the sanctions they initiate to enforce the rules of the institution, they generally relate to instances of disturbance of the friendly environment set up by the collectivity, disturbances of *hygge*, creating a "bad" or "insecure" environment or atmosphere. When the social workers speak of "no tolerance", it is in connection with "aggressive behaviour", carrying weapons, threatening behaviour, "if a person or a group controls or dominates others", a room or the institution as such. The social workers involved with children and juveniles frequently mention "bad language" and "gangster attitude" as triggers of sanctions, while being high or drunk, selling drugs and stealing from the nearby shops are the reasons for severe sanctions in cases of older juveniles and troublesome adults. In general, the social workers apply sanctions against behaviour which they identify as behaviour that creates an "insecure environment". "They have to behave properly," the social workers say, and proper behaviour is intimately identified through the cultural category of *hygge*.

Describing these sanctions, the social workers commonly highlight the motivation of the citizens as the main target, and usually the descriptions of "hard" exclusions go hand in hand with descriptions of "soft" dialogue and mutual understanding. Anna, who has been a pedagogue for many years and who works in a day centre for marginalised adults says the following about her management of sanctions:

> I don't just hand out quarantines [randomly]. I do it when it makes sense. […] Sometimes you have to work with the long process of motivation, so that they feel motivated to come back [after a period of exclusion]. You cannot just exclude a person for three months and then think that all is good […]. So we visit the person's home and then we have some talks during the period. "How's it going?" Sometimes it's practical things, really, that make it difficult for the citizen. […] We have a meeting or the person comes into my office [for a talk]. And sometimes it's all about embracing it in another way instead of going along with the anger or the ongoing conflict. You know, saying, "How are you, what makes you tip at the moment?" You know. Sometimes it's about getting them to lower their guards, in a different way. Or talking to them, when you can hear that something's going on: "What's going on with you guys, can we solve it somehow, what is it?"

In line with this "work with the long process of motivation", the social workers explain that they want the excluded to understand, through dialogue, the reasons behind the sanction and to work on motivating them to participate properly in the future. Following that "softness", the social workers describe sanctions as a last resort, and they say that they go a long way to prevent conflicts and escalations by knowing the citizens intimately, by "working preventively", by "catching signals", by "upholding friendly relations" and by "addressing reason" in dialogues. Other measures are making small contracts or using user payment for trips to make them keep their schedule and avoid vacancies. "And we arrange friendly

activities, you know, it's harder to get in conflict if you just had a cool experience together," a social worker says.

The ideas of the citizens wanting to attend, using dialogue as a core means to ensure "the nice atmosphere" and "the cozy milieu", and aiming at motivating and reasoning with the citizen is illustrative of most of the pedagogical techniques highlighted by the social workers. "One of the beauties of this work," a social worker says, "is that we give away our power. […] It is always the young persons and/or their parents who get to decide what it is they want to talk about." Others say, "We don't preach," and, "We try to focus on the things the citizen wants to change." In other words, the social workers consider the citizen to be the expert in his or her own life, and the social workers use different techniques to get the citizen to talk: "user meetings", "suggestion boxes" and signs on the office door saying "I want to be disturbed", so that "they feel committed to enter my office and talk", to stop by for a coffee, or inviting people in for hot chocolate milk. Again, it is the friendliness, the nice and cozy environment, the un-dangerous social worker with no agenda but to listen and help that get the citizen to express what he or she wants, which seems to be the ideal the social workers follow.

Getting people to talk is closely related to ideas of involvement and inclusion that run through the interviews. One social worker says, "We are trying to include the people it's all about, you know, that they get involved in their own life, in their own process. We listen and take it seriously what they themselves think is best for them." Another one says, "We have to try and get the people who are affected [by youth street delinquency] engaged, because it's also their problem. It's not just ours." The social workers describe their ways of creating involvement and responsibility in line with the strategies of persuasion described above: Offering activities in sync with the "needs" of the target group, maintaining good relations to the surroundings, collaborating with civil society around projects and arrangements, or "investing in a youth on the edge of criminality" by assigning him a job in the institution, getting him a training position in a firm or similar. Furthermore, the social workers emphasise activating the citizens through friendliness, dialogue and commitment to participating in the development of themselves and the community, whether it be a peer group, an institutional setting or (a part of) the neighbourhood. In that way, the social workers strive to focus on the neighbourhood and the residents as people with resources and as experts in their own lives – as opposed to visions of the passive client who needs to be told about the right ways of life in a condescending tone backed by disciplinary measures and punitive sanctions.

The social workers use all the buzzwords keen to the politics and pedagogies of the moment, like peer-to-peer, open dialogue, user-driven, solution-oriented, co-creation and so on. They speak of the need to make the citizen contribute, engage, commit, involve, include, motivate and activate, and they describe their efforts to avoid "clientisation," how they reject disciplinary and coercive sanctions, and how they focus on solutions rather than problems, on humans and not diagnoses, on processes not results. As such, the dominant philosophy underlying the social workers' pedagogies do not resemble paternalistic behaviourism. The social workers do target the moral capacities of the client, citizen or community, but they do so applying what governmentality studies would call the self-techniques and the will to empower characteristic of advanced liberalism (Cruikshank 1994, Villadsen 2007, Rose 1996). The social pedagogies of urban marginality in the Northwest apply the neo-philanthropic idea of empowering immanent qualities and potentials of the individual subject trough moral aid, practical support, and "meaningful" activities. They idealize or naturalize neither punitive corrections and compliant conduct nor fulfillment of social rights and collective mobilization to attack the socio-economic structures of inequality and injustice.

Rather, they seek to uplift the individual well-being and psychosocial self-esteem through a care to self-care. If they speak of reinforcement, it is a positive reinforcement of existential, cognitive and affective as well as behavioral aspects of the case at hand.

5   Pedagogisation and (de)alienation

It seems quite obvious in these interviews that the language and objectives of social work are affected, if not defined, by the neoliberalisation of the welfare state. Neoliberal pedagogical ideals, categories and technologies have found their way into the social workers' point of view. So when they describe their sense of bureaucratic condition(ing)s, their social work practices and their judgments of the Northwestern residents, they use a neoliberal vocabulary: contracts, reasoning, dialogue, self-governance, empowerment, facilitating, coaching, counselling, entrepreneurial project-maker, and so on (Woolford & Curran 2011; 2012). In this situation, the pedagogisation of urban marginality is increasingly carried out in and governed by a bureaucratic system trying to embrace business-like models of service (Dubois 2010, Woolford & Nelund 2013).

On a political level, then, it does not seem like a stretch to say that the poor residents of the Northwest (along with the residents of other stigmatised territories) are increasingly alienated as they are publically constructed as outsiders of the civic and national society, outside the norms of society, living in ghettos, parallel societies, "holes in the map of Denmark," as the Danish Prime Minister claimed. The politics of urban marginality are individualising and racialising, and in a way demonising the poor populations, considering poverty as self-inflicted, the poor as lazy, unwilling, morally corrupt, and as potential thieves and welfare-cheaters. As such, the poor residents are officially categorised as non-humans, non-citizens.

However, even though workfare and prisonfare are prevalent too in the social workers' descriptions of their political conditions of practice, they still uphold ideals of welfare work. As Wacquant (2011) points out, the rhetoric of prisonfare in Europe has been stronger than in actual practice, and police intervention has expanded simultaneously with welfare protection. Contrary to the neoliberal paternalism, the social problems of the territory are to a large degree to be handled by pedagogical measures (Smeyers & Depaepe 2008). The social and political production of bureaucratic categories of "vulnerable areas" and "ghettoes" have paved way for the physical demolition of buildings, but not (yet) on a scale comparable to the heydays of slum clearance. In last 25 years, social workers have increasingly been entrusted with the tasks of creating networks between the residents, arranging cultural activities and helping with questions related to financial circumstances, child care and the general managing of life and understanding of the welfare system (Fallov 2010, Birk 2016). Furthermore, when social workers describe their involvement in the removal of problem categories and undesired persons from public places – primarily addicts, drug dealers and immigrant vagrants – it is primarily done by finding pedagogical alternatives, not through prison-warehousing, but a steering into "sound activities" and "delimited spaces", and not with legal injunctions (McCarthy 2010), but with dialogue and reasoning. Rather than regarding the people and the place to be responsible for their own *misère*, the social workers vividly describe their efforts to strive to compensate for the inequality and injustice of the social order and the social politics, which in the Northwest is symbolised by the social service centre ironically referred to as the Eagle's Nest [Ørneborgen]. Contrary to the social case workers analysed by Møller (2012), the ethos of being a defender of the poor is widespread among the social workers of the Northwest as they try to remedy the effects of the alienated system, to show the human face of the state and to de-alienate the relation between society and community by constructing shared emotions, joint meanings and a common neighbourhood identity.

This is not without frustration. The social workers generally describe their struggles against the system; they say that they are working despite the conditions; and they testify to the impossible mission they are on as they are waging internal battles over limited resources, feeling increasingly alienated from the bureaucracy and the politics they are entrusted with carrying out. However, when poverty is not handled by redistribution of wealth, but by limiting the direct economic benefits (which are increasingly restricted and conditioned by workfare policies and practices), the rolling out of pedagogical programmes (increasingly imposed as manual- and evidence-based) runs the risk of carrying on the fantasy of "a culture of poverty" stemming from "the physical concentration" of problem categories, that is, from "neighbourhood effects" (Slater 2013). It seems paradoxical that the social work organisations, many of them born and nurtured by the genesis of the neoliberal "modernization" of the welfare state, seem to be the protective shield against the corrective neoliberalisation, paternalism and moral behaviourism; that they may even hold the dispositions and resources to speak up actively and effectively on behalf of what more and more constitute "old welfare professionalism".

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