

“Welcome in my backyard”...but on my terms: making sense of homeless exclusion from renewed urban spaces in Copenhagen

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Abstract Based on a Danish case study of urban renewal in Copenhagen’s Sundholm District, this paper examines, (a) how present urban regeneration efforts in a historically welfare-driven, but increasingly neoliberalized state context, is contributing to more or less spatial exclusion of the homeless, and (b) to what extent this may be associated with a revanchist/punitive stance of the Danish state. Using an urban political ecological lens, this paper highlights a relational understanding of the apparently dualistic/competing public and civic discourses shaping the Danish urban regeneration program. Revealing the complex ways that public socio-environmental policies and middle-class civic environmentalism/activism intersect with state-entrepreneurialism within such regeneration efforts, this paper presents an instance of a historically and geographically distinct process of neoliberal disciplining of the poor in Sundholm District. The paper shows that while such disciplining of the homeless is not driven by a purely punitive state, it results in soft, green-coded, nonetheless exclusionary implications for the homeless and their socio-spatial practices within the renewed urban spaces.

Keywords Neoliberal disciplining · Urban political ecology · Urban renewal · Danish state · Homeless · Spatial exclusion

Introduction

Regulation of public spaces, although not a new phenomenon, has definitely increased manifold in the last couple of decades (Bloomley 1994; Kohn 2004; Low and Smith 2006). Specifically, with a turn to the Right (Taylor 1998), entrepreneurial cities across the globe, have introduced a new phase of regulation of public spaces characterized by increased surveillance and policing, full or partial privatization/corporatization/commercialization, and deterrent urban design (Bannister et al. 2006; Blumenberg and Ehrenfeucht 2008; Coleman 2004, 2009; Doherty et al. 2008; Ellin 1997; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick 2010; Macleod and Johnstone 2012; Mitchell 2003; Staeheli and Mitchell 2008; Whitehead 2008). Smith has explained this trend in terms of the increasingly punitive attitude of the neoliberal state in the way it treats the less resourceful in the city, proposing the theory of urban revanchism (Smith 1996, 1998, 2001). Others have argued that urban policies/practices that aggravate existing patterns of socio-spatial exclusion of the poor are often not solely a result of economically-driven concerns or punitive/unsympathetic attitude of the entrepreneurial state (Body-Gendrot 2008; Favell 2003; Van Eijk 2010). Whether associated with

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punitive state intensions or not, increased regulation of public spaces within contemporary cities have particularly negative implications for the homeless people because in the absence of the private space of home, the public space remains the only alternative location for human functioning for this social group (Doherty et al. 2008).

In this paper, I focus on spatial exclusion of the homeless from renewed urban spaces in Sundholm District in Copenhagen. My main purpose here is to examine how present urban regeneration projects in a historically welfare-driven, but increasingly neoliberalized state context, like that of Denmark (Koefoed 2015; Larsen and Andersen 2009; Larsen and Lund Hansen 2015; Simonsen 2015) are likely to contribute to more or less spatial exclusion of this disadvantaged group. In addition, I also reflect on the extent to which such exclusionary contribution may be explained by the rolling out of the “darker side” of “entrepreneurial spirit” or revanchist urbanism (Uitermark and Duyvendak 2008: 1487).

In order to address these questions, I present an Urban Political Ecological (henceforth, UPE) analysis of a Danish urban regeneration effort, and its discourses, practices, and implications in Copenhagen’s Sundholm District. UPE’s sensitivity to the complex interrelations between the social, environmental, and economic allows us to see through the apparently dualistic nature of a traditionally welfare-driven, but evidently neoliberalizing state’s social, environmental, and economic policies legitimized through popular (arguably middle-class) civic priorities. Presenting a relational understanding of the dualistic/competing public and civic discourses, which in turn shape the Danish urban renewal program, the UPE framework in this paper highlights the complex ways public socio-environmental policies and middle-class environmentalism/activism intersect with state-entrepreneurialism in Copenhagen, reinforcing some of the existing socio-spatially unequal implications for the homeless in renewed urban spaces.

I draw data from two and a half years of field work between 2012 and 2015, when the urban renewal process in Sundholm District was closely followed and 38 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with local planners, social workers, and citizen participants. Twelve homeless individuals living and/or using public spaces in Sundholm District were also briefly interviewed.¹ My purpose was to gain a broader

understanding of the underlying motivations and possible exclusionary implications of urban renewal processes in the Danish context in terms of the homeless groups’ access to urban spaces. I strategically chose Sundholm District renewal effort for this purpose, which from the very beginning was advertised in social media, and in local, national, and European planning arena as an exemplary case of inclusive planning (Sundholmsvej Områdeløft 2009). In order to emphasize its commitment to user-driven inclusive planning, Sundholm District renewal became a partner in the EU-funded USER project that intended to support efforts across nine European cities to plan and maintain public spaces through involvement of multiple and contending users such as tourists, citizens, beggars, and the homeless (USER 2012). As such, Sundholm District renewal effort presented an opportunity to examine Danish urban renewal process’ exclusionary implications for the homeless within a context where it seemed least likely.

Based on a thoroughly contextualized case study, I present Sundholm District renewal effort as a useful example to reveal the complex ways in which rising state entrepreneurialism intersects with local public and civic socio-environmental policies/priorities giving rise to a soft, selective, and green-coded process of neoliberal disciplining of the poor in the Danish context. Furthermore, I suggest that while such disciplining is not necessarily associated with a revanchist state attitude or a middle-class compassion-fatigue towards the homeless, it is a reflection and a by-product of the rising entrepreneurial drive of the Danish state that prioritises the vision of a safe, orderly and market-friendly city, even when it comes at the expense of exclusion of the poor. Ultimately, this case study offers important lessons for better understanding the complications of rising entrepreneurialism within traditionally strong welfare-states, resulting dualism, and potential relationship with exclusionary practices, within and beyond Denmark.

¹ Despite several attempts to reach out to more homeless individuals by means of direct communication, local gatekeepers, and nonprofits dedicated to their cause, very few showed interest to share their experience. Local social workers explained that a general skepticism that their concerns are likely to be misinterpreted and the frustration of responding to state-imposed surveys that they are required to complete regularly were to blame.

For the purpose, first I highlight the importance of a UPE framework to better understand the changing Danish political-economic context within which the urban renewal program remains embedded. Then I examine and present the dualism and the occasional streaks of revanchism that characterize Danish urban governance. Next, I discuss Sundholm District renewal effort, first examining its motivations/discourses, and then the real practices and their exclusionary implications for the homeless in the neighborhood. Finally, I conclude that while Danish urban renewal efforts cannot be described as revanchist per se, their exclusionary results should not be accepted simply as unintended consequences. Rather, based on a relational understanding of the entrepreneurial and socio-ecologically compassionate discourses shaping the Danish renewal program, they should be identified as a consequence of a subtle but effective form of neoliberal disciplining of the poor necessary for maintaining the Danish cities' market-advantage.

Understanding variegated entrepreneurialisms through the lens of Urban Political Ecology

Urban scholars have emphasized the need to recognize the variegated nature of context-specific and path-dependent processes of neoliberalization that unfold quite differently in different places (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002). Accordingly, it makes sense to acknowledge that rising urban entrepreneurialism and its possible linkages with revanchism must also be examined through a historically and geographically context-specific lens. In fact, Uitermark and Duyvendak (2008) in their attempt to explain the present trends of urban entrepreneurialism and underlying revanchist streaks in the Dutch urban context point out that compared to US cities, European cities still remain highly supported by the central state and hence feel less economically pressurized and act less aggressively towards displacing/excluding the poor (for instance through outright gentrification, hard-handed policing, or through restricting availability of affordable social housing). Alternatively, the focus within European cities is more on civilizing/disciplining the poor and (recent) ethnic immigrants so that they do not threaten to damage their market-friendly image in the global economy (Uitermark and

Duyvendak 2008). This, the authors describe as a “qualitatively different” revanchism in the context of actually existing neoliberalism within continental Europe (and in particular the Dutch state) (2008, 1486).

Despite such qualitative differences, urban revanchism is generally expected to unfold through institutional discourses and practices and to be characterized by the “concerted ways urban ‘problems’ are described, responsibilities for them ascribed, and solutions prescribed,” (Jou et al. 2014: 4; Also see Atkinson 2003) in terms of identifying the poor and the minorities as the “main culprits of urban decay” (Slater 2009). However, being traditionally rooted in strong welfare-based principles of social and environmental equity, Western European cities (including Copenhagen in Denmark), often engage in a dualistic policy discourse that simultaneously emphasize on marketability and social/environmental compassion (Andersen and Pløger 2007; Technical & Environmental Administration 2010). This makes it difficult to associate European policies with the hard-handed (clearly compassion-less and more punitive) US style revanchism that Smith’s work presents (1996, 1998, 2001). In fact, the dualism within European urban governance has often led to softer compromises such as constructing warming up rooms for the homeless close to railway stations (where they are not welcome) in Poland (Wyganska 2006) or sending out mobile outreach teams to help rough sleepers in central city to find alternative spaces in Sweden (Sahlin 2006). Although, as Doherty et al. (2008) suggest, ultimately these are effective ways of removing the undesirable population from spaces where they are unwanted, it seems somewhat unfair to ascribe existing exclusionary practices/policies within the Western European urban scene as purely revanchist.

In fact, a number of scholars examining the dual policy context in European cities argue that urban policies/practices that aggravate existing patterns of socio-spatial exclusion of the poor is often the result of non-economic concerns that are “distinct and fundamentally different drivers for exclusionary policies” such as notions of national unity and social order (Van Eijk 2010: 820; also see Body-Gendrot 2008; Favell 2003). However, my analysis in this paper will highlight how non-economic concerns/factors, (in case of Sundholm District renewal effort, those of maintaining a healthy urban environment, social

diversity/order, and safety), remain entangled with and complement the economic motivations of the entrepreneurial city. Here, I do not mean to dispose the non-economic factors as “a euphemism for class-motivated warfare” on poverty and deviance (Papayanis 2000: 342). Rather my intention in this paper is to use a UPE lens to show the complex interrelationship between apparently ‘distinct’ factors/discourses of economic viability, environmental sustainability, social integration, and safety mobilized by the public and civic agencies within Sundholm District.

The value of UPE lies in the fact that it presents “an integrated and relational approach that helps to untangle the interconnected economic, political, social, and ecological processes that together go to form highly uneven urban landscapes” (Heynen 2014: 602). In fact, UPE allows us to understand the importance of and the dialectic interlinkages between not only the material processes, but also the various narratives that normalize specific socio-ecological configurations and their (often unequal) implications (Loftus 2012). As such, in their discussion on examining waterfront transformation through a UPE lens, Bunce and Desfor (2007), indicate the importance of “policy frame” that according to them represent how different actors (public agencies, civic groups, private companies), working at different scales (national, municipal, neighborhood etc.), interpret rationales for and define goals of policies by linking social, cultural, environmental and economic concerns. Furthermore, by effectively teasing out “who (or what) gains from and who pays for, who benefits from and who suffers (and in what ways)” (Heynen et al. 2006: 12) from the complex interactions between the social, environmental and economic, UPE lens highlights the political nature of the process of production of urban spaces.

The UPE approach in this paper proved to be particularly useful for analyzing urban renewal efforts that often rest on attempts to (re)produce public/green spaces as means of uplifting decaying neighborhoods. In particular, a UPE analysis of the Sundholm District urban renewal effort enabled a conceptualization of the renewed urban (green) spaces as socio-natural hybrid spaces transformed by policies/programs that reflect multiple public and civic priorities/narratives. While these narratives are often presented as dualistic, the UPE framework in this paper incorporates a relational understanding of such apparently competing

goals like those of environmental sustainability, social cohesion, and entrepreneurialism and also reveals how they may complement each other, in the end, often co-producing exclusionary urban spaces.

The dual Danish context: welfarism, entrepreneurialism, and streaks of revanchism

Despite differences between places in the exact form and intensity of revanchism, MacLeod (2002) explains that there is a dialectic relation between urban entrepreneurialism, its contradictions, and a growing need to adopt certain forms of revanchist political norms. He suggests as places become increasingly driven by the global neoliberal logic of market competition, they inevitably feel the compulsion of appropriating, although selectively, revanchist policies. This is a particularly important point to bear in mind while examining possible revanchist streaks within Danish urban context as the strongly social democratic welfare-driven Danish political-economy has not remained untouched by the global tendencies towards neoliberalization.

In fact, in the last couple of decades, “(A)n entrepreneurial urban politics, more accommodating towards investors and developers, has been implemented here (in Copenhagen, Denmark)” (Larsen and Lund Hansen 2008: 2433). As such, Copenhagen has been doing everything that entrepreneurial cities do: invest in infrastructural and urban development projects (the Øresund Bridge connecting Copenhagen to Malmo, the new urban center-Ørestad), and build cultural attractions like the Arken museum for modern art and the new Opera House along Nyhavn. Also a lot of effort is put into transforming Copenhagen into a post-industrial knowledge economy (Hansen and Winther 2012) and a center for culture and creativity suitable for the creative class (Bayliss 2007). Along similar lines, the city’s official convention and visitors’ bureau portrays an image of a ‘Wonderful Copenhagen’ advertising the city’s beauty, environmental sustainability, and diversity with the intention of attracting thousands of people to visit every year and of fulfilling the vision to make Copenhagen a world city through tourism.²

² See <http://www.visitcopenhagen.com/copenhagen-tourist>. The visitors’ bureau also calls itself Wonderful Copenhagen.

Such entrepreneurialism, however, has not completely erased previous welfare-driven policy-focus concerning greater social and environmental equality. As such, the Danish welfare state's social transfers continue to have a significant impact on poverty reduction (Eurostat 2014). Also, the Danish non-profit housing sector continues to represent an important part of the welfare system, despite asserted attempts to privatize and weaken the sector (Larsen and Lund Hansen 2015). Hence, Andersen and Pløger (2007) describe Danish urban governance as “dual” in character where entrepreneurial motives, logics, and strategies are increasingly becoming entangled with the traditional welfare-driven state's workings.

This in turn seems to have inspired some changes in the Danish urban/social policies with special implications for the poor and the homeless. For instance, the incremental reduction of welfare benefits for the unemployed and the ever-increasing emphasis on activation programs have raised debates over the state's move from welfare to workfare (Jensen 1999). With respect to homeless people's access to the city, the Danish state seems to be selectively revanchist towards foreign homeless people. This group is particularly vulnerable to police control and prosecution. Schmidt (2012) writes how this group is subjected to repeated ID control and getting their belongings taken away, or even deported for camping in public spaces. Given that this same population is denied access to publicly funded or supported shelters and day centers complicates the situation for this group of homeless people (Feantsa 2012). Despite such selective but nevertheless exclusionary and punitive policies/practices directed towards the poor and the ethnic minorities, the dual nature of urban governance that simultaneously emphasizes entrepreneurial and socially/environmentally progressive goals makes it difficult to call such state policies purely revanchist.

Similar dualism characterizes the Danish urban renewal program. In contrast to the purely entrepreneurial endeavor of investing into making Copenhagen the nation's growth locomotive (Desfor and Jørgensen 2004), Danish urban policies have simultaneously focused on uplifting the disadvantaged neighborhoods through its urban renewal program since the 1990s (Larsen 2013). This program was introduced primarily on the grounds of addressing issues related to social, ethnic, and unemployment problems in

deprived neighborhoods in close interaction with the local communities (Agger and Larsen 2009). A substantial emphasis remains in these efforts to build local capacity through inclusive planning processes (Agger et al. 2016). As such, the urban renewal program in the first instance represents the welfare spirit of the Danish state, focused on ameliorating the problems of the socio-economically needy communities. However, a closer analysis of the program simultaneously points out its underlying entrepreneurial motivations. In this sense, they reflect the dualism of the Danish urban governance that simultaneously and somewhat tenuously manifests an entrepreneurial and a welfare-driven spirit.

In a 2007 report the Minister responsible for the Danish urban renewal program commented on the success of certain projects saying, “[T]he Danish government finds it vital to stop the continuing trends towards ghettoization...The kvarterløft³ projects in e.g. Brøndby Strand and Avedøre Stationsby have clearly succeeded in reversing the development in primarily non-profit housing. The areas have successfully been made attractive, also for employed residents” (Jensen and Munk 2007: 5). This statement suggests that entrepreneurial motivations to make these targeted neighborhoods attractive for the more resourceful and economically sustainable population remains ingrained within such projects. As such, in his analysis of the Kvarterløft program in the wake of its 10th anniversary, Tverskov (2007: 35) rightly contended, that “[E]ssentially, the kvarterløft idea is a branding project. The local stakeholders prepare a holistic plan and analyze ‘the product’. They propose a plan for ‘product development’ to ensure the area can live up to the demands and desires of the ‘consumers’ (potential residents) in terms of housing and a local community.” The primary method of such renewal often involves improving the image of the neighborhoods through physical beautification/development projects. This seems logical given that the primary aim of the legislative framework within which urban renewal program works (the 1982 Urban Renewal and Improvement of Housing Act) is to improve the quality of landed property through modernization (maintaining standards of construction, facades, open spaces) (Kimaryo 1991). Several of the urban renewal

³ Danish urban renewal was originally known as the Kvarterløft program. Today they are known as Områdefornyelse.

planners interviewed agreed that while the most renewal-related projects have obvious socio-cultural impact, substantial financial investment directly goes into physical renovation of neighborhood spaces.

Underlying intentions of the Danish urban renewal program towards making neighborhoods attractive for the employed/middle-income residents has led to, in some occasions, rather traumatic experiences for the disadvantaged population. Larsen and Lund Hansen (2008) for instance elaborate the case of Inner Vesterbro's urban renewal to show how the ambiguous state motivations and lack of strong measures to limit people's displacement (along with the housing market functions) have led to more of the middle income residents replace the socioeconomically marginalized inhabitants of pre-urban renewal Vesterbro. Thus following Lees' (2008) suggestion on European urban renewal programs, the Danish urban renewal program could also be interpreted (at least in part) to be a state-supported gentrification project to fix problems of concentrated poverty and ethnic incivilities by displacing, excluding, and disciplining the marginalized.

Larsen and Lund Hansen (2008) further draw an interesting connection between the Inner Vesterbro gentrification with the strong revanchist rhetoric of Copenhagen's municipal housing policy. They explain (2008: 2433) how this policy, ironically titled "Housing for all," actually targets to make the city suitable for an economically sustainable population by removing the less economically resourceful or the "trash" (as described by the municipal head of planning). Based on these reflections it seems reasonable to suggest that Danish urban governance and urban regeneration efforts in particular are not purely revanchist (i.e. driven by a malicious state ascribing the blame of urban decay on the poor and intending to take revenge on the poor). However, under the market-pressure to maintain Copenhagen as a 'Wonderful City' in the global economy they do present streaks of selectively adopted revanchist policies/discourses that end up punishing the poor.

Sundholm District: the neighborhood and the renewal effort

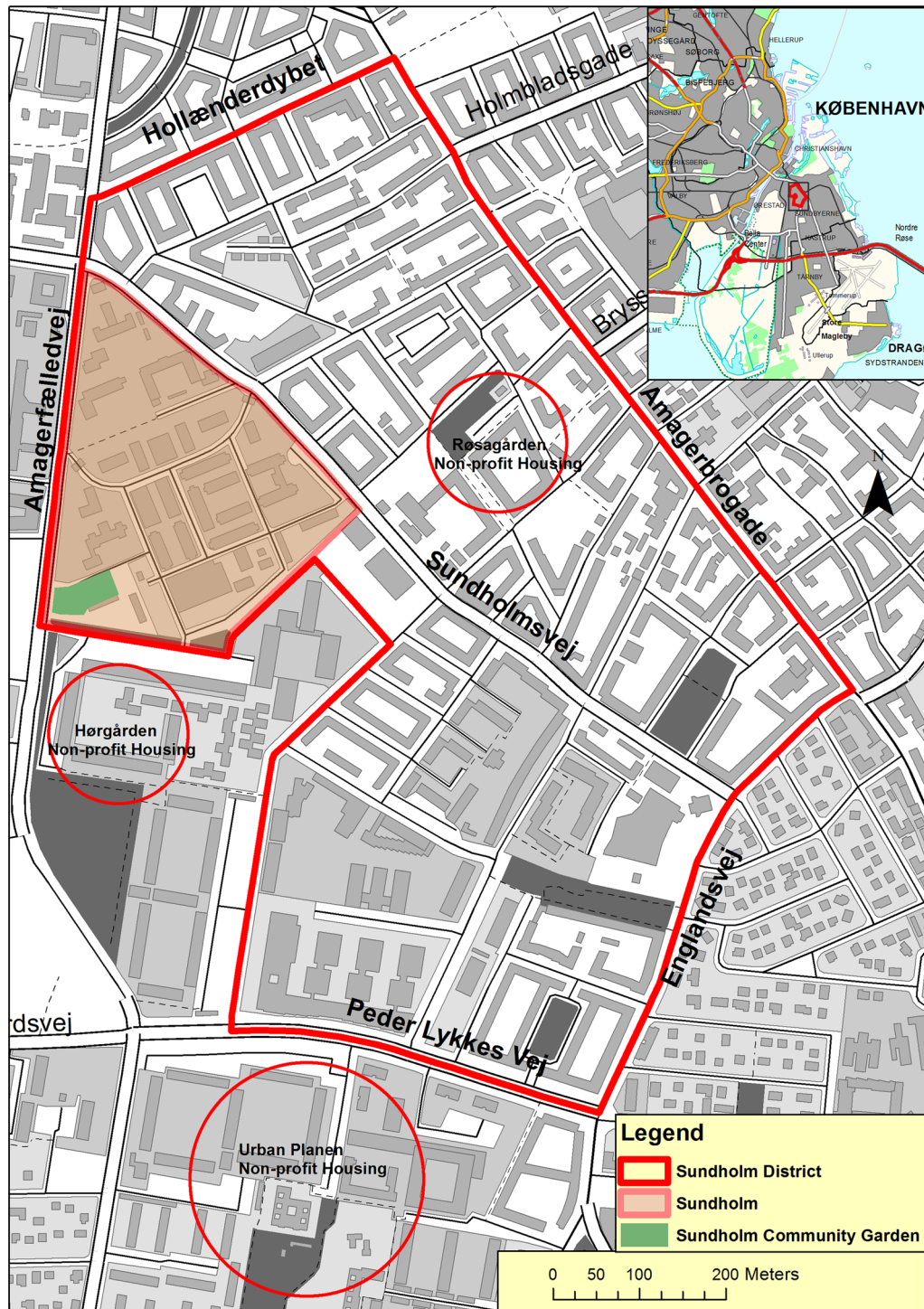
Sundholm district is situated in S.E. Copenhagen (see Fig. 1). The district is named after the institute,

Sundholm. Built in the early 18th C the institution was a place where the homeless, the mentally ill, and other disadvantaged population were taken into custody (USER 2012). Separated from the surrounding by a moat and a fence, Sundholm acted as a labor camp where the destitute were delivered by the police keeping the city streets safe (Brandt 1999). Today, while the moat and the fence have disappeared, a number of social institutions providing various services to the homeless remain in Sundholm and it continues to be "a sanctuary" for the homeless in Copenhagen with 200–300 homeless visiting, hanging around, and using Sundholm every day (USER 2012:56). As such, Sundholm represents the Danish state's continuing welfare commitment for the poor. Alongside the institutions offering social services for the disadvantaged, Sundholm also houses day care centers, a primary school, an art gallery, a number of socio-economic businesses and municipal offices (some of which have been added during the period of renewal).

Sundholm District, which is a larger area around Sundholm, is believed to have deteriorated in its socio-economic character during the last 15 years with increasing social problems such as high levels of crime and vandalism (Unified Plan 2008). Statistics from Copenhagen Municipality (2012, 2013) show that the district has a higher percentage of people who are either unemployed (5%) or live on social security (15%) compared to the city average (4 and 11% respectively). The percentage of people from non-western ethnic background is also higher in the district (23%) compared to the city (14%). Hence, the district was identified as a "disadvantaged" neighborhood in Copenhagen and targeted for an urban renewal effort in 2008 (Technical & Environmental Administration 2010).

Discourses and motivations of the renewal effort

Along the lines of the Danish urban renewal program's vision to "promote a new, positive development in the districts—encompassing physical, social, cultural and environmental aspects" (Technical and Environmental Administration 2012: 4), the primary aim of Sundholm District effort has been to improve city life in a *sustainable* way (Sundholmsvej Områdeløft 2009). While such *sustainability* was inadequately defined in the strategic plan, it was evident from the



Contains data from Geodatastyrelsen, Denmark, Danmark 1:200.000, December 2014

Fig. 1 Sundholm District in S.E. Copenhagen

projects undertaken that a definite focus remained on environmental sustainability (specifically issues related to energy saving and greening the neighborhood). This resonated well with the city's goal to become the European Green Capital (which it did in 2014) and provide 90% of its citizens, access to a park, beach, or harbor within 15 min of walking distance by 2015 (City Strategy 2008). While one may argue that the motivation behind the municipality's initiative has its roots in the Danish state's strong and longstanding commitment to maintaining a healthy environment and quality of life, it also intricately intersects with the rising entrepreneurial goal of the city to mobilize comparative advantage of being "the green capital" (Copenhagen European Green Capital 2014) and possibly trigger more capital flow into the city by attracting more tourists, green businesses, events and conventions (Strategy for Copenhagen Tourism 2014–2016). This implies the complex entanglements of the diverse ecological and economic motivations that can hardly be separated without contention.

The municipal greening policy (whether primarily an entrepreneurial or environmentally-driven agenda) was further justified by popular demand for safe and well-maintained neighborhood public/green spaces in Sundholm District. During the early phase of planning and civic involvement, local residents mostly described Sundholm institutional area and local neighborhood parks as "dangerous" and "unsafe", (although to different degrees and due to differing real and perceived sense of fear of the homeless, ethnic minorities, drug dealers, and alcoholics). As such, one of the primary goals of the renewal process was to materially and symbolically redevelop these green areas as cleaner, safer, and hence more attractive neighborhood spaces for the general public (Sundholmsvej Områdeløft 2009).

Furthermore, according to the Sundholm District urban renewal office when the renewal process began, "[T]he neighbors around Sundholm stated a wish of tearing down the mental wall that is still around Sundholm, having more physical and psychological openness from both sides of the 'fence'" (USER 2012: 56). As such, one of the other primary goals recognized was the need to integrate Sundholm (and its users, i.e. primarily the homeless) with the surrounding neighborhood (and its users including the Danish and immigrant residents). As one citizen participant explained, "from the very beginning it was recognized

that they (the homeless people) were always here and we (other residents) were always here, so we couldn't say not in my backyard... we will never be each other's best friends, but if we can share public spaces, interact, and be part of it together that will be cool." As such, Sundholm District effort was presented in public discourse as an attempt to get away from NIMBY (not in my backyard) attitude and incorporate a principle of WIMBY (welcome in my backyard) (Dyrholm and Leon 2015). An important point to note is that despite the renewal office's rigorous efforts to include people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, the 'neighbors' involved in the renewal process were mostly middle-class residents, who in one citizen-participant's words, participated actively in the steering committee "with the hope of improving their property value(s)," while being driven by other personal, professional, and community interests.

Overall, therefore one might argue that the focus of Sundholm District urban renewal effort was on a combination of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural sustainability concerns (specifically to foster an attractive neighborhood with better property values, beautiful green public spaces, and a socio-culturally diverse and integrated environment). The focus on social integration was in sync with Danish state's commitment to using social mixing as a strategy for maintaining social order and cohesion (Andersen et al. 2014) Interestingly, this way of managing class/ethnic differences has been critiqued for resulting in gentrification of neighborhoods and further disempowerment and displacement of the poor (Lees 2008). Here, once again, the complex entanglements of genuine commitment to social equality and integration and entrepreneurial motivation to make declining urban areas more attractive spaces for the middle-class are obvious.

The projects and their underlying motivations

A number of different public space projects were undertaken inspired by such multiple (some more explicit and some less explicit) discourses of greening, safety, social integration, and improved property values. In addition to redeveloping some of the existing local parks like Skotlands Plads and Sæterdalsparken with new furniture, play areas, and open design, several projects were initiated within the Sundholm institutional area (see Fig. 2). First, a

community garden was created inside Sundholm. Sundholm District planners agreed that the idea for this garden was largely driven by the municipal support and funding for such local greening projects. Furthermore, this urban garden was seen as a means to orchestrate positive meetings between “groups of citizens with different cultural and ethnic background and different abilities...in a place where race or economic status is not that important” (USER 2012: 59). Here, the idea of creating a socio-culturally integrative space and hence fostering social cohesion played an important role. Planners intentionally recruited a group of Pakistani and Turkish women in the garden while ensuring that Activity Center (one of Sundholm’s social institutions for the disadvantaged) took the initiative to associate the homeless with the project. Funds were made available for a post of a social worker employed at Activity Center so that he/she could coordinate the gardening work with interested homeless individuals.

To facilitate spatial integration a new path was also created so that local residents and visitors could walk or bike through Sundholm and take a shortcut from Amagerfælledvej to Sundholmsvej passing by the community garden (see Fig. 2). Similarly, to encourage local residents to use and visit Sundholm more and interact with its homeless users, a new park was also built in the Amager Fælled schoolyard. This project converted the entire schoolyard into a new semi-private space with forests and lakes that was to be used by school kids during the day, and would be an open park for everyone during after-school hours.

While social integration and urban greening voiced through municipal social and environmental policies and local civic activism for clean, safe, and diverse neighborhood green spaces remained primary inspirations for these projects, a closer analysis of these efforts suggest that they were simultaneously inspired by certain municipal entrepreneurial goals. This complements the already established economic

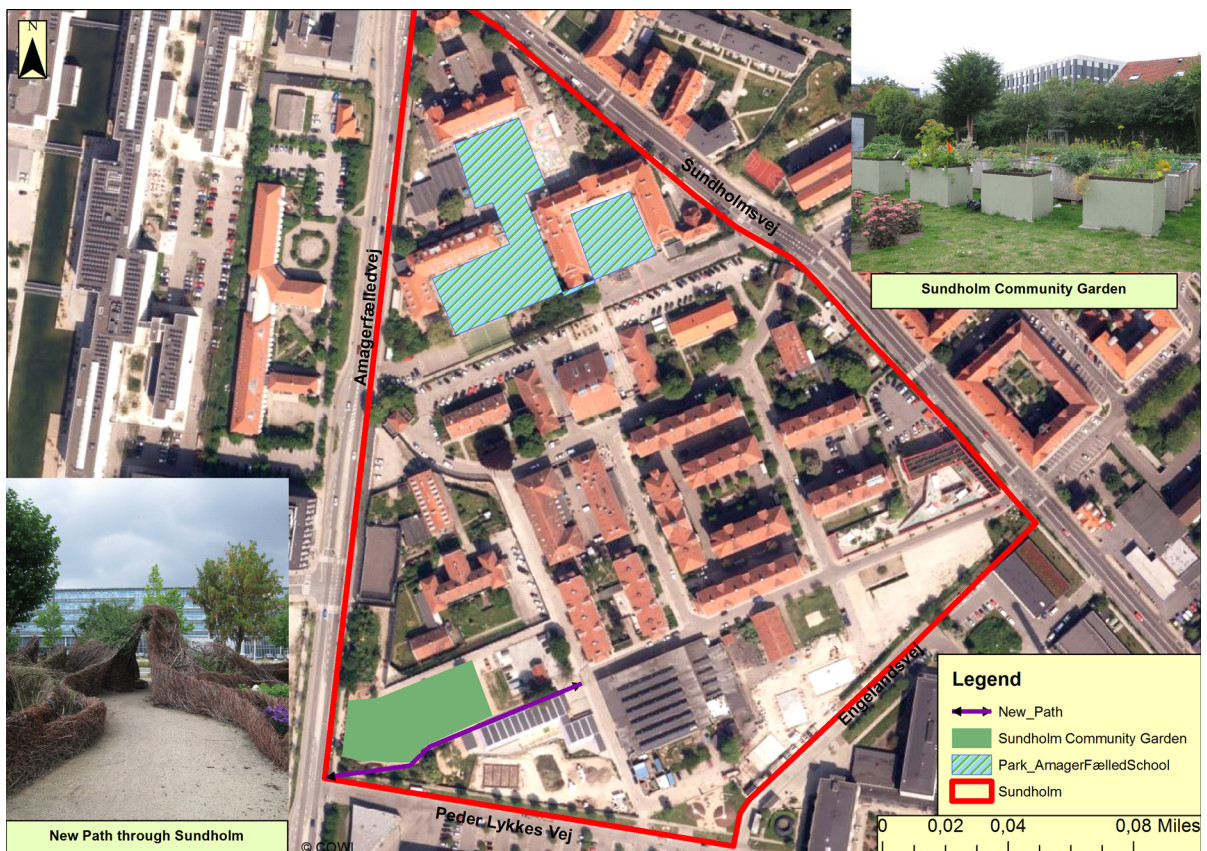


Fig. 2 Sundholm projects for socially diverse and safe green/public spaces

interest of the existing middle-class residents to generate better property values through the neighborhood beautification/renewal process. Discussing the reasons for investing in the community garden in Sundholm, one of the planners explained, “[W]e were also working with the idea that we wanted to make some kind of social development before the physical development of this area and the rim between Sundholm and Hørgården which is a ghetto area. So the fact that you have two very challenged areas and you are building normal housing in between them, we thought it would be a good idea to have something nice to come to.” So the idea was to create a nice and attractive space that could change the image of the neighborhood and make those newly moving in feel good about their new home-space. Presently two new housing developments for middle-income families border the community garden and according to the local plan there are several other parcels close to Sundholm planned to be developed into housing in the near future (Municipal Plan 2011). Thus, an entrepreneurial goal to provide a sense of security and beauty to future economically sustainable population seemed to work hand in hand with the municipal goal of greening and civic activism for socially integrated, safe, and clean local ecology in inspiring the community garden project in Sundholm. Regarding the development of the new path, one of the planners elaborated, that this would allow more people to pass through Sundholm, “see what nice work was being done in the garden, see that the area is not that dangerous after all.” Again the emphasis is largely on changing the image of the place so that Sundholm opens up to outside users and Sundholm District is perceived as a more attractive place for existing and potential middle-income residents. Similarly, local planners explained that the park in Amager Fælled School was also meant to make the Sundholm institutional area more usable and attractive to the residents of the District in general.

Two things are evident from the above analysis. Firstly, these public and civic discourses of greening, social integration/cohesion, and greater attractiveness for existing and potential middle-income residents are in this case not working in separation or opposition. Rather they are complementing each other and collectively shaping Sundholm District neighborhood ecology. Secondly, the above examination of the multiple state and civic discourses suggest that while

urban renewal effort in Sundholm is partly guided by state and civic entrepreneurial motivations, it is not explicitly guided by a malicious state-intent to punish the poor. However, in the end these multiple discourses co-produce an unequal local ecology that proves to be enabling for some and disabling for other social groups. In the next section, I focus attention on these enabling/disabling implications for the homeless population in the Sundholm District.

Implications: excluding, containing, and disciplining the homeless

Research has shown that greening (whether or not driven by entrepreneurial goals) can act as an important catalyst for gentrification (Dooling 2009; Quastel 2009). However, the greening efforts within Sundholm District seem, at least at the present moment unlikely to cause complete displacement of the poor or the homeless from the neighborhood. Irrespective of future possibilities of gentrification, as long as the social service institutions remain in Sundholm, this will be a place for the homeless.⁴ However, the renewal process (and particularly the green space (re)development process) is definitely reshaping/restricting their spatial practices in the area. In fact, the public policies related to greening, social integration, and creating marketable developments along with the civic (specifically the middle-class) aspiration for safe, clean, and diverse neighborhood offering greater economic return on their investment (in the form of higher property values), all seem to co-produce exclusionary public green spaces for the homeless in Sundholm District.

First and foremost, many of the homeless people who used parks like Skotlandsplads in Sundholm District before the neighborhood renewal found the changes in these parks (e.g. removal of bushes and open layout) particularly unattractive (see Bjødstrup 2014). While most other park-users found such design to provide greater safety, the homeless felt exposed

⁴ In renewed Inner-Vestebro district of Copenhagen, political pressure by incoming middle-class residents have raised possibility of displacing public departments serving the homeless to move their facility elsewhere. As such a similar future development is not impossible in Sundholm District (Personal communication with Head of Social Service Department 2014).

and unwanted due to these changes. During the fieldwork many of the local park-users suggested that due to the renewal the “tramps” who used to come to these parks, do not use them anymore. This indicates that renewal of these parks opened up more space for the ‘normal’⁵ residents of the area while making these same spaces inaccessible and unwelcoming for the homeless community.

One of the local planners explained that it was in response to such “expected exclusion” of the homeless from other neighborhood park spaces that the Sundholm community garden was created explicitly as a space where they would be welcome. However, based on field observation and interview with the social worker working with the homeless-users of the garden, it was evident that very few homeless people actually use the garden to work or to sit, relax, and sometimes sleep at night. Interviews with the homeless in Sundholm present one possible explanation, that they “feel uncomfortable to be in the presence of normal people.” This means, as more residents from outside Sundholm begin to use the garden, the number of homeless people coming to the garden may fall further, mainly because they may feel more uncomfortable and also because incoming residents may feel insecure and impose too many rules to keep the space safe. One planner agreed that “experience says if a space is used by other people then the homeless tend not to be there so much.”

Interestingly, the place where now the garden stands was a city-owned vacant lot that no one really maintained or took responsibility for until the renewal process was initiated. As such, the development of the garden means that the area that in its dilapidated state was freely available to the homeless people of Sundholm without much restrictions, has become a well-maintained garden space where all users are expected to follow certain behavioral codes/norms to satisfy the vision of a safe and clean neighborhood. The homeless, therefore, in principle are welcome in this garden, as long as they are gardening/working, while sleeping and partying in the garden is not allowed. Those who sleep in the garden at night are usually moved on and instructed not to sleep there by

the Activity Center social worker next morning. As such, the homeless are required to prove their worth as active citizens in order to enjoy access to this urban public space (Ghose and Pettygrove 2014; Kearns 1995) Under such restrictions, many homeless people tend to stay away from the garden, especially during the day when others are around. One of the local planners agreed, “[T]he garden, of course they (the homeless) like it, mostly those who use it for gardening, but it used to be just a wild area, so that they could camp and now there is less and less space for that. So some of the free space they have had disappears now and they react to that, no doubt about it.”

Similar behavioral codes also apply in case of Amager Fælled schoolyard. Regarding the use of this park by the homeless, one planner said “...of course if homeless people start to use the park as a park there won’t be a problem.” In case of “problematic” use of the park she explained that in Copenhagen they have special local police who are sensitive to how they approach people socially and they will “talk...before using police force”. This suggests that although this park space will remain ‘open’, certain behavioral norms and restrictions will be imposed through soft policing methods on how it should be used by the homeless (and also the ethnic minority kids, who are often described as the main “problem” in the district by the local Danish residents).

As more and more people have begun to use Sundholm, driven by the renewal process (to come to garden, to work, to drop off children at the day care center or school, or just to take a short-cut through Sundholm), more restrictions on the homeless people and their whereabouts in the area are being imposed. Quite contrary to revanchist urban design, covered wooden benches were placed within Sundholm to provide a place for the homeless to take shelter during heavy snow, rain, or on hot summer days. However, one planner explained “as new buildings have come up...and new people use the area...the street on which these shelters are placed are being questioned as a hangout space for the homeless.” As people passing by feel uncomfortable and unsafe due to the presence of the homeless (not due to any real undesirable incidence), Sundholm District planners are being asked to move the wooden furniture inside the courtyards of the buildings providing social services to the homeless (see Fig. 3). On a similar note, as more

⁵ This was a term used frequently by the homeless respondents to identify all those who are different from them by virtue of their compliance with mainstream societal expectations related to home-ownership/rentership, employment, civil behavior etc.

people begin to use Sundholm, the demand for safety and cleanliness has led the urban renewal effort to invest in a mobile drug house, i.e. a truck that would be used by the homeless people to take drugs in the presence of a nurse. This is another good example of a soft compromise that effectively constrains ‘unacceptable’ behavior in specific spaces to keep the rest of the area clean (see Doherty et al. 2008).

As such making Sundholm district green, sustainable, safe, and socially integrated seems to have opened up more space for the mainstream civil society while imposing spatial restrictions on the homeless people pushing them into specific nooks and corners inside Sundholm. As the UPE analysis of Danish urban renewal policy frame has shown these restrictions and exclusions are co-produced and to some degree normalized by the complex entanglements of the civic and municipal discourses (see Fig. 4). This is not to deny that the renewal process has had some empowering results for those few homeless

individuals who have chosen to participate actively in the Sundholm community garden and/or the adjacent Bybi (meaning city bees) initiative. The Bybi is a social and environmental effort to engage the community including the disadvantaged to save the bees while producing fresh local and urban honey brought to Sundholm with the support of the urban renewal team. During the interviews, while one homeless individual explained how getting involved has “taken him off drugs”, another acknowledged benefiting from the social network to “get employed and develop new friends”. Another homeless user of Sundholm garden acknowledged how he was able to vote when the urban renewal team organized to bring the ballot to the garden. This provided many disadvantaged individuals, who usually do not vote, an opportunity to politically voice their opinion. As mentioned earlier, drawing on these empowering implications, the Sundholm District renewal effort has claimed their work to follow a WIMBY principal. But based on the

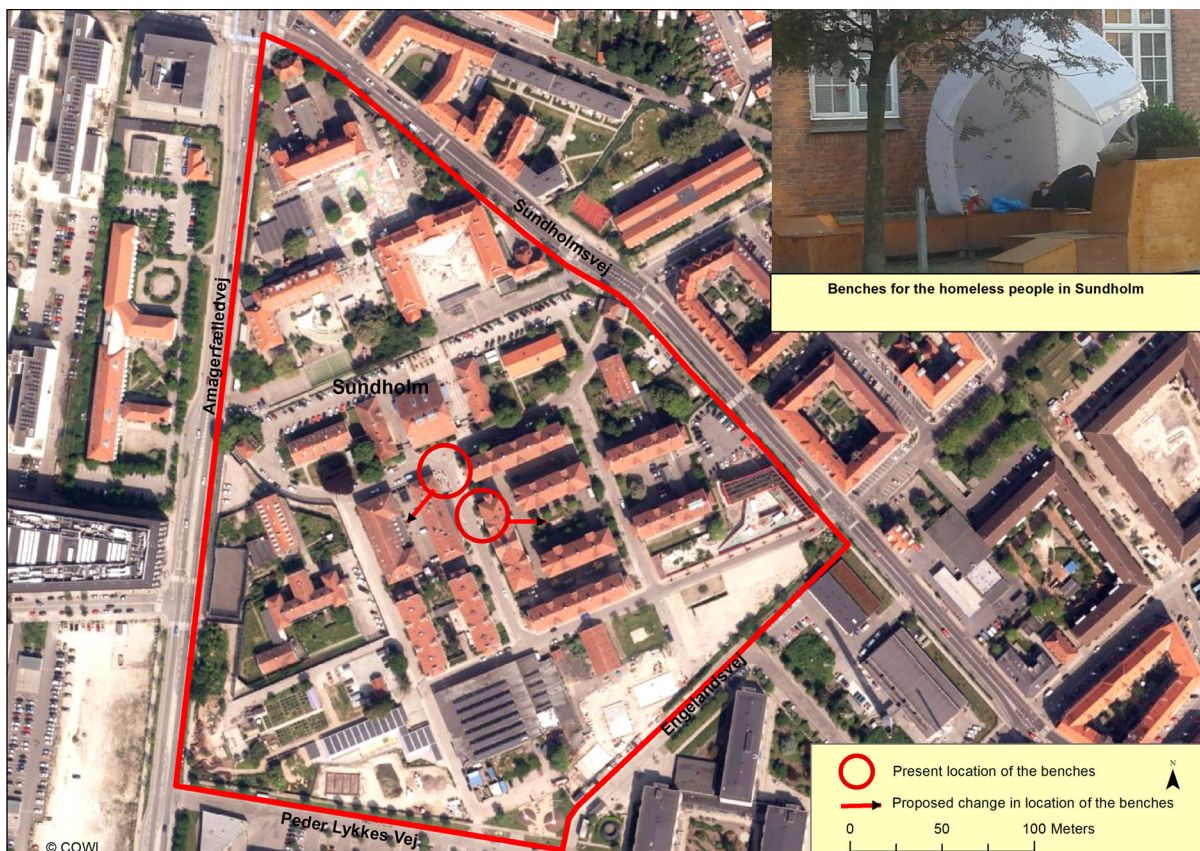


Fig. 3 Benches for the homeless in Sundholm

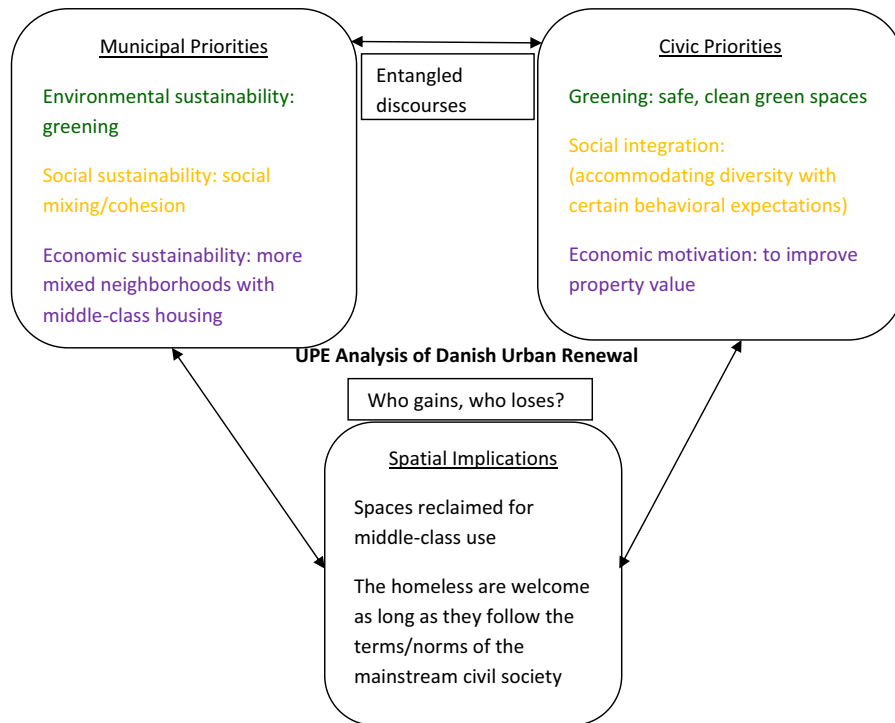


Fig. 4 Entanglements of municipal socio-environmental policies, local entrepreneurialism and civic activism/environmentalism and their implications

above analysis, I would argue that there is a post-script attached to this WIMBY principal and that is “Welcome in my backyard”...*but on my terms* where the mainstream civil society and the entrepreneurial state sets the terms for the homeless to prove themselves to be worthy citizens by working productively, for instance in the garden or at Bybi, in order to have access to the renewed neighborhood spaces.

Conclusion: soft, selective, and green-coded neoliberal disciplining through Danish urban renewal efforts

The Sundholm District case study through the lens of UPE shows that Danish urban renewal program within the traditionally welfare-driven but increasingly neoliberalized state context, remains situated within a complex policy frame, where it is difficult to disentangle the civic and public entrepreneurial/economic goals from the more socio-environmentally progressive goals, without contention. As such, the apparently dual discourses of greening, social integration, and economic vibrancy seem to complement

one another ultimately co-producing urban spaces that reinforce existing socio-spatial inequalities for the homeless in the neighborhood.

In the end, while the aggravated exclusion of the homeless from renewed urban spaces does not seem to be inspired by systematic and malicious revanchist state sentiment, or lack of compassion on the part of local planners or middle-income residents, such exclusion should not be simply disposed as unintended consequence of purely well-intended urban regeneration efforts. Rather, this paper presents the argument that these exclusions are a result of neoliberal disciplining of the poor by an increasingly entrepreneurial state (that despite its simultaneous welfare-commitment) finds it necessary to prioritize the creation and maintenance of a business-friendly and a middle-class resident friendly image of the targeted neighborhoods. This is evident, for instance, when the wooden furniture built for the homeless was removed off the street to keep the ‘normal’ civil society happy.

This Danish case represents a historically and geographically specific instance of soft, selective and green-coded neoliberal disciplining of the homeless: soft, because softer compromises and strategies are

used to discipline the poor and such disciplining is not entirely devoid of state/civic compassion; selective, because such disciplining is not complete and is combined with some empowering implications; and green-coded because it is largely presented as attempts to foster social and environmental sustainability with relatively less explicit mention of the state or civic economic goals. No matter how soft or selective, the spatially restrictive impact of such urban renewal efforts are no less problematic for the marginalized. Hence, it is important to pay attention to such soft and subtle spatial cleansing and disciplining processes as they can easily go unnoticed wrapped within dominant and harmless discourses of social integration, safety, and/or greening.

While Danish urban renewal efforts remain embedded within an increasingly neoliberalizing state context and therefore might prioritize entrepreneurially-driven goal of making the disadvantaged neighborhoods fit into the image of a *Wonderful Copenhagen*, actual projects are planned and implemented at the local level. Hence, instead of ascribing the exclusionary implications of renewal processes simply as unintended consequences, unveiling the complex connections between the multiple discourses that normalize such exclusions is essential so that local planners and active citizens may think about their efforts more critically and design renewed urban spaces as truly more inclusive for the marginalized.

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