On the Margins

Exploring the Phenomenon of Social Marginalization and the Social Work for Socially Marginalized People

Aarhus BSS
Aarhus University
Center for Drug and Alcohol Research
August 2018

Ph.d.-dissertation
Louise Christensen

On the Margins: Exploring the Phenomenon of Social Marginalization and the Social Work for Socially Marginalized People

PhD Dissertation

Centre for Drug and Alcohol Research

Department of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences

Aarhus University

© Louise Christensen

Handed in for assessment: August 4, 2018

Public defense: November 16, 2018

Supervisor:

Associate Professor Bagga Bjerge, Center for Drug and Alcohol Research, Aarhus University

Co-supervisor:

Associate Professor Nina Holm Vohnsen, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Assessment Committee:

Associate Professor Esben Houborg, Center for Drug and Alcohol Research, Aarhus University

Professor Kjeld Høgsbro, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Aalborg University

Research Fellow Marie Jauffret-Roustide, Inserm, Paris Descartes University

In dedication to the state, the workers of the state and community

Acknowledgements

Content

Chapter 1
- Introduction -

"I am a sick man. I am a wicked man. An unattractive man. I think I am liver sick. However, I don't know a fig about my sickness, and am not sure what it is that hurts me"

(Dostojevski 2012 [1864])

""It could be so good, if [...] you could open a gate and then the solution was there, right? But we always lack that. There is never an easy solution [...] for these [kind of citizens] where you think... well, actually you are dealing with people where I think: "Shit man, I wonder if they survive the weekend". That is how it is"

(Interview with social worker, winter 2016)

This dissertation engages with social work for socially marginalised people. Two concepts; social marginalisation and social work; a societal phenomenon and a practice, that are elusive, slippery and hard to comprehend or delineate clearly. They are at once geographically diverse yet geographically alike, and they are ever-changing yet resemblant and recognisable through time. They are difficult to pin down, and they are difficult to deal with.

Social marginalisation is, in a general Danish context, most often described as a phenomenon that relates to the part of the population which experiences a mix of so-called social problems such as homelessness, drug/alcohol addiction, mental illness, (long-term) unemployment, and less frequently, connected to people involved in prostitution or criminality. In a Danish context, the social work practice towards socially marginalised people is, therefore, aimed at these target groups and organised around various forms of help to these groups.

In this dissertation, I explore the social work for socially marginalised people in order to extend our understanding of this practice and enable a rethinking of the social work practice and the questions of power (Article A), context (Article C) and changeability in social work (Article B).

I argue that contemporary analyses of the social work practice have been heavily influenced through the dominant themes and analytical lenses of: governmentality (power), interactionism and social constructivism. Drawing on extensive fieldwork and qualitative interviews with social workers and receivers of social services, I seek to circumvent or suspend these themes in order to analyse what characterises social work more basically (Article A and Chapter 2), how we study a social work practice that is changing (Article B) and how to understand social work practices in a world that is invoking its influence on the practice itself (Article C). On a more general level, the three articles contribute to the ongoing debates and discussions in social science about 1: the role of context (for example in contemporary debates put to the fore by (Duff 2016, 2011; H. Vigh 2009; Holbraad and Pedersen 2017), 2: the character of the object of study and critique of social constructivism (for example in discussions on the critique of 'organisations' by (Du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017)) and 3: the role of power and governmentality in the studies of welfare state practices in general and in social work in particular (as put forward and discussed by (P. Miller and Rose 2013; Dean 2009; Cruikshank 1999) and others and in a Danish context critiqued by (Uggerhøj and Ebsen 2014)). Thus, with this dissertation, I seek to contribute to the contemporary discussions regarding these central themes in the social sciences in general and for the field of social work towards social marginalisation in particular.

More extensively, for research in social work, my aim is to build on the insight from existent analyses on governmentality and power and reorient the focus by illuminating other qualities and characteristics central in the social work practice in order to broaden our view on this practice in contemporary society (see Article A). Furthermore, social work practises have often been dealt with and explained through the lens of interactionism in qualitative sociological and anthropological studies (see for instance, (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2013; Matarese and Caswell 2018; Andersen 2014; Järvinen and Andersen 2009; Mik-Meyer 2005; Fahnøe 2016; Matarese and Nijnatten 2015; Smith 2011; Gubrium and Holstein 2000). These studies have zoomed in on the meeting and interactions between users of services and providers of services and less on the context in which these interactions are taking place. My aim is to add a renewed sensitivity to the role of context to that focus by illuminating how less visible forces and policies surrounding these meetings entangle with the practices and phenomenon of social marginalisation (see Article C). Finally, I hope to contribute to the research on social work practises by avoiding deconstructing or dissolving this practice even though it was susceptible to change during the study. Thus, I describe various ways in which the social work practice was susceptible to change but how we might still analyse this as one common practise (see Article B). Overall, I hope that my attempt at engaging with the discussions of context, social constructivism and governmentality in the social sciences will contribute, to an, if only humbly, extension of our understanding of these topics.

Besides the main arguments in the three articles, I engage with *four theoretically guided arguments* in this extended summary (Chapters 2 and 3), which is relevant in order to situate and delineate our contemporary conceptions and understandings of social marginalisation and social work in general. These arguments are not derived from the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted but rely on the analytical insight and discussions of previous qualitative researchers exploring social work and social marginalisation. They serve as a general introduction to the understanding of social marginalisation and social work, and I apply them here as *these four arguments* extend our contemporary ways of understanding social work and social marginalisation and highlight main problems in the qualitative sociological and anthropological knowledge of these two fields and our ways of conducting research into these two fields.

This thesis prioritises the phenomenon of social marginalisation and the (practical) responses to it in present-day society. As stated above, I foreground the social work practice towards socially marginalised people empirically in order to add a renewed sensitivity to this field of practice. As such, the PhD draws heavily on ethnographic and qualitative methods to focus on the lived experience and contextual reality of social work practices and social marginalisation in the field instead of the, I would argue, more popular and dominant themes of discourses, literary and verbal constructions of social marginalisation and its connection to social work, which is so dominant within a social constructivist framework (a theme I explore more fully in Chapter 2). Thus, with this PhD, I seek to contribute to the fields of social work and social marginalisation and to the research disciplines of anthropology and qualitative sociology in general.

This PhD-project is inscribed in a larger research project, which explores how the Danish welfare state helps and manages people who are socially marginalised, operationally defined as people who receive services from the drug treatment system, the psychiatric system and the unemployment system. The project was particularly focused on the collaboration between various actors in municipal and regional services. The PhD-part of the project focused on the daily social services delivered to people who were receiving services from the psychiatric-, drug/alcohol treatment and unemployment system (see original project description in Appendix C). The project was funded by the Danish Independent Research Fund.

Even though the data is restricted to a Danish context, I suspect that the phenomenon of social marginalisation and the responses to it through social work practices might find resonance and relevance in a broader context (I elaborate on this discussion in Chapter 2).

Situating the empirical field: Social marginalisation as measured and as observed phenomenon

The Social work practice and social marginalisation as a phenomenon might be explained and described in various ways. Here, I provide a short glimpse and feel of the phenomenon of social marginalisation and social work practice by situating the empirical field through three condensed descriptions from my fieldwork and some of the available quantitative data on social marginalisation in Denmark. Through three excerpts from the fieldwork, I provide a very brief feel of the field below:

In the drop-in center for socially marginalised people, Malik is shaking sick with what I think is abstinences. The employee at the workshop he attends has helped him into the café and told him to sit down while she gets him some lunch. He is extremely thin. She returns with a plate of pork chops, potatoes and gravy and asks whether it is okay for her to leave him with us to eat while she returns to attend to the workshop. Malik sits down at our table but does not touch his food. 'I can't eat a thing', he apologetically says to us after only a few seconds though none of us has asked. 'How about just the meat?' I unsuccessfully try. He shakes his head despairingly and looks desperately around the room of the approximately 100-m2 café where employees, homeless people and users of the various services of the compound can buy lunch. A man of African origin who is commonly known as a bit of a bully looks at us from a nearby table surrounded by a loud crowd of comrades. He sees Malik's condition and calls out at him 'Whiskey! Whiskey!' Malik hesitates, looks testily at me who does not respond. He repeats; 'Whiskey!' Malik approaches the table slowly. The man pulls out a bottle from his inner-pocket pouring a small amount of transparent liquid into a plastic cup under the table and hands it over to Malik who drains it in one go. He returns to our table with a small, uncomfortable smile and a trying-to-sound-convincing, 'Whiskey, that's my nickname'.

At another time in one of the workshops at the shelter compound, a destitute woman sits all in rags smelling of liquor and urine. She has slammed two heavy bags of frozen meat at the table, which she says she bought for 'no money!' at a small supermarket nearby. She is unemployed, affected by what is retold as a heavy addiction and drops in at the workshop sometimes. Now, she is trying desperately to sell the meat to employees or other homeless people stopping by. No one is interested. She is in desperate need of cash and tries to sell it to me. An employee interrupts and asks her about her plans to visit the drug treatment clinic down the street. She aggressively tells the story of how she had walked 'all the way there' but had been turned away from there as her abuse was not the sort they were treating and how they had guided her towards another unit about a kilometre apart where they could treat it. She has not been yet, she says, and returns to try selling her meat.

At yet another time, the social worker, Ella, tells me she has received yet another SMS from one of the users. One who had written her earlier and asked if she is at [the Service] today. [...] But Ella wants to know why he wants to know [if she is at the service today] and texts him back. He answers: 'Because I've got a diagnosis...'. She thinks he might show up today then and talk with her. But he might be sidetracked onto a lawn somewhere if some of his friends sit there and drink and so on [she tells me]. Ella tells me the story of this young guy. How he has a providing, resourceful family who take care of him. But he has an addiction problem, has had drug-induced psychoses and been committed to a mental hospital several times. Ella says the goal is to stop these young people from dying or from ending their days on the street'.

Social marginalisation as a phenomenon is difficult to define and therefore difficult to measure. However, in a Danish context, the amount of citizens who can be categorised as socially marginalised have been tried counted and characterised in different ways (see for instance, (Benjaminsen et al. 2017; Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2010)). Homelessness, mental illness, drug/alcohol abuse, and

combinations of these often serve as markers to identify social marginalisation or become solidified as the epitome of social marginalisation (Benjaminsen et al. 2017; Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2010; Benjaminsen et al. 2015). These conditions have been counted and estimated in certain ways through the last three decades.

Danish health authorities' latest estimate of the number of people with drug abuse in Denmark dates back to 2010. Based on a capture-recapture method, the Danish National Board of Health Authorities estimated the number of persons with drug addiction at approximately 33,000 (Sundhedsstyrelsen 2017), but based on several surveys of drug use among the general population, the Center for Drug and Alcohol Research estimate the number of Danes with addiction to illegal drugs to be 70-90,000[1] (Pedersen 2015).

The level of homelessness in Denmark has been analysed since 2007. Measured through a bi-annual national survey, approximately 6,700 people were homeless in one week in February 2017 out of a general Danish population of approximately 7 million people (Benjaminsen 2017). More than half of the homeless population is estimated to have drug and/or alcohol abuse (61%) and about half (53%) a mental illness. One in five have immigrated to Denmark or is the heritor of immigrants. About one in four homeless are women and the number of young between 18-24 years has more than doubled since the count in 2009 (in 2017, 1,278 young people between 18-24 years were counted as homeless). Circa half of the homeless people stay in the capital area with approximately 1,750 in the two capital municipalities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg (Benjaminsen 2017) and approximately one-fourth (about 770 people) in Aarhus municipality (ibid.).

Estimations of the number of people who are socially marginalised in the general population have varied. It has ranged from estimations of ca. 1,5% of the population (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2003), to ca. 3% (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2010), 4% of the population (Benjaminsen et al. 2017) and ca. 10 of women and ca. 14% of men in the population (Benjaminsen et al. 2015, 11). In this sense, we may claim that between 1% and 14% of the general population can be viewed as socially marginalised.

The conditions of socially marginalised are not surprisingly described as poorer than the general population though it might surprise how large the gap is between the general population's health and well-being and that of the group of socially marginalised people. Through questionnaires filled out by socially marginalised people, their general health condition is described as significantly worse. Compared to a similar survey in the general population, more than half (63%) of socially marginalised people have a long-term illness as compared to only a third (ca. 34%) of the general population (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2018). About half (48%) experience stress in their daily life, compared to about. 1 out of 5 (17%) in the general population (ibid). Ca. one third (30%) experience anxiety or nervousness compared to only 6% of the general population. Almost half (40%) have attempted suicide, and socially marginalised people's average lifespan is 61 years compared to 80 years in the general population (ibid.). This is 19 years less than the general population and is coherent with the average lifespan of the general population in the 1920s (ibid.). Another survey also based on questionnaires reports that more than half (ca. 70%) of socially marginalised people experience poorer health compared to only ca. 5% of the general population(Benjaminsen et al. 2017). More than half (ca. 65%) have a mental illness compared to ca. 5% of the general population, that most (ca. 87%) have felt lonely compared to ca. 2% of the general population, that half (ca. 49%) have not eaten three meals a day because of poor economic resources compared to very few (ca. 2%) in the general population and that half (ca. 57%) have felt 'outside' or marginalised from society compared to ca. 6% of the general

---

[1] These are measured as ca. 50,000 with a near daily use of hash, ca. 20,000 with a use of opioids (of which ca. 13,000 inject) and ca. 10-20,000 have a use of other illegal drugs (Pedersen 2015). It is estimated that ca. 17,000 are below 17 years old (ibid.).

population (Benjaminsen et al. 2017). All in all, the quantitative-based data give a rather dire view of the conditions of marginalised people.

In this sense, we might view social marginalisation: as both a lived reality that can be experienced through observation and interviews and a measurable entity that can be understood and delineated through predefined categories. This dissertation is making use of qualitative studies in order to study social marginalisation and the social work practices towards solving or alleviating social problems. In this dissertation I have chosen to concentrate my time and energy on the content of the thesis; that is on the argumentations and the ideas surrounding the themes of social marginalization and social work, and not on providing rich evocative language, interesting phrasings and colourful sentences of the empirical field; the socially marginalized people and the social workers. Thus, contrary to most anthropological dissertations this might risk coming off a bit rough. I of course regret the loss of experience-near descriptions of such a diverse and interesting field but I hope the argumentation of it all outweigh this lack and still succeed in invoking an interest in these highly relevant and important themes.

In a Danish (and a European: see Lorentz 1998), context social work might comprise many types of work. It might be referring to the effort to help children and families who are socially marginalised, to help residents in social housing units, helping unemployed immigrant women, helping young gang members out of the gangs etc. This dissertation is about the social work for socially marginalised people who are of legal age and of full legal capacity. Though some social workers will disagree with this division, I think it reasonable to state that the social work practice to socially marginalised people can be divided into casework and to direct service delivery (which we might term social caretaking). Some employees will manage both.

Social casework deals with the assessment, management and closing of citizens' cases. They assess the eligibility for services (though management will often decide on the eligibility for expensive types of services), manage the cases, assess whether citizens are getting better or worse, make sure to adhere to the national law and execute changes in national law (for an example see Article B), to follow through on local policy, make and have contact to other services (if citizens allow) etc. Caseworkers will often have a larger number of citizens to manage; the caseload will depend on municipality, municipal unit and the amount of people who seek the services compared to the amount of workers employed. Caseworkers are most often social workers by profession, but other professions might also fill this position.

The delivery of the direct services: the **social caretaking**, is concerned with the daily delivery of services. The general types of services are described by law, but municipalities interpret this and address the level of service according to their quality standards. Social caretaking can take the form of being the contact-person for citizens in shelters, delivering visits in citizens home in order to help them with the upkeep and keeping of a home, working with a group of citizens in drop-in centers, workshops or other types of units, helping citizens connect with other types of services, for instance, the contact to the unemployment center in order to secure their cash benefits, psychiatric services, somatic health services, drug treatment services etc. The types of caretaking are delineated by law, but from here, municipalities decide on the more specific type of service delivery and the extent of service to each service user. Some service users will get more intensive help than others. Social caretakers span a range of professions such as social workers, social pedagogues, pedagogues, nurses, occupational therapists, academics and non-skilled workers among others.

This dissertation engages with the direct delivery of social services (the social caretaking part) and less with casework and might, therefore, be better stated as 'the social pedagogical practice', rather than 'the social work practice', but as social work is a more comprehensive term, which is used in other countries as well, I apply it here.

During participant observation in two Danish municipal service units, I have interacted with ca. 30 social workers and interviewed ca. 50 (including the 30 social workers from the fieldwork). In Denmark, there are ca. 13,000 social workers who are part of the Danish union of social workers ('Danmarks Statistik' 2018) and ca. 37,000 people who are part of the Danish union of social pedagogues ('Danmarks Statistik' 2018). (However, these comprise pedagogues who might also work with children, immigrants etc. Furthermore, pedagogues might also be organised in the general union for pedagogues and, as pedagogues comprise one of the largest occupational groups in Denmark, it is difficult to estimate the exact number of people organised as social pedagogues and those working with social issues and adults).

In Denmark, the largest part of public spending towards alleviating social marginalisation is carried out though the municipalities. Public municipal expenses to socially marginalised people comprised approximately 6.9 billion d.kr. (ca. 42 billion US dollars) in 2016 (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2018). This comprises a smaller part of Danish public spending as Danish general public expenses for 2016 were budgeted at about 1,103 bn. d.kr. ('Offentlige udgifter 2016' 2016). The approximately 7 bn. d.kr of municipal expenses to socially marginalised people both comprise direct services and administration of services (ibid.). They are divided between ca. 1.1 bn. d.kr. (Ca. 6.6 bn. US dollars) to institutions for homeless people and crisis centers for women who are victims of domestic violence, ca. 1.3 bn. d.kr (ca. 7.8 bn. US dollars) on drug/alcohol treatment for socially marginalised people, ca. 3.7 bn. d.kr. (Ca. 21.2 bn. US dollars) for temporary and permanent housing units, ca. 0.2 bn. d.kr. (Ca. 1.2 bn. US dollars) on contact-persons to people who are socially marginalised and ca. 0.5 bn. d.kr. (Ca. 3 bn. US dollars to drop-in centers, workshops etc. for people who are socially marginalised (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2018).

Situating the dissertation within existent research

It is difficult to give a simple overview of the wealth of studies that have provided us with knowledge on social marginalisation and social work practices because our knowledge of these can be obtained from a myriad of disciplines and types of studies and from various levels of abstraction. Below, I sketch an overview of the main types of research-studies and disciplines that have engaged with social marginalisation and/or social work towards socially marginalised people. In general, the research has focused on the phenomenon of social marginalisation much more than the social work practises towards it.

Sketch of Studies in Social Marginalisation

Research fields like sociology and medicine have been exploring social marginalisation longer than others (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009; Farrell and Swigert 1988), but today, a broad range of disciplines can be found which explore this phenomenon or aspects of this phenomenon: such as *anthropology* (for instance, (O'Neill 2017a; Gowan 2010; Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Desjarlais 1999; Højdestrand 2016), *sociology* (for instance, (Goffman 1963; Becker 1963; Loïc Wacquant 2013; Farrell and Swigert 1988)), *geography* (for instance, (Takahashi 1996; G. Deverteuil 2006; Geoffrey Deverteuil, May, and Von Mahs 2009; Geoffrey Deverteuil and Wilton 2009), (social) *medicine* and *psychology* including the particular branch of evidence-based methods (for instance, (Tsemberis 2014, 2010)), *history* (for instance (Ocobock and Beier 2008; Lützen 2014)), and of course, *social work* (for instance, (Knutagård 2009)). Though some disciplines are more densely occupied by this phenomenon than others, they can all be said to have engaged with social marginalisation in some variant. Some are working across disciplines and blending theories and methods from different fields and both quantitative based and qualitative based methods are reflected in the study of social marginalisation.

This dissertation is inscribed in the anthropological and qualitative sociological field of research in general and the studies that engage with social marginalisation in particular. Within these fields, we find studies that provide an insight into socially marginalised people's everyday life such as homeless people in shelters (for instance, (Desjarlais 1999; Siiger 2004; Glasser and Bridgman 1999)), on the streets (for instance, (O'Neill 2017a; Christensen 2011; Højdestrand 2016), or give insight into particular aspects of that life such as drug use (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009), bottle collection (Gowan 2010), begging or sidewalk vending (Duneier 2001; Beijer 1999; Christensen 2011) etc. Other types of studies give insight into conditions that are general, but which often also form a large part of socially marginalised people's lives or condition such as drug/alcohol use (for instance, (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009)) and mental illness (for instance, (Duff 2014)).

Sketch of studies in Social Work

Though most anthropological and qualitative sociological studies' main aim have been to explore the phenomenon of social marginalisation, some have also provided us with insight into the services and (welfare) state practises towards this group in society. Though many do not have their main focus on the social work practice itself, they nevertheless give insight into this also. For instance, studies that give insight into shelter policies and practices in shelters, soup kitchens, emergency services and drop-in-centers (for instance, (O'Neill 2017a; Desjarlais 1999; Siiger 2004)). Studies that give insight into policing towards socially marginalised people (for instance, (Stuart 2014, 2018)), urban planning and practises towards socially marginalised people in the cityscape (for instance, (Geoffrey Deverteuil, May, and Von Mahs 2009; O'Neill 2017a; Christensen 2011), outreach work and frontline practises (for instance, (Hall and Smith 2015; Høgsbro et al. 2003; Smith 2011)). Furthermore, a few studies look into frontline practises in (welfare) state services in general (Lipsky 2010; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Brodkin 2011) and finally, policies, which affect socially marginalised people in particular such as empowerment and user-involvement (Bjerge and Selmer 2007; Oute Hansen 2016).

Social work practices might also be illuminated through the broader fields to which these practices take part and are inscribed in. These may include studies on the (welfare) state in general (Esping-Andersen 1990) and (welfare) state developments that affect the population of socially marginalised people in particular such as developments from welfare to workfare (Torfing 1999; Berkel, Caswell, and Kupka 2017) and public-sector reforms (Bjerge 2008). It might further be inscribed in studies of bureaucracy (Blau 1980; Du Gay 2000), street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky 2010; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Brodkin 2011) and the sociology of (caring) professions (Abbott and Meerabeau 1998).

Thus, the social work practice can be understood from various angles and levels of abstraction. However, two popular strands in anthropological and qualitative sociological research have particularly dominated the analysis of welfare state practices in profound ways: governmentality studies (and its focus on power) and (symbolic) interactionism (and its focus on interaction).

Governmentality Studies

Studies on governmentality became particularly dominant up through the 1980s and 1990s. Inspired by Foucault's writings in general and his notions of different types of power such as disciplinary power, biopower and the illustration of government as the 'conduct of conduct', social scientists became aware of how power was produced in society in general and in the welfare state institutions in particular (P. Miller and Rose 2013; Dean 2009). Foucault's writings illustrated the important powerful roles institutions and welfare state practitioners played in enforcing certain types of power. This Foucauldian ethos and mode of analysis gave way to numerous analyses of welfare state practices as examples of governmentality (P. Miller and Rose 2013). Thus, the "little engineers of the human soul and their mundane knowledges, techniques and procedures [such as] psychologists, psychiatrists, medics, accountants, social workers, factory managers, town planners and others" (P. Miller and Rose

2013, 5) became the object of analysis and examples of the manifestation of a modern regime of power. Thus, by scrutinising the 'mundane practices' of various welfare state practitioners, the regime of power could be revealed (Miller and O'Leary 1987, Miller 1980, 1981, 1986a, Rose 1985, 1986, 1989a, 1989b in: P. Miller and Rose 2013, 5).

In a Danish context, studies of governmentality are also highly present and have been used to study practices and policies in, for instance, the health-, social- and educational services (Larsen 2012, Hermann 2007, Krejsler 2007, Knudsen 2008, Drejer 2015, Andersen 2003, Borch 2005, Villadsen 2004, Triantafillou 2012, Frandsen & Triantafillou 2011 in: Spanger et al. 2017). In a Danish context, governmentality studies combined with the popular variant of (symbolic) interactionism have focused on analyses of how the exercise of power, subjectivization and clientalism occurs in specific welfare state practices (Mik-Meyer 2008, Juelskær 2007, Järvinen and Fynbo 2011, Dahlager 2005 in: Spanger et al. 2017).

In this dissertation, I seek to reverse or redirect the tendency of studying social work practices through a lens of power. This is, of course, not a negation of the many descriptions of the effectuation of power in the meeting between service user and service provider, or a negation of how an obviously powerful state is effectuating its policies through various institutions, or how receivers of services make use of micro-strategies to counter this 'conduct of conduct', but an effort to expand our rather one-sided view of the powerful meeting the social work practices are taking place in.

Interactionist Focused Studies

Besides the Foucauldian-inspired governmentality analyses, the perspective of interactionism is prevalent in anthropological and qualitative sociological studies of welfare state practices as well (see for instance, (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2013; Matarese and Caswell 2018; Andersen 2014; Järvinen and Andersen 2009; Mik-Meyer 2005; Fahnøe 2016; Matarese and Nijnatten 2015; Smith 2011; Gubrium and Holstein 2000) and for a critique of analyses in a Danish context see (Uggerhøj and Ebsen 2014)). The popularity of (symbolic) interactionism when analysing welfare state practices has provided us with thick descriptions of human interaction such as the actions, words, pauses between words, laughter, body-language etc. in the interaction but less on the less visible or even invisible contextual forces the interactions are part of. Though many studies of an interactionist bent do incorporate macro-sociological or contextual conditions, their main focus is heavily on human interaction.

Even though contextual factors are illuminated and mentioned in these analyses, the context is often laid out in a prefix or suffix to the analyses themselves or takes up only a smaller part of the analyses. I would, however, argue with Cicourel that: "neither macro- nor micro-structures are self-contained levels of analysis, they interact with each other [...] despite the convenience and sometimes the dubious luxury of only examining one or the other level of analysis" (Cicourel 1981 in: Jauffret-Roustide and Cailbault 2018). In this dissertation, I draw on the studies and analyses that are not limited to the heavy focus on human interaction and which seek to incorporate contextual conditions in the analyses of welfare state practices and policies as well. That is, on studies that "allow[s] us to go beyond interactionism, by avoiding the limitations of describing social situations through the sole [or the main] analysis of interaction between individuals and by attempting to place them back into broader sociological realities" (Jauffret-Roustide and Cailbault 2018, 2).

Thus, this dissertation builds on the type of studies which, to a larger extend, incorporate local, national and/or global societal forces such as political, material and/or economic conditions or events when understanding welfare state practices and policies (for instance, (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Fassin and Brown 2015; Houborg and Frank 2014; Desjarlais 1999; Rhodes 2009; Bjerge, Nielsen, and Frank 2014; Jauffret-Roustide and Cailbault 2018)). Thus, in this dissertation (in particularly in Article C), I experiment with what perspective we might gain of social marginalisation and social work practices if we reverse the tendency to analyse welfare work practices through a heavy focus on

interaction and apply an extensive focus on the contexts of the interactions instead. Thus, in general, I hope to contribute with a contemporary anthropology on the phenomenon of social marginalisation and social work practice, which builds on the mixture of intimate lived lives and broader societal phenomena and seeks to extend our view of the social work practice from the interaction of the powerful meeting between system and client.

Chapter overview

In Chapter 2, I delineate the concept and phenomenon of social marginalisation and describe relevant aspects of the social work practice, which situate the dissertation within the most relevant existent discussions of these. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodological concerns, the practical choices and methods used, and the ethical considerations in the field. Chapter 4 contains the three articles, and in Chapter 5, I sum up the seven main arguments (including the three in the articles) in the dissertation and the overall project.

Chapter 2
- Delineation of key concepts -

The concept and phenomenon of social marginalisation is a rather tricky and slippery one. The categories used to describe the phenomenon have changed with the passing of time (Järvinen 1993; Bømler 2000; Abrahamson 1998b), it has varied around the globe (Abrahamson 1998a; Freilich, Raybeck, and Savishinsky 1991; Glasser and Bridgman 1999) and the groups, people or conditions used to denominate the phenomenon have varied (Stax 2005; Bømler 2000; Järvinen 1993).

Most researchers and policymakers of today agree that social marginalisation is not a well-defined or well-delineated concept (for instance, (Benjaminsen et al. 2017; Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2010). It is difficult to conceptualise exactly what social marginalisation is and exactly who comprises the group of socially marginalised (ibid.). When trying to define it, it seems to escape you. In fact, it seems the more one tries to pin it down, the more it escapes you. It seems we never really get at its boundaries and neither really at its core. When talking with social workers, health personnel, drug treatment employees, managers of municipal services etc. and people in society, in general, they will, however, always almost certainly, know to whom you are referring and what type of situations and condition you are aiming at. Usually, I did not have to explain much before the other, be it a Dane or a foreigner, knew the group and people I was engaging, though these might comprise different groups of people in society. Though they instinctively knew it, they would, however, not be able to come up with clear definitions of it in words that would prove sufficient and satisfying enough for us to get hold of it in its entirety in the end. It seems, therefore, that the phenomenon is quite known and well-experienced but, when asked to define it literally, quite difficult.

This project does not take as its goal to define the phenomenon of social marginalisation in its totality or to end out with an exact definition as I consider this a less fruitful and needed endeavour in order to get closer to an understanding of the phenomenon itself. Below I will, however, describe it from different angles in order to give an overview of some of the historical, geographical, theoretical, ideological and moral/ethical discussions that are relevant when analysing this theme. I will end out with a broader type of definition which, I argue, more closely captures what we mean by social marginalisation and which will prove useful in understanding this phenomenon on a more general, cross-national and ahistorical plane. I argue that such a broader definition is much needed since the last decades of descriptions of social marginalisation in social science research and policy seem to have done away with these types of more general cross-national analyses to the detriment of understanding this phenomenon in society.

In this project, I am applying the category of 'social marginalisation' and 'socially marginalised people' as they, at this point in time in Denmark, serve as the most common category, a sort of 'parlance of our times', and fairly reasonable way to describe the phenomenon in society and the, however extremely varied, group of socially marginalised people. Other categories such as 'the homeless', 'the poor', 'the long-term unemployed (with social problems)', 'the (severe) mentally ill', 'the socially excluded', 'people with drug addiction/drug use/abuse', etc. could also serve the purpose, though, they risk reducing it to various superfluous expressions and positions as I describe below. I anticipate the objections from many a qualitative social researcher by the mentioning of the category of social marginalisation and the incoming debate about whether it might serve as a proper term for it but bear with me as I extend the argument below. In order to pre-empt too much focus on the categorical construction and use of categories, I account for how I use the category of social marginalisation below, but I also present an argument for why these categorically fixated discussions and debates within the social sciences are less relevant for the understanding of the phenomenon and, along with Winlow and Hall (2013), I argue, that these kinds of discussions have taken up too much space and energy in qualitative social scientific research and debates of social marginalisation in general. Therefore, it is my argument that carving out the exact term matters less than the lived experience, situation, and position of what we, in one variant at this point in time and place, can name social marginalisation in society. I extend my argument in this chapter.

Historically different categorisations

Anthropologists expect the phenomenon of what I have chosen to call social marginalisation to have existed since the very advent of man (Farrell and Swigert 1988), but the categories and concepts used to describe this group and phenomenon has changed throughout history. Categories such as: 'the poor' and 'paupers' (see (Abrahamson 1998b; Villadsen 2008)) or '*lumpen* proletariat' (Marx) can be mentioned as earlier ones, while 'socially marginalised people' (Abrahamson 1998a, 1998b), 'socially excluded' (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009), 'people with complex problems' (Aarhus municipality 2016) are some of the more recent ones.

In Denmark the phenomenon of social marginalisation has been categorised with a multitude, and sometimes overlapping, terms such as: '*betlere*' and '*tiggere*' (beggars), '*vagabonder*' (vagabonds), '*fattige*' (the poor), '*pjalteproletarer*' (*lumpen* proletariat), '*fattiglemmer*'/'*lemmer*' (literally 'limbs') and to newer ones: '*afvigere*' (deviants), '*socialt udsatte*' (socially precarious people) and '*socialt ekskluderede*' (socially excluded) or '*mennesker med komplekse problemer*' (people with complex problems). In contemporary Danish society, the sub-categories of the homeless, the mentally ill or people with mental illness/vulnerabilities, people with drug/alcohol dependency have taken center stage (see Appendix C). I argue that these definitions are minor categories that are applied which highlight certain aspects of social marginalisation such as homelessness (demarcating the lack of a home), drug or alcohol abuse (demarcating the dependency to drugs and alcohol) and mental illness/vulnerabilities (indicating the mental state, sickness or vulnerability of the person). These minor categories, in a sense, try to give as close an instrumental or observable description of the phenomenon as possible. By referring and categorising according to specific conditions of the individual's behaviour (drug/alcohol dependency and rough sleeping), bodily state (mental illness) or social or physical condition (lack of a home), social scientists and social policymakers use categories that seem to reflect a more direct observable reality when it comes to the phenomenon of social marginalisation. My argument here is that these types of technically or linguistically specific descriptions grab at the more observable aspects of the phenomenon but do not touch on a more common and less visible character (which I describe below), which enable us to describe other important aspects of the phenomenon and which permits us to make broader historical and cross-geographical understandings of the phenomenon in societies. Thus, the dominant categories of homelessness, addiction/drug/alcohol use, and mental illness, which are popular today, are descriptions that try to get as near to and render visible the empirical reality of the observed. As such,

these categories might seem to invoke some sort of scientific neutrality or a 'matter-of-fact' relation to reality, but by refusing to apply a more abstract or general understanding of social marginalisation as phenomenon in society, these technical and seemingly more neutral description-near-categories leave no impression of the shared reality of social marginalisation of society and across societies. I will unfold this argument further below.

In earlier times, the phenomenon and concept of social marginalisation was less differentiated than today's categorisations of 'homeless', 'mentally ill' and 'people with drug/alcohol abuse'. In a Danish context in the late 1800s, the group comprised such varied groups as the old and uncared for, physically handicapped, people with chronic physical illnesses etc., and they were taken care of in general institutions with no further differentiation or specialisation. In Copenhagen in the 1880s, we meet certain types of general institutions such as the hospital and the correction house (in Copenhagen there were two hospitals at this time: Frederiks Hospital and Almindeligt Hospital and the correction house: Ladegaarden). Journalistic and literary accounts leave rather unflattering descriptions of this population group. As Danish writer Herman Bang described it in 1881, "All these shaking old men and wives, some blind and some deaf, all decrepit, hobbling along with canes and with crutches one Thursday sneaking down the noble street spreading out to beg in the city. A whimpering cohort imploring the mercy of our waistcoat-pockets who spread out like locusts." (Bang [1881] in: Lützen 2014, 124 [own translation]). Another institution, the Copenhagen house of correction, Ladegaarden, houses another group of people of which it is written: "Is there any resident of Copenhagen which has not seen this crowd of street sweepers whom every morning wanders out from Ladegaarden to clean the municipality's streets and squares' superfluous filth and grime. Behold these people; regard the distorted and disfigured faces with dull eyes and long of drinking and other debaucheries. And watch them when they walk home soiled and often drunk so that two have trouble carrying a third" (Stuckenberg [1867] in: Lützen 2014, 124 [own translation]). Today, in a Danish context, the development of the person-group delineating socially marginalised people has been separated from 'the elderly', 'the physically handicapped', 'the chronically somatically ill' and 'children (under age) with social problems'. These divisions are reflected in national law.

The type of people comprised within the category of socially marginalised is said to have changed with time wherefore in the 1970s it consisted of the long-term 'unemployed' (Bømler 2000:18-19, 75, 80-81) and, the 1980's and 1990's, to have changed to consist mostly of the 'homeless', 'addicts and 'mentally ill' (ibid.). On the other hand, it has been argued that it is not the group of socially marginalised people that has shifted over time but the most popular categories used to define the group, which has changed (Järvinen 1993, 10–56). That is, the application of different categories has been ascribed to shifting types of discourses about the group of socially marginalised people rather than to a change of clientele (ibid.). The argument is that the group of socially marginalised people are being ascribed certain characteristics such as in the 1920s to 1930s to be interpreted as an unemployment problem because of the dawning of urbanisation and the lack of employment for the many who poured into the cities (ibid.). From the 1940s to 1950s it was described as primarily a housing problem (ibid.) and in the 1960s and start of the 1970s as personal problems such as life crises, for instance, divorce (ibid.). From the mid-1970s, it was again primarily to be referred to as unemployment problems but now also mixed with drug-problems (ibid.) and again, at the beginning of the 1980s, as lack of housing and drug addiction (ibid.). All in all, it seems there is uncertainty as to whether it is 'the same group of people with different names or different groups of people with different names' ((Stax 2001, 68). The historical variation, though, gives us a clue that this type of phenomenon and concept is ever-changing and evolving as are the varying discussions, views, definitions, and analyses that are applied to it.

Furthermore, it has been argued that the phenomenon and concept of social marginalisation ought to be understood as a relative concept as social marginalisation ought to be understood on a continuum where people can be more or less marginalised or that social marginalisation is a process which one

can be more or less affected by (Benjaminsen et al. 2017; Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2010). There might be some truth to this idea in that some socially marginalised people such as homeless people, for instance, do experience longer periods of homelessness than others (also known as chronic homelessness (Tsemberis 2018 personal communication) and that some might be able to step out of it (Stax 2001). The dominant popular understanding of mental illness as chronic also serves well to describe this point. Since the advent of the notion of 'recovery' and the uncovering of how mental illnesses do not always involve a lifelong chronic illness but something one might recover from, the chronicity and life-permanent condition of mental illness have been refuted. Thus, the category of mental illness is changing form from being an absolute chronic category to a less stable or dynamic category that people might step in and out of during their lifetime. Indeed, research seems to indicate that people who experience mental illness are able to recover in a clinical, social or individual sense (Socialstyrelsen 2018). In relation to social marginalisation in this dissertation, however, it matters less whether social marginalisation ought to be viewed as absolute or relative. History seems to teach us though that, whether or not people step in or out of it, this social phenomenon seems to prevail although through different types of categories and different types of people experiencing social marginalisation.

Ideologically inclined categorisations

Categories also reflect a certain perspective of the world and/or value-laden ideological stance. As the concept is closely connected to less privileged group(s) in society, the concept has been cloaked in moral and normative views. Researchers and political activists have illuminated the different ideological ways categories of social marginalisation have been used to try to highlight some aspects of the phenomenon or society and mask others (Guldager and Skytte 2017; Abrahamson 1998a). It has been argued that the contemporary images evoked by the concept of 'marginalisation' convey images of a center and a periphery in contrast to the images evoked by more hierarchical categorisations such as the underclass of earlier times. By using a margin and a center instead of the earlier pyramid shape of upper-, middle- and lower class, the relations of power becomes blurred. The understanding of forces affecting social marginalisation shifts when we move from a category which manifests the phenomenon as the product of hierarchical strata in society to a category that reflects the phenomenon as exclusion or distance from a non-hierarchical center (Abrahamson 1998a). As such, it is argued that the change in category also changes the view of social marginalisation as societal phenomenon (ibid.). In another example, it has been argued that the evolvement from referring to 'the poor' to using the category of 'socially excluded' instead has resulted in focusing our attention and understanding of social marginalisation as not only a lack of resources but of human exclusion wherefore it might not only be solved through poverty relief (Abrahamson 1998b). In yet another example, it has been argued that the contemporary popular categorisation of 'user' or 'service user' when referring to people who receive various services from the welfare state might reveal a certain neo-liberal focus (Guldager and Skytte 2017; Bjerge, Nielsen, and Frank 2014; Mol 2011). This category has been analysed as a market-oriented way of portraying the receivers of social services (ibid). The older but today less popular terms of 'clients' and 'citizens' highlighting the person's relation in an institutional setting or as a legally bound person of the state, respectively, have today given way to the more popular 'service user' (and 'service provider' when referring to employees providing services to socially marginalised people). Thus, we enter the realm of a service- and consumer society where socially marginalised people are constructed as individuals being capable of choosing the services of the welfare state as if they were customers in a store (ibid.), and social workers and other agents of the state are construed as providers of this service (I explore this further in the paragraph below on social work and new public management). Though the various categories used to reflect social marginalisation might seem neutral or technically correct in its time, they reflect value-laden or ideological claims about the individual socially marginalised person, the group as a whole, their relation to the society they live in, and society in general. My argument is that no term will stand the test of time as language itself portrays a stand, betrays objectivity, and is rarely (if ever)

neutral. Therefore, I make use of a variety of categories in this thesis, claiming each as unfit as the next to convey a neutral or objective reality. Instead of expending energy carving out the exact and most neutral term for this phenomenon and person group, I argue for a 'good enough' categorisation in order to invest energy and attention towards the exploration of the phenomenon as it manifests itself in contemporary society instead (I unfold this argument in the paragraph on 'a good enough category' below).

Geographically varied descriptions

Geographically, the categorisation of social marginalisation also varies. Around the globe, the categories depicting social marginalisation differ. As such, different geographical locales might highlight different aspects or situations of the phenomenon of social marginalisation. The category of homeless, for instance, differs among different countries and centers on different aspects of homelessness (Glasser and Bridgman 1999). In Japan they speak of the '*furosha*' ('the floating people'), in the French-speaking world of the '*sans-abri*' ('without shelter' (from the elements), '*hemlösa*', '*hjemløse*' (those without a home) in the Scandinavian countries of Denmark and Sweden, and '*bostedsløse*' (with no domicile) in Norway. Each category highlighting, respectively, a floating condition, the sheltering from the elements, the home or domicile. These are current usages of categories which, as noted above, however, change with the passing of time and where the people comprising the category might change so the category, though retaining the same word, carries a different meaning as to whom it refers. Though countries seem to have certain shared national categories of social marginalisation, they might vary within nation states also. Even locally, there might be a difference in the categories used. In as small a country as Denmark's 43,500 km², there are local variants of the categorisation of socially marginalised people. In Copenhagen (the capital area) the usage of *'socialt udsatte'* (social precarious) which focus on the precarious situation socially marginalised people are in, is dominant, while the Aarhus area (Denmark's second largest city) more frequently uses the term '*borgere med komplekse problemer*' ('citizens with complex problems') highlighting the intermix and intersection of problems such as mental illness, unemployment, drug or alcohol dependency, homelessness etc.

Even though the term social marginalisation rings true to Danish ears, the term is less known in other societies. In American anthropological and sociological research, it has been replaced by the popular use of homelessness. Homelessness as a category and research field on its own, however, only arises with the phenomenon's arising and rising public concern about this phenomenon in American society in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Glasser and Bridgman 1999). As 'Americans began encountering people living on the streets, a way of life which had been confined to the skid rows of large cities' (Glasser and Bridgman 1999, 2), homelessness gains attention in the general public. This means that Americans born before the end of the 1970s still remember a society with no (remarkable) visible traces of homelessness, whereas younger generations do not. It has been argued that for younger generations homelessness might, therefore, come off as a fact of life, as if the phenomenon of homelessness is a natural unavoidable condition of every society; a sort of (societal) natural law (personal communication 2018, Sam Tsemberis). The concept thus rises from the geographical realities of a place. For social science research, this means that the phenomenon, though it can perhaps be argued to persist or have existed in other ways, mainly rises as a social reality in the 1970s. Concepts and realities thus mix in strange and powerful ways. This is also reflected within the sociology of deviance as this concept and area of study has died out or lost its vigour (J. M. Miller, Wright, and Dannels 2001; Goode 2004). Indeed, a review of the declining numbers of studies into social deviance in sociological research concludes, the concept has almost died out and being replaced by, or left room for, the studies into criminology (ibid.) or studies which favour so-called illegal norm violations and not more broader ideas of deviance (J. M. Miller, Wright, and Dannels 2001). Thus, as the category and study into 'poverty' gave way to 'social exclusion' (Abrahamson 1998a, 1998b), the category and study into 'social deviance' has declined within social science research to instead be

replaced by newer fields such as criminology (J. M. Miller, Wright, and Dannels 2001; Goode 2004). In this sense, social marginalisation as category and research field is dying out (or has been for a while), and it seems to be replaced in the field of criminology. A fact, which is perhaps, also reflected in societies across Europe and the US in general where it can be argued that we bear witness to an age that privileges and forefronts the penal state at the expense of the welfare state. As anthropologist Didier Fassin argues from a French context, "The decline of the welfare state has been paralleled by the expansion of the penal state" (Fassin and Brown 2015, xi).

Theoretical delineations of social marginalisation
As I described in the introduction, investigations into the phenomenon of social marginalisation are spread across a vast area of research. Medical, biological, economic, geographic and psychological studies have centered on the phenomenon of social marginalisation or aspects of it such as drug/alcohol addiction (Farrell and Swigert 1988; Guldager and Skytte 2017). However, journalistic accounts (see for instance, Orwell, Bang) and literature-studies might also incorporate or center on the phenomenon (more or less head on). Some of the classic writers illuminate the phenomenon (for instance, Dostoyevsky, Dickens and for the Danish classics particularly, H. C. Andersen and Bang) and carry with them descriptions of the phenomenon as well. As such, the science fields from the exact sciences to the arts, as well as literature, journalism, and art have fed into our understanding of the phenomenon of social marginalisation. As this thesis is inscribed in the social sciences, I take my point of departure in the main discussions and illuminations of social marginalisation there within.

Within the social sciences the field of sociology has most directly and persistently been occupied with the study of social marginalisation while anthropology took up the study of social marginalisation late, perhaps due to the traditional subject matter of anthropology and the fact that since the nineteenth century "anthropological research has tended to focus on small-scale systems, societies that Westerners generally view as primitive, exotic, and mysterious. To counter such myths, anthropologists have tried to discover sense where others have imputed nonsense, to perceive structure and meaning where others found only noise. As anthropologists have struggled to discern (and sometimes impose) patterns and structures, irregularities were played down. If they were mentioned at all. Put otherwise, anthropologists have tended to view deviance as a mole, a disruptive animal that messes up the neatness and symmetry of our carefully manicured cultural lawns" (Freilich, Raybeck, and Savishinsky 1991, 1). This tendency is made up by the newer analyses of social marginalisation by anthropologists such as the studies on homelessness as mentioned earlier (Desjarlais 1999; Højdestrand 2016; Gowan 2010; Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Glasser and Bridgman 1999; O'Neill 2017a).

The newest social scientific approaches to social marginalisation can be seen to cut across disciplines and is rather influenced by common trends in social science in general (as for instance in studies of intersectionality and assemblages). With inspiration from the field of law and the notion of intersectionality, some researchers of social marginalisation call for new ways of describing the phenomenon (Zufferey 2017). The notion of intersectionality grew out of the concrete juridical concern of not being able to perceive multiple problems as intersecting and relevant for punishment in a given court case (Crenshaw 1989). In the US legal system, it was thus not able to file a case as discrimination against black women, but cases were to be judged as either discrimination against gender or as discrimination against race. This realisation was taken over in gender studies where it is claimed that the experience of being a black woman cannot be understood separately from being black and from being a woman but must be understood as an intersection of both and how this particular status of being both a black and a woman enforce each other (Crenshaw 1989). The notion of intersectionality has been lauded as the new concern within studies of social marginalisation as well (Zufferey 2017). The basic argument is that the experience and situation of socially marginalised people cannot be understood as a common category but have to be understood through various

intersections. Thus, homeless women ought to be understood as a particular category on their own as their status as women and socially marginalised place them in a certain position which is claimed to be radically different from those of homeless men. Thus, a diversity of categories, which, by default, are understood as marginal such as gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status (class) (ibid.) (or other types of categories that the researchers find disparagingly) must be taken into account when understanding the situation and condition of these groups in society. I will not go into a discussion of the argument here, but I will, however, state the opposite question: What if a common category of social marginal does exist, and what if the category and position of social marginalisation more powerfully define status, possibilities, and position in society and overrule other (minor) categories such as gender or ethnicity?

Here I turn to the insights from sociological research as this field most persistently has tried to engage with the phenomenon of social marginalisation in society. Sociologists ranging from the earliest, Durkheim (and his study of suicide leading on to the study of anomaly (a category used and applied later by sociologists such as Merton, Mead, Parson (Farrell and Swigert 1988)) to the Chicago-School-studies of urban disorganisation (Park, Liebow, Anderson) (ibid.), the 1960's-1970's 'romantic' studies based on 'labelling theory' (Becker, Goffmann) (ibid.) and present-day studies of socially excluded, ghettoes/banlieues etc. (for instance, Small 2004, Wacquant) have all provided theoretical and/or empirical insight into the phenomenon of social marginalisation. Sociological literature that describes and theorises on social marginalisation has been analysed according to several waves: The many theories and analyses have been divided into a range of strands, perspectives and approaches such as a functionalistic approach (Durkheim, Mead), a conflict perspective (Marx, Wirth), a definitional approach (Thomas), an interactionist focus (Goffman, Becker), an anomie approach (Durkheim, Merton), social and cultural support theories, and integrative and processual approaches (Farrell and Swigert 1988). Others have divided the research literature on social marginalisation (as it particularly relates to social work) as sociological deviance theories, conflict theory and labelling and social-constructivist theory, and a special variant of Scandinavian welfare-theory (Ejernæs in: Guldager and Skytte 2017).

I will not present a comprehensive account of them all here but highlight the dominant variants of the definitional approach, labelling-theory and social constructivism as these are the ones which most popularly are applied in the analyses of social marginalisation to this day (see Article C for further detail on this argument) and which I try to depart from or venture on from. The popular theories of labelling and social constructivism are addressing social marginalisation on a different level than earlier theories on social marginalisation. Earlier theories had a tendency to construe social marginalisation as inherent the individual marginal acts or persons who were seen as deviant in themselves (Farrell and Swigert 1988). Labelling theory and social constructivism try, on the other hand, to theorise on the very production of social marginalisation from a micro-perspective which build on the idea of 'the definition of the situation' (Thomas [1923] in: Farrell and Swigert 1988). Human actions, practices and societal events are attributed meaning through the definition of the situation (ibid.). People are not fully free to construct their own definitions of the situation, however, but are brought into a world already populated with definitions (ibid.). Through definitions of situations occurring in everyday life, people make sense of their everyday world and impose an order that makes people able to understand social life in certain ways and act according to it. Thus, social marginalisation, as well as normal social actions, are viewed as socially constructed. In this sense, social marginal actions and situations are defined as such because people have defined them as marginal and not because there exists something inherently social marginal in each being or event. Thus, what lends social marginalisation its character 'does not inhere in the act or attribute itself' (Farrell et al. 1975, 137) but in it being defined (and condemned). Definitions of the situation are critical in order to apply 'order to an otherwise disorderly world' (Farrell et al. 1975, 140). Definition of the situation is not only expressed verbally but also bodily. 'Through winks, shrugs, nudges, laughter, sneers, haughtiness, coldness', and I would add, the contra-examples of appraisal and

idolising certain non-marginal behaviour, the socially marginal are demarcated from the non-socially marginal. As such, they stand out as the non-wanted, the undesirables of society in everyday interaction through speech, bodily expression but also, as it has been potently described by Foucault (and through the numerous applied examples building on his notions), in writing (Foucault) or other representations of socially marginalised people in the media (I turn to this problematic below). Therefore, it is through everyday interactions and everyday definitions of situations in society that deviance can be analysed as in the making. Thus, deviance is produced or reproduced in human interaction, and the popular social-psychological theories of a symbolic interactionist bent gave way to numerous accounts of these types of productions of deviance (Blumer, Goffmann) which have survived to this day (see Article C for an extended argument). The problematic of the definition of the situation and this insight in labelling theory, symbolic interactionism and social constructivism paved the way for the critique of representation in the social sciences up through the 1980s which has had a profound impact on the study of social marginalisation to this day. I elaborate on this problem below in order to discuss its implication and relevance for research into social marginalisation to this day.

Critiques of representation

The mixture of social constructivism, the literary turn and a general representation critique advancing and gaining ground up through the 1980s and 1990s in the humanities and social sciences (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Said 2003 [1978]) have affected the qualitative studies and analyses of social marginalisation in profound ways. With professor in English and literary studies Edward Said's seminal work "Orientalism" and its trenchant critiques of how the 'Occident' has portrayed a typified 'Orient', a general critique of representation is sparked. Though Said's critique of representation is only aimed at the orientalists, it introduces a general crisis of representation in other disciplines too (Jebens and Kohl 2013). A wide array of studies claim that works in literature, art and social science are constructing a too stereotypical depiction of these represented 'others' and that these works are imposing a Western normative view upon this 'other'. As such, the works are described as creating and distorting our image of 'the other' by evoking occidental typified images and re-productions of our very own normative understandings. Thus, the critique of representation is a critique of the specific descriptions made in the arts and in research, but it also carries with it a claim that the naming, categorisation and descriptions of 'the other' is an act of domination through definition. In short, of enforcing power over 'the other' by having the power to describe and define them. Hence, these strands of critiques lend way not only to critiques of specific works on 'the orient' (Said) or different cultures (Clifford and Marcus) but also results in a general self-conscious and self-critical reflection of one's own and colleagues' works (and coming work) and of a focus on the practice of power through textual (and other types of) representations. The critiques of representation thus inadvertently become a self-critique that often carries with it heavy moral connotations because the construction of the other is seen not only as distorting the reality of 'the other' but also enforcing its power (and perhaps belittling) the described.

This critique also gains importance over how to analyse and represent people who are socially marginalised and the phenomenon of social marginalisation (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Spector and Kitsuse 2009; Desjarlais 1999). In the American context, anthropologists and sociologists such as Robert Desjarlais (1999) and Philippe Bourgois (1995, 2009) have problematised the way socially marginalised people were represented in popular media and Loïc Wacquant (2001) in research. In a Danish context, debates about representations of socially marginalised people are also present. One of the more fierce debates arose during the end of the1990s when a range of programmes representing socially marginalised people on Danish national TV was condemned as 'social pornographic' (Pedersen 2004 in: Christensen 2011). The programmes portrayed socially marginalised people in their everyday life and local environments such as homeless people at a shelter in Copenhagen (Engels 1991), clients (as they were named at the time) at a social service office in a particularly destitute part of Copenhagen (Engels 1994) or insight in to social marginalization through the special doctors'

service that services clients with health problems at night (Engels 1990) etc. The programmes were critiqued for representing socially marginalised people in a too intimate and dramatic way and for not having consideration for the socially marginalised people's private lives. It was claimed that they showed them in too intimate and emotional situations (Pedersen in: Christensen 2011) and that the producers, through imaging-techniques, depict an 'aesthetics of decay' for the sake of producing drama and sensation (Pedersen in: Christensen 2011). Even though the aim of the TV-projects was to portray socially marginalised people lives in order to give as near and specific a picture of this societal phenomenon and not let the stereotypical pictures of social marginalisation prevail and stand unexplored (Engels 1997; Kehlet 2001), the TV-programmes were described as "class-chauvinistic, aesthetics of decay, drama-seeking and unscrupulous" (Pedersen in: Christensen 2011) serving as entertainment for the middle class and the elite (ibid.). The critique spawned a debate arguing for or against Engels (for instance (Heurlin 1997, Baastrup 1997, Nielsen 1997 in: Christensen 2011)) and carrying a heavy moralistic discussion and judgement of Engels' programmes, their intent and their viewers. Ca. seven years later, Lars Engels was fired from Danish TV reportedly because of cutbacks (LO 2005).

The critiques of representations can be summed up as a critique of the distortion and 'construction of the other' in incorrect or unnuanced ways, but it also becomes a moral critique of presenting 'the other' in an undignified and perhaps even inhumane light (Desjarlais 1999) and the power that comes with being the presenter. Thus, the critique of representation of socially marginalised people becomes both a critique of social scientific descriptions in general and a moral critique of the superiority of the presenters. The problem of representation, however, forever remains as the construction of texts, images and moving media invariably invokes a certain image to the viewer of social marginalisation and socially marginalised people. Anthropology and other representational sciences will never escape this conundrum when it comes to social marginalisation because as "representational practices they are torn between objectifying and humanizing; exploiting and giving voice; propagandizing and documenting injustice; stigmatizing and revealing; fomenting voyeurism and promoting empathy; stereotyping and analysing" (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009, 15). Thus, it is a choice: to expose and represent or not to. To expose means risking representing intimate lives which are vulnerable to the critiques, sentiments and morals of the general population. Not to expose means hiding from view conditions and situations, which are, perhaps, unknown to a general population or already (more or less) superficially known, an object for clichés or stereotypes and (perhaps) distorted in the general population. I would argue that there is no logically or morally correct choice, but I would, and this project of course leans on this, prefer the former to the latter in that I would argue that the availability of categories already are well in place and that the general population already know of the phenomenon of social marginalisation.

Another (down)side of the postmodern coin, is the over-fixation or almost obsession with trying to come up with the correct and least morally laden words, categories and images of social marginalisation to the detriment of understanding the phenomenon as it presents itself in society. I would argue alongside Winlow and Hall that: "A growing proportion of twenty-first century social exclusion analysis appears to be more interested in the ways in which powerful and influential social groups construct images of the poor as profligate, lazy, immoral and dangerous. […]. [Researchers] approach the danger of the 'stereotype' with a broad-spectrum antibiotic, simply denying that all universal forms and categories exist. […]. Very little interest is now paid to the realities of social exclusion" (Winlow and Hall 2013, 30). The contributions and relevance of social constructivism and critique of representation were, without a doubt, welcoming in the humanities and social sciences, as they have produced valuable insight into classical works in the arts and sciences and reflection on how representations are also an act of domination and power. Thus, they have sharpened our understanding of how representations and social constructions of reality also give way to domination. However, the critique of representations and the social constructivist focus on which words and categories are used to describe people who are socially marginalised might result in a preoccupation,

and even obsession, with words and categories in replacement of understanding the phenomenon itself. This preoccupation with words and how they result in power and domination give representation of 'the other' a moral bent that might risk silencing or at least makes representing very difficult and with the risk of moral condemnation of the individual author (as seen in the case above). The energy spent on trying to come up with a perfect category and to delineate precisely where this category ends and begins, who it precisely entails etc. take attention and energy away from the job of understanding the phenomenon as it manifests itself in society (outside or despite of the categorisations and verbal productions). The consequences of the popularity of the representation critique and social constructivism have resulted in many near-sighted and structurally blind sorts of ethnographies which persistently highlight the ills of categorisations and their ensuing demonisation of the socially marginalised people and leave structural conditions as a prefix or suffix to the analyses themselves (I further extend this argument in Article C). Though the critique of social constructionism and pure phenomenology is perhaps stated a bit unnuanced in the following, one could argue that; "the deep underlying causes of social exclusion are […] off-limits, or in some extreme cases where pure phenomenological, symbolic interactionist or social constructionist discourses are drawn upon, reduced to a mere outcome of labelling and demonization" (Winlow and Hall 2013, 30).

Life, however, triumphs over words and, I would argue, with Winlow and Hall that, "the sudden removal of hostile labelling processes would relieve none of the multidimensional structural pressures […] that put the excluded where they are" (Winlow and Hall 2013, 31). To produce more positive pictures of the socially marginalised people would, from a social scientific perspective, be equally futile and wrong (see Wacquant), and though I am awed by the newer ethnographies that focus in on the very positive and fulfilling descriptions of socially marginalised people's lives (see for instance, (Singh 2015), and I very much agree that their lives, human existence, and each individual's presence can never be reduced to their socio-economic status and social situation (see (Singh 2015), the lived realities of social marginalisation is also one of suffering, lacking, violence and pain. In this dissertation, I argue that social marginalisation, in what can be characterised as one of the most affluent Western societies of the 21st century, is constructed because the phenomenon is alive and shows itself in various forms and shapes in our neck of the woods too. In this sense, the lived experiences of the socially marginalised people ought not to be hidden from view or not addressed because of fear of invoking stereotyping categories and the constructions of power this entails. I would say with social anthropologist Philippe Bourgois that because socially marginalised people: "survive in perpetual crisis. Their everyday physical and psychic pain should not be allowed to remain invisible" (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009, 15). A fact that is only further underscored by our knowledge of the concrete conditions of socially marginalised people, for instance, in Denmark (as I described in the introduction).

But then how do we get to an understanding of social marginalisation? How do we describe it if we want to catch a broader characteristic of it? Below, I discuss an alternative way (which for a brief period in the 1990s proved relevant for social researchers and practitioners on a cross-national level), which may override the geographical, historical and ideological boundaries usually set in contemporary social science of a qualitative bent.

A 'good enough' category; Social marginalisation broadly construed
The problem with confining descriptions of social marginalisation to narrow categories such as homelessness, addiction or drug/alcohol use, mental illness etc. lies in the fact that all of these characteristics might be applied to the general population; that is, without social marginalisation being involved. Mental illness does not necessarily imply social marginalisation as mental illness in various degrees is experienced throughout the general population. In fact, anxiety is one of the most common and widespread diseases in Denmark (Sundhedsstyrelsen 2015). Drug and alcohol use (and abuse) are also known throughout every layer or group in society such as craftsmen, nurses, doctors, CEOs,

academics etc. and are not restricted to socially marginalised people. Thus, these markers (homelessness, mental illness etc.), though they very much do contain a presence and sometimes a very dominant one in socially marginalised people's lives (see for instance, (Benjaminsen and Christensen 2007; Benjaminsen 2009; Benjaminsen, Boje-Kovacs, and Hesselberg Lauritzen 2011; Benjaminsen and Hesselberg Lauritzen 2013; Benjaminsen, Hesselberg Lauritzen, and Danmark 2015; Benjaminsen 2017), do not capture the phenomenon in its entirety. Therefore, we must turn to other ways of getting at its core. Here, I am inspired by the writings of social researchers and practitioners Vigh, Lambech, Brandt and Room. I would argue, that one way of getting at a more general description of the phenomenon which is not tied geographically, historically (and is perhaps less normative) is the definition of social marginalisation as a shared experience that eclipses other relevant categories (as paraphrased through (H. Vigh 2007)) and an inability or possibility to make use of societies institutions broadly understood (Room in: Abrahamson 1998a, Brandt 1992). Thus, socially marginalised people might be described as people who are having difficulties using societal institutions in the broadest definition of the term. That is, both formal and informal institutions such as formal health care institutions like hospitals, drug treatment clinics, schools, prisons etc. and more broadly the labour market, the housing market, the family etc. or market economic institutions centered on consumption which one could argue are some of the most important and influential societal institutions of today (Winlow and Hall 2013). In this sense, social marginalisation can be characterised as a general disadvantage in relation to societal institutions. Or (though the verb of suffering is perhaps a bit blunt for our ears today) as people who:

> "a: [...] suffer general disadvantage in terms of education, training, employment, housing, financial resources, etc.; b: their chances of gaining access to the major social institutions which distribute these life chances are substantially less than those of the rest of the population; c: these disadvantages persist over time" (Room in: Abrahamson 1998a, 18)

Or, put briefly, as a *'lack of ability to use societal institutions broadly speaking'* (Brandt 1992, 7)

With a more abstract view on social marginalisation, we get a different take on this phenomenon in relation to society. As institutions change with the passing of time and from one geographical setting to another, this definition allows us to view social marginalisation in a more general light. Here, the definition of the phenomenon is not bounded in more superfluous or technical-functional understandings such as a 'lack' (of housing for instance) or a 'behaviour' (using drugs) but in a more general characteristic. The lack of ability, or perhaps we could just say less or worsened capability or possibility, of using societal institutions gets us closer to a more general characterisation of social marginalisation. From this point of view, it is the societal layout (with its particular; though highly dynamic, institutions and the concurrent expectations, glorifications and idealisations in order to step into and manage participation in these institutions) which make social marginalisation a reality not solely the linguistic categorisations of social marginalisation or the material lack (though it fills into it or manifests it further since it worsens the possibility of societal institutional inclusion in various ways). And also, keeping in mind that institutions, as social structural forces in general, are dynamic and changeable (H. Vigh 2009).

This inability, less capability or possibility is also characterised by a certain position, condition and shared experience in society. I would argue that this shared position and experience overrule other less dominant categories such as for instance gender, race, class etc. (wherefore the call for intersectional analyses of social marginalisation such as homelessness (see (Zufferey 2017)) is less relevant as described above). Even though the socially marginalised people in this dissertation are as varied as the rest of the Danish population as there were: young/old, women/men, Danish/foreigners, people with varied educational backgrounds, with different political views and moral standpoints, people with or without mental illness, with or without an alcohol/drug dependency, homeless or non-homeless (and some who were in and out of these situations and conditions during the fieldwork), and

a wealth of personality types: talkative and less talkative, funny or serious, outgoing or introvert etc., they all shared a position, condition and certain points of reference. In this sense, they could be said to share "specific ordeals, praxis', perspectives and positions within a given terrain and thus sharing certain points or spheres of reference" (H. Vigh 2003, 18). Paraphrasing Vigh, I will argue that: Though the complex human life of each socially marginalised individual cannot be reduced to a type or generality, their ways of creating a path through the movement[2] of Danish society is representative of the majority of my interlocutors' lives. Thus, it is not each individual's life course that is representative of all socially marginalised people (indeed many life courses and ways of living their lives could not be further apart), but each person's attempt at navigating in and through Danish society as it is laid out today. I would argue that it is a shared experience, position and ability to make use of societal institutions that more generally characterise social marginalisation. This inability or severed possibility is, of course, very difficult to quantify and measure in pre-described categories and, therefore, also difficult to operationalise politically and academically. How do we determine who is experiencing an inability or severed possibility of making use of the general societal institutions in society? Many of the regularly used categories do not grasp this or only at some symptoms of it. How then do we find and delineate the socially marginalised people for this study?

As this dissertation is aimed at engaging with the social work practice, the type of socially marginalised persons that I refer to throughout are those who receive services from the Danish welfare state (though it must be stated here that some, though I would make a qualified guess and claim that it is probably few, do not receive any services). These are services such as drug/alcohol treatment like methadone treatment, individual counselling, group sessions for cessation or harm reduction etc. Housing initiatives such as shelter stay, social housing, help with managing a home by social service workers etc. Various health services ranging from extensive treatment like wound care, malnutrition etc. to chronic or more severe illnesses that demanded more extensive treatment such as diabetes, respiratory diseases, hepatitis, cancer etc. Psychiatric services like treatment through outpatient facilities or in hospitals or supported housing etc. Besides voluntary services, the welfare state also sets certain demands and restrictions which might also be relevant for socially marginalised people such as certain demands in order to receive transfer payment due to unemployment or when serving a sentence in a correction facility due to criminal offences, for example. In this dissertation, I therefore, refer to people who receive services from the state willingly, and forcefully when applied to the services from the unemployment authority and potential juridical authorities. Furthermore, as this PhD-project is part of a larger research project focusing on the mix of services to socially marginalised people with particular focus on those who receive psychiatric, drug/alcohol treatment and unemployment services, units that targeted a person group that needed a mix of these types of services were singled out. Thus, in this dissertation, social marginalisation is operationalised through the municipality's own assessments of people who are eligible and who claim these services. Thus, these are people who social workers have already assessed and deemed eligible for receiving services according to national law. This, however, obviously leaves out the most marginalised (if one can construe it as such) group as this group would not master access to these types of services unless they were non-voluntarily given or targeted directly at each individuals' condition and needs. That is, the institutional setting of municipal services would be too difficult, unwelcoming, unmotivating etc. for them to use. A fact which governments across Europe have become aware of up through the 1990s (Høgsbro et al. 2003) and which is sought countered by the development of outreach services for instance to homeless people on the streets or home visits for hard-to-reach or so-called 'isolated mentally ill' who are isolated in their homes and do not respond or show up for the standard social services (SKP-ordning) (ibid.). Thus, municipal social services of today will also be aimed at those groups who lack the ability to use societal institutions such as the welfare state's social services.

---

[2] The phrase movement of Danish society makes for a strange sentence, but it is important insofar as Vigh's (and I agree with him) claim is that society must be viewed as in motion (as I elaborate on in Article B).

Above I have given an overview of the concept and phenomenon of social marginalisation and related it to the major discussions in the social sciences in order to delineate the type of phenomenon social work practitioners are engaging with and the type of discussions their practice is inscribed in. My argument is that a social work practice towards socially marginalised people only difficultly is understood without an understanding of the phenomenon to which it engages. Below I turn more directly to the practice of social work in order to illuminate the most important themes and discussions surrounding this practice and, thereby, outline this dissertations' other main topic: social work towards socially marginalised people and how I apply this concept in my analyses.

Defining social work
Social work is a diffuse concept, practice and discipline (Soydan 1999; Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009; Payne 2007; Guldager and Skytte 2017). Like social marginalisation, social work is a newer category in a European context. In Scandinavia, the word replaces other terms such as 'poor-relief work', 'charity work', 'philanthropy' etc. (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009; Villadsen 2008). Today, a wealth of methods, theories and definitions exist. In one review, 23 definitions of social work were analysed ranging from broader to narrower definitions of the term (Bergmark in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009). In general, definitions of social work range from defining social work as a profession, an art, a science, a calling, work and a practice (Soydan 1999; Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, Bergmark et al in: 2009). Furthermore, the goal of the social work practice might be construed in various ways (see also Article A on goals in social work), and it might cover different conditions in society and citizens such as: poverty, addiction, homelessness etc. A broad range of professionals and non-professionals are employed to practice social work such as: social workers, pedagogues, nurses, non-professionals etc. Finally, social work targets different types of populations such as: 'the poor', 'families', 'the elderly', 'the handicapped', 'the unemployed', 'troubled youth', and servicing either individuals, groups or communities (Teicher 1951). Thus, the social work practice, its aims and its target groups are diverse and might refer to: "Scottish social workers teaching adults to read and write, a Swedish social worker who organises a course in stress management at a large industrial firm, German youth workers who voluntarily help Turkish kids with their homework after school" (Lorenz in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 37). These practices all attest to the field of social work in some way. Therefore, it is difficult to state where the boundaries of social work lie. Any attempt at defining the practice and concept "necessarily either becomes so vague that it can be used about anything and thereby is meaningless or be defined so subjectively that important details are left out" (Lorenz in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 37). The contemporary lengthy definition of social work by the international association of social workers attests to this problematic as well:

> *"Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels"* (Global Melbourne Definition in: Staub-Bernasconi 2017, 960)

In this way, social work becomes entangled with a wealth of other ideals and conditions such as social justice, well-being, social cohesion, indigenous knowledge, liberation and so on. These are concepts, which also carry with them historically differentiated meanings and, thus, are diffuse like social work. As this thesis is directed at the type of social work that is directed at socially marginalised people, it is not extended for all the other populations that social work also serves such as, for instance, the elderly, physically handicapped, generally unemployed, mentally ill and so on. In this thesis, I am interested in the help extended to socially marginalised people in society. Thus, I refer to the type of social work, which is directed at socially marginalised people as described above. In line with my

argumentation on the concept of social marginalisation, I argue that the exact category used to describe this practice equally matters less than the practices themselves. I most often use the term 'social work' as it serves as the common language of our times. I many times apply the term 'social work practice' as this foregrounds the practical element of the social work. I sometimes also use other terms such as 'service providers', 'employees' etc. Here the social work practice is for easiness sake merely operationalised as the social workers employed in the municipalities who take care of socially marginalised people (I describe the specific methodological delineations further in Chapter 3).

In this thesis, I am not attempting to reach a clear-cut definition of the social work practice as the task is, rather, to render visible traits in the social work practice in contemporary Danish society in order to portray the specific workings of this practice. Therefore, I try to suspend the most common popular dominant themes of social work and, through participant observation and interviews, to render more clear what this practice entails and how it is connected to other contextual forces such as organisational, administrative, economic and political forces it is inscribed in (I describe this further in Article B). It is, of course, too large an aim to cover all areas fully. In the chapter below, I therefore describe some of the main discussions within social work in order to give a general overview of what I consider to be the most dominant themes and discussions in contemporary social work. I argue that though the social work practices take diverse forms and there exist very specific organisational and administrative conditions, relevant similarities exist. I extend this argument in the rest of the chapter below.

Tracing the roots of social work
Tracing the roots of social work practice is difficult, and to this day, it is disputed when to mark its beginning and if that is at all possible or advisable. Is it in the poor laws of Europe, the Christian movements, the British charity organisations, the settlement movement, The Chicago-school or as far back as 1300 BC with figures such as Sinhue of Egypt (Soydan 1999) that the origins of social work are to be found?

The social work practice has been analysed as hailing from Christianity and the charity organisations of the church or other charity organisations (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 32), though it has also been argued that the influence of Christianity on social work has been overestimated and that the poor laws and the work in asylums have influenced the social work practice far more (Payne 1996b in: Meuwisse 2000,35). Some of the most common key figures mentioned as originators of contemporary social work are Mary Richmonds and Jane Adams (Soydan 1999; Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009), but others, however, argue against this common standpoint to center Richmonds and Adams arguing instead for the importance of Bismarck's model of the state's social obligations (Weihe [1998] in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 22–23) or all the lesser known social workers of Europe and the US such as Konopka, Klumker, Hill etc. (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 33). On the other hand, it has been argued that man in his nature can be viewed as '*homo juvendum paratus*' ('man as ready to help others') (Swedner 1983) and that the social work practice, therefore, has been practiced since the dawn of man (Nedeljkovic [1989] in: Soydan 1999, 22). In a lecture on the historical background of social work research, French-Croatian Nedljkovic states it this way:

> *"It is the heritage of human mutual relations, based upon elementary mutual help, customs and morale, originating from the necessity to keep alive, all the way to institutions and professions that have been formed and still are being formed by states and governing systems. And they, turned into proverbial and other (today neglected or 'forgotten') paradigms of wisdom and skill to form various social bases, according to time and place of human living, have been settling for thousands of years, while the contemporary social workers are hardly aware of the depth of true roots of its own activity"* (Nedeljkovic [1989] in: Soydan 1999, 22)

Here, the social work practice is based on mans' sociality and his nature to help or keep alive. In a similar vein, the social work practice is analysed as hailing from as far back as 1300 Egypt. The book about 'Sinhue the Egyptian' describes an Egyptian doctor who took care of the poor in the city of Thebes, and when he fell ill himself, was taken care of by an Egyptian 'wise woman' (Swedner and Watari in: Soydan 1999, 21). This might, however, overtone man's ability to feel and act empathetically towards others (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009) and create an idealised view on history which overlooks mans' destructive features or how empathy might be used in more destructive ways (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 31; Bubandt and Willerslev 2015).

Contrary to these descriptions of a long(er) tradition of social work, or even as hailing from the dawn of man, it is argued that the social work practice ought to be viewed more narrowly connected to the problems and specific location of their time. That is, it ought only to be understood in relation to how it was defined at the time and which types of problems it was referring to and trying to solve at a specific time and place. Thus, social work must be seen as a specific practice in relation to specific problems in the time it was referring to. As such, the modern term: 'social work', which is in use today, should be connected to industrialisation and urbanisation because 'social work' describes a particular practice at this point in time which relates to these specific problems we observe and experience now. Older terms such as 'charity', 'poor-relief work' etc. ought to be used when referring to the work or practices done in that specific time as it relates to the specific time and place they were used in ((Howe 1996 and Reisch 1998 in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009). Finally, it has been argued that the social work practice, ought to be closely understood in its geographical context, and the European and American practices of social work ought not to be used as a general model or understanding of how social work is practiced in other parts of the world (Midgley 1981, Dominelli 1998a in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 35)).

All in all, we see a discrepancy as to whether we ought to view the social work practice as a result of a general human feature or a specific practice at a certain time and place. As I engage with the social work practice as it is practiced today, it matters less whether one wish to view it in more general universal terms or as a specific practice at a certain point in time (Denmark anno 2016-2018). I would, however, argue that many social workers would, to some extend, identify with many of the same themes and problems because we see them portrayed across countries, for example, the dilemma between self-determination and neglect (Hollander [2000] in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009), a general understanding of the emotional impact of social work (see for instance, (Simonova 2017)), the act of and room for discretion (Lipsky 2010 [1980]), the assessment of eligibility for services (ref), the double role of social worker as both provider of care and control agent of the state and its services (Green and Clarke 2016; Dolgoff, Harrington, and Loewenberg 2012; Richards 2017), the links of social work to social policy for instance by the introduction of new public management into social work practice (Rogowski) and the introduction of evidence-based methods (see discussions in Høgsbro 2015) etc. I describe some of these themes below. Finally, I would add, the aim of reducing, alleviating or solving the problems of socially marginalised people and the relations and experiences such a practice amounts to most probably also cuts across borders. Thus, I would argue that it seems that the situations that social workers find themselves in when practicing social work share some general common conditions and that social work, therefore, might be much more general than contemporary social scientific studies of a qualitative bent have a tendency to give clue to. Below I describe some of the general themes.

Social work as professionalised or de-skilled?
Though not all agree to whether social work ought to be considered a profession (Dominelli [2004], Lowe and Reid [1999] in: Svensson, Johnsson, and Laanemets 2016 [2009]), social work in Western

Europe and the US has increasingly been professionalised (Svensson, Johnsson, and Laanemets 2016, 69; Rogowski 2010). In general, the concept of professionalisation refers to a process of formal education or more/longer formal education (evolving from courses to schools to high-school and universities) to going from voluntary work to paid labour, to the increasing number of social workers, to evolving into a research field etc. (Svensson, Johnsson, and Laanemets 2016, 69 [2009]). From the mid-19th century, American charity organisations argued for the education of charity workers (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 29), and a few courses were established at Johns Hopkins University (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 29). The same tendency was seen in Europe (Davis 1964, 30; Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 29). In 1885, the education of social workers was established at the London School of Economics (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 29), and in 1899, a two-year education program for social workers was established in Amsterdam (Davis 1964, 30). In Sweden, a six-month course for charity workers existed between 1909-1920 (Davis 1964; Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 29–30), which was the forerunner for the first school for social workers established in Stockholm in 1920 (ibid.). In Norway, a one-year education program was established in 1920, while it was not until 1937 that the first school for social workers was established in Denmark (Davis 1964, 30), and, in 1938, the union for social workers (Svensson, Johnsson, and Laanemets 2016 [2009]). Though some reject the idea that social work requires an education at all (Staub-Bernasconi 2017, 74), the formal education system has grown. In Denmark, social work is organised as a bachelor's degree at university colleges and a master's and PhD programme at one of Denmark's universities. In Europe and the US, social work is usually established as a discipline at university level with bachelor's, master's, and for some, a PhD-level (refs). Thus, social work can be characterised as increasingly professionalised across Europe and the US.

Even though social work has been viewed as increasingly professionalised, others argue that a process of de-professionalisation is occurring, or one could argue that it is rather occurring in parallel at the same time (Evett in MM, Rogowski 2010). In general, the advent of new public management at the end of the 1970s has been analysed as the deskilling of the social work profession (Rogowski 2010). New public management is described as rising through the 1980s across several Western European countries heralding new modes of public administration (Hood 1991, 1995). There is no single accepted explanation of the rise of NPM (Hood 1995), though underlying values of a more effective, less costly public sector seem to lie at heart. Though it has been implemented differently and with varying force in different countries, a general tendency towards new public management practices has occurred throughout Europe. The Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Sweden and Norway have been analysed as putting a relatively high emphasis on this new type of administration (Hood 1995). New public management is used to describe various administrative goals, values, and methods, but it can generally be outlined as designating "the set of broadly similar administrative doctrines which dominated the bureaucratic reform agenda in many of the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] countries from the late 1970s" (Hood 1991). These doctrines have been described as: a lessening or removing of the differences between the public and private sector (Hood 1995) and a move towards accountability (ibid.), for example, the change from an emphasis on process to an emphasis on results. More specifically; a greater emphasis on outcome, more contract-based competitive provision, explicit formal measurable standards and measures of performance of success (in order to check whether and how well goals have been met) are encouraged and practised (Hood 1991, 1995, Rhodes). Thus, with the advent of new public management (Hood 1991, 1995), market-based ideas, values and methods of the private sector have been introduced into the public sector's management and practices (ibid.) including in the social services offices in Europe. It has, for instance, been analysed how citizens now are understood as customers, consumers, or users of services (Christopher Hood 1991, 1995; Mol 2011; Rogowski 2010; Hollander in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 104) and how municipalities (which in a Danish context have the responsibility of managing social services) are seen as suppliers of services (Hollander [2000] in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 104). As such, a market-driven language and agenda have been identified in social work (Rogowski 2010, 158) introducing a performance-, inspection- and

target-driven culture (Rogowski 2010, 159) where "management tools including forms and templates aim to improve professional judgement by standardising responses and limiting the possibility of error" (ibid.). This development is analysed as "the deskilling of social work" and "the continued de-professionalisation of social work owing to the emphasis on discrete technical competencies in a culture that promotes market forces, consumerism and managerialism" (Rogowski 2010, 110). In fact, some argue that this has resulted in hiring unskilled labour instead of trained social workers (Rogowski 2010, 155 [(for UK) and in personal communication with a skilled Danish social worker in the winter of 2018 [for DK]). So, even though one can regard the transformation of social work into a graduate profession as a sign of increased professionalisation, the parallel and quite strong tendency towards privatisation and marketisation of social work since the 1980s has led to a de-professionalisation of social work (Rogowski 2010).

Even though new public management is implemented and manifests itself in various degrees in different welfare states (Hood 1991, 1995), it has introduced a general performance-, inspection- and target-driven culture across the European countries (ibid.). This is also reflected in social work practices in various degrees. Social work can, thus, not be differentiated and analysed solely outside the environment of which it takes part. This is further mirrored in the increased focus on management tools and templates to improve the effects of social services in general as, for instance, in the amount and force with which new methods are introduced into the social work field. I describe this tendency from a Danish context below.

Social work methods and models
In a Danish context, social work practices are often not guided by systematic methodological rigour. During interviews with the social workers of the two municipal units, there would, in general, be no mention of any specific methods they applied consistently during their workdays. However, some methods and concepts were in focus during the ca. one year of fieldwork, but they differed in the two municipalities. During fieldwork, social workers in one municipality would be obliged to participate in a course about the increasingly popular method of motivational interviewing whereby some knowledge of this model was enforced on the social workers. However, social workers were not required to use it in their practice and could, therefore, use it as inspiration and in addition to their daily work if they saw fit. In the other municipal unit, adherence to one general method was not mentioned or applied systematically either, but the idea of 'resilience' and working from a resource-based approach was mentioned by some (for elaboration see Article B) and the 'narrative approach' more persistently it seemed. In general, the social work practice in Denmark cannot be characterised as adhering to specific types of methods and models but by the intermixing and flexibility in incorporating new methods when they would be considered relevant, appropriate and effective. However, the public and political demand for a more effective administration and lower public spending and the moral call to effectuate sound social services that have a proven impact on social problems has introduced evidence-based methods into the social work practice. In short, the idea of evidence-based methods is that by testing services in action we can determine which efforts are best suited to alleviate social problems (for a discussion see: (Høgsbro 2015)). Thus, the claim is that by testing different types of social services as they are applied it is possible to determine whether they work or not. In this perspective, the randomized controlled trials are lauded as the gold standard (and even more so systematic reviews that gather randomised controlled trials) of knowledge. Evidence-based methods are, thus, referring to methods that are believed to work in practice. Often adopted (and often times adapted) from American-invented models and developed and tested in an American setting, European trials however sometimes show less effect. In a Danish context, municipalities are free to choose which methods and approaches to apply and, therefore, are not forced to apply any evidence-based methods. Through national government-funded projects, however, municipalities can apply to test some of the methods that national ministries deem relevant to try. The most popular evidence-based methods introduced into the social services in Denmark are ACT (assertive

community treatment) and CTI (critical time intervention) which originally was introduced as part of the Ministry of Social Affair's homeless strategy in 2009-2011. Other popular methods have been FIT (feedback informed treatment) or SE (supported employment)/IPS (Individual Placement Support) for people with mental disorders (tested on a regional level and organised under the regional health services). These are, however, independent projects with the 'old' standard services running as usual beside them.

This process of application and adherence to new public management and evidence-based methods in a Danish and European context highlights how social work is closely linked to social policy and the administration of the welfare state. Below, I describe social policy from a Danish example to delineate the empirical reality of my field but also to give examples of certain links between social work and social policy.

Social policy, welfare state models and research in social work

Social policy is a key factor when it comes to the scale, layout and execution of the social work (see for instance, (Blomberg and Peterson [2000] in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 79; Green and Clarke 2016)). Social policy determines which rights and duties citizens have and which services can be allocated to certain population groups (Hollander in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009). Thus, the role of social workers, the problems they are asked to engage with, and the ways they are able to engage with these problems are closely connected to social policy. In a Danish context, the law on social services (Danish social service act) in particular delineates the groups eligible for help and types of services offered. As the Danish law on social services is a 'framework act', it only sets the boundaries for the municipalities to work within and, thus, provides a certain room for discretion and interpretation within the municipal office. Social scientific analyses of social work, however, often highlight how social policy becomes disconnected or distorted in the actual practice through discretion (see for instance, (Lipsky 2010 [1980]; Brodkin 2011)). I argue, however, that this does not overrule the fact that social work, in general, is connected to larger societal structures such as the law (I exemplify this in Article B). Two dominant themes during participant observation with social workers were their efforts into 'motivating-to-motivation' and 'goal-work' (for examples and further analysis, see Article A). During their daily work, social work practitioners would often have a more or less direct goal of motivating to motivation and of working with setting goals, assessing how far these goals had been reached, and stating new etc. These themes can not only be viewed as a locally invented practice in the two municipalities but can be seen promoted and encouraged in national law and national and local policies. In the Danish social act, it is, for instance, stated clearly that services have to be delivered voluntarily, that no force must be used in the delivery of services to people of legal age and full legal capacity, and that in cases where force must be applied (for instance, in cases of risk of loss of life), the least extensive form of action must be taken [in Danish: *mindstemiddelsprincippet*]. Thus, the individuals own wishes, capacity and energy for change or help becomes pivotal wherefore motivation becomes an important part of social work practices. Further, one might argue that the general societal sentiments and call for less expensive and more effective public services, which are being expressed in the Danish population have provided an incentive for working with goals and particularly the evidence-based methods as mentioned above. Thus, the actual social work practices such as 'goal-work' and 'motivating-to-motivation' are often also reflected in social policy and, therefore, closely linked to this.

Social policy and its inherent values are expressed in a particular way at a particular time in a specific setting. In this sense, "the different European welfare systems [...] have a solid influence on how the social work is practiced. The social worker represents and interprets these systems through his actions and will continuously expand or narrow the borders of solidarity" (Lorenz [1998] in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 79). The social workers (along with appeals committee, ombudsman and other institutions) are the interpreters and executors of the social policy in the

different European welfare systems. From the highly popular Foucauldian perspective, however, the social workers are not just the providers of social services and distributors of social rights but also part of the institutions of the state through which they are executing the will of the state which Foucault describes as disciplining, surveilling (that is: monitoring or keeping under surveillance), discriminating and normalising (which in effect also leads to the marginalisation of subjects who are not able to fit under this regime). Rather than solely distributing rights in coherence with policies, they are cloaked in the subjectification policies and practices of the state through institutionalised settings (Blomberg and Peterson in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 82) (an argument I elaborate and discuss further in Article A).

The social policies enacted in the welfare states, therefore, connect to the larger political landscape they are part of wherefore ideological foundations have impact on the frame and possibilities of the social work practices. Different societies have been described as adhering to different types of welfare state models such as institutional versus residual (Wilensky and Lebeaux [1965], Mishra [1981] in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 82) as liberal, continental and Scandinavian welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990), as a Bismarck-model versus Beveridge-model (elaborated in: Blomberg and Peterson [2000] in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 85–86), as a Scandinavian service-model, an Anglo-Saxon need-oriented model, a Southern-European and Irish traditional home-oriented model, a Dutch-German subsidiary model and a French-Belgian family-political model (ibid.). Accordingly, these analyses serve the purpose of abstracting similarities and differences in the organisation, layout and priorities in different welfare states across the globe. However, on a general level, as, for instance, with the heralding of new public management described above, all contemporary European welfare states' social policies seem, at large, to be impacted by market economic principles such as effectiveness and profitability (Hollander [2000] in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009, 113; Rogowski 2010; Hood 1991, 1995) though in varying degrees (Hood 1991, 1995). An incoming paradigm shift (Hood 1991, 1995) implements target-driven and business-oriented cultures into not only public-sector service administration but also the social work practices themselves by applying and encouraging various types of management tools such as templates and forms and reducing professional judgement (discretion) of social workers in the field (Rogowski 2010, 159) or evidence-based methods. Thus, we might say that social work practices across Europe and the US (and for specific examples on Russia see for instance, Simonova 2017) are embedded in very different types of welfare systems, in different types of historically, economically and value-specific national and even regional contexts but that they also share a common ground of relating to socially marginalised people, new public management which I have described above.

Analyses of different types of welfare models might be connected to the types of social services applied or the presentation of social marginalisation in certain societies. Scandinavian anthropological researchers argue for the existence of a particular equality and unity ideal that is typical for the Scandinavian welfare states ((Jöhncke in Olwig and Pærregård 2007, Gullestad 1991, Salamon 1992, Liep and Olwig 1994 in: Christensen 2011)). These ideals are not just analysed as an effect of the societal layout and administration of society but might also give us a clue to how Danish citizens interact in certain spheres of society and form groups and sub-groups within it. Knowledge of social work thus extends across various disciplines and levels of abstraction. Social work practices might, thus, be illuminated through the broader fields to which these practices take part and are inscribed in. Such as studies on the (welfare) state (Esping Andersen 1990) and (welfare) state developments affecting the population of socially marginalised people such as developments from welfare to workfare (Torfing 1999) and through public-sector reforms in general (Bjerge 2008). It might further be inscribed in studies of bureaucracy (Du Gay 2000; Blau 1980), street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky 2010 [1980]; Brodkin 2011), and the sociology of professions in general (Abbott and Meerabeau 1998).

Research into the welfare state practices such as social work practices can not get around the notion of governmentality or, rather, the research field of 'governmentality' (Rose and Miller 2013:2) and the popularity of symbolic interactionism which, therefore, I turn to below.

The Foucauldian notion of governmentality is central to many present-day analyses of (welfare) state practices. Governmentality is, as with most Foucauldian concepts, difficult to delineate completely as his concepts are often developing throughout his authorship (Dean 2009, 13; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). Indeed, I argue with Dean that Foucault's concepts are highly dynamic and "never remained fixed; each formulation contains a modification, a transformation, however minute, until the concepts become something very different" (Dean 2009, 13), and thus, each concept can be likened to an M.C. Escher picture where birds develop into fish (ibid.) or are at the same time fish. Nevertheless (or perhaps therefore), the Foucauldian concept of governmentality has become highly popular in social scientific research not least in the studies of (welfare) state practices and, in a Danish context, inspired by the Anglo-Saxon interpretations (P. Miller and Rose 2013; Dean 2009). One central aspect of Foucault's notion is the theme of power.

Though Foucault never developed an actual theory on power (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982; Spanger et al. 2017) and though the concept of power is evolving through Foucault's authorship, it is central to the concepts and analyses he made. Power is to be understood as relational, dynamic and ever-present throughout society. In Foucault, we trace a change in societal power from sovereign and disciplinary power towards a governmental type of power though these are not to be considered excluding each other or as a uni-linear development (Dean 2009). Thus, modern society is to be viewed as characterised by government with its particular aims and technique for governing though retaining and utilising techniques, rationalities and institutions characteristic of both sovereignty and discipline originated in an earlier age (Dean 2009, 29). Government can be described as 'the conduct of conduct' (Foucault 1982, 220-221; Foucault 2007, 192-193; Gordon 1991, 2 in: Dean 2009, 17); where conducting, in general, refers to leading, directing or guiding an individual or thing and in relation to a population and government, to "shape with some degree of deliberation aspects of our behaviour according to particular sets of norms and for a variety of ends" (Dean 2009, 18). Thus, government as the conduct of conduct can be defined as a calculated activity, which employs a variety of techniques to seek to shape individual conduct. Government as conduct of conduct entails human beings who are free to act and think but whose conduct is sought, manipulated or directed. Where the object of sovereign power is the exercise of authority over the population and the object of disciplinary power is concerned with the regulation and ordering of the population, the object of government is concerned with the health and well-being of the population; as resources to be fostered, used and optimised (Dean 2009, 29). Thus, modern times must be understood as an age of government with its particular regimes of power. From this, governmentality is linked to our thoughts on government or, rather, how we are able to think about government according to certain rationalities at a certain point in time. Thus, to analyse mentalities of government (governmentality) is to analyse thought made practical and technical. An analytics of government, therefore, views practices of government in their complex and variable relations to the different ways in which 'truth' is produced in social, cultural and political practices" (Dean 2009, 27). Governmentality is connected to practice and knowledge because "studies on governmentality, [...] are [...] concerned with how thought operates within our organised ways of doing things, our *regimes of practices*, and with its ambitions and effects" (Dean 2009, 27). Governmentality can, therefore, be portrayed in our regimes of practices where 'regimes of practices' refer to the historically constituted conditions through which "we do such things as cure, care, relieve poverty, punish, educate, train and counsel" (Dean 2009, 40).

Governmentality studies are then concerned with the "engineering of conduct" and the normalising of behaviour (P. Miller and Rose 2013, 5). The general focus on conduct, discipline and bio-power reflected in regimes of practices "demonstrated the important normalising role played by a vast array of petty managers" (ibid.). This Foucauldian ethos or mode of analysis has paved the way for a wealth

of analyses on welfare state practices. In this sense, it is the "little engineers of the humane soul and their mundane knowledges, techniques and procedures –psychologists, psychiatrists, medics, accountants, social workers, factory managers, town planners and others (Rose and Miller 2013,5) which has been scrutinised because they are claimed to reveal the regimes of power through their mundane practices (Miller and O'Leary 1987, Miller 1980, 1981, 1986a, Rose 1985 in: P. Miller and Rose 2013, 5). Thus, it is the many regimes of practices as, for instance, the practices performed in modern welfare institutions, which become the object of study for a wealth of analyses in the qualitative social sciences.

Because the power of the modern state is dissolved or heavily dispersed in Foucauldian analyses, it takes a very particular all-encompassing presence in society. "The state, he [Foucault], said does not have a unitary essence or indeed the importance commonly ascribed to it: what are important are the multiple governmental practices that are exercised through its institutions and elsewhere" (Gordon: xxxii). As such, the particular welfare institutions become locus of analysis because they reflect the state. As Fassin puts it "the institutions –be they the police, the justice system, the correctional facilities, the social services, or the mental health units- are thus the sites where the state is produced" (Fassin and Brown 2015, 6). The Foucauldian and governmentality-inspired analyses of welfare state practices have given us many analyses of the 'conduct of conduct' by the welfare state practitioners but risk overshadowing other aspects of the practices. I extend this argument further in Article A.

In a Danish context, governmentality studies are also highly popular in relation to describing welfare state practices, and combined with the popular variant of (symbolic) interactionism, they have described how power is exercised and how subjectivization and clientalism is are produced in specific welfare state practices (Mik-Meyer 2008, Juelskær 2007, Järvinen and Fynbo 2011, Dahlager 2005 in: Spanger et al. 2017). The label 'symbolic interactionism' was coined by Herbert Blumer in 1937 for an article in "*Man and Society*" and stated that his "thesis is that social problems are fundamentally products of a process of collective definition instead of existing independently as a set of objective social arrangements. […]. This thesis challenges the premise underlying the typical sociological study of social problems. The thesis, if true, would call for a drastic reorientation of sociological theory and research in the case of social problems" (Blumer in: Staub-Bernasconi 2017, 289). Three decades later, he summarizised the perspective of symbolic interactionism into three basic premises: 1: "that human beings act towards things on the basis of meanings that the things have for them", 2: "the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows" and 3: "meanings are handled in, and modified in, an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things he encounters" (Blumer in: Andersen 2014, 36–37). These premises strongly emphasise how meaning is created in or arises out of social interaction and how this meaning is continuously created in human interaction. Thus, the social interaction takes predominance, leaving less attention to the contextual conditions and forces in society. The popularity of (symbolic) interactionism in the analyses of social problems (see for instance, (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2013; Matarese and Caswell 2018; Andersen 2014; Järvinen and Andersen 2009; Mik-Meyer 2005; Fahnøe 2016; Matarese and Nijnatten 2015; Smith 2011; Gubrium and Holstein 2000) and, for a critique of the Danish context, see (Uggerhøj and Ebsen 2014)) has provided us with thick descriptions of human interaction between service user and service provider. Analyses have focused in on the actions, words, pauses between words, laughter, body-language, the close materiality etc. in the interaction but less on the less visible or even invisible contextual forces the interactions are part of. Even though contextual factors are illuminated and mentioned in these analyses, the context is often laid out in a prefix or suffix to the analyses themselves and take up only a smaller part of the analyses. In Article C, I experiment with what perspective we might gain of social marginalisation and social work practices if we reverse this tendency and apply a heavy weight on the structural contexts of the interactions instead.

In conclusion, we can, therefore, describe social work as a practice that is diverse across Europe and the US but also as a practice that is increasingly being professionalised and de-skilled at the same time

due to political and public sentiments towards new public management and evidence-based methods. Further, the social work practice is, in general, closely inscribed in and influenced by social policy wherefore the context for the social work practice is very relevant. In this dissertation, it is the insights from qualitative methods (of participant observation and interviews), combined with analyses of various contextual factors, which are used in order to give a close description of the social work as it is practiced towards socially marginalised people today. In these analyses, I have tried to step further from the analyses of governmentality and the analyses, which most heavily rely on an interactionist bent. Below, I outline the main methodological approaches and challenges and sketch the methods used in order to generate an analysis of the social work practice towards socially marginalised people as it manifests itself in contemporary Danish society.

Chapter 3
- Methodology -

In this chapter, I describe the methodological concerns and the methods used in order to explore the social work practice towards socially marginalised people. I outline the specific methods used during fieldwork and analysis and highlight the most crucial methodological problems and questions that arose during fieldwork.

The project was set up as an ethnographic study of social work practices in relation to social marginalisation and, therefore, involves the usual conditions in connection to validity and generalizability (Hammersley and Atkinson 2010; Kvale, Brinkmann, and Bjørn Nake 2015) which I have also touched upon in Chapter 2 on defining social marginalisation and the social work practice. I will, therefore, not engage in the more basic methodological concerns about validity and generalizability in qualitative studies here but delve into some of the specific methodological challenges in this project and the methods used.

My original aim was to study the phenomenon of social marginalisation and the standard social work practice towards socially marginalized people in contemporary Danish society (see Appendix C for original problem and project statement). In order to illuminate these themes, the main research questions were centered on how social workers went about their day-to-day work with socially marginalised people, which problems were they meeting, and how were their workdays manifesting themselves within the political and economic context of contemporary Danish society. As is common knowledge in anthropology, any problem statement formed from the confinement of our desks never stands the test of empirical reality. The problems cannot be stated quite the way they were first thought; they are embedded in other types of realities, or interlocutors are not engaging with the problems as we thought out or are using a vernacular foreign to the study. The importance of reflecting the empirical realities of any field is crucial to any ethnography. What use is it to talk of social work practice as a common practice if social workers are, in fact, engaging in a practice they have dubbed something else and which takes a completely different form than what we might refer to as social work? Thus, any serious ethnography is, of course, constantly aware of our categorical enforcements on the new world studied and how the empirical reality manifests itself and is produced along the way. Thus, methodologically, the synchronising of the empirical realities and sensibilities in the field with our preconceptions and theories are crucial to any ethnography and might lead to important insights and pivotal theoretical or empirical advances. However, this move towards circumventing or reworking the original problem statements might also end in a disappearance of problems, of questions unanswered and undealt with. This serves both as a problematic of leaving difficult questions unanswered in research and in an inability to answer some of the pressing concerns in society. As a trained anthropologist with experience from municipal and national administration

and with extensive fieldwork experience with people who are socially marginalised on streets, in shelters, soup-kitchens and so forth in Denmark and abroad, I have sensed the acuteness of the many different situations socially marginalised people and social workers can be in. Thus, I will argue that qualitative studies that are not able to answer the original questions posed risk leaving it unanswered in society, or answered through other means. Thus, the practice of reframing research questions might risk excluding the qualitative realm and tools to answer pertinent questions, though these might actually be answered or illuminated through qualitative studies if engaged with more persistently. In this project, I wanted to persist in finding answers and elucidations to the original problem statement both because I consider them immensely interesting, intriguing and practically relevant questions but also because I contest the easier tendency to rewrite project statements. I argue that the anthropological methods and theoretical bases ought to prove their worth in answering the pertinent or urgent questions of our times too and, thereby, also serve a more public-oriented purpose. Thus, I adhere to the call for a public anthropology that tries to engage more directly with problems experienced in society (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009). Thus, I wanted to stay as true to the original problem statement as possible, and that was to provide descriptions of the social work practice towards socially marginalised people in order to bring to light crucial aspects of this practice that have not been stated in other analyses (see Appendix C for original research aim and research questions).

Situating the Empirical Data

At the time of fieldwork, Denmark consisted of 98 municipalities, which had the responsibility of effectuating and enforcing the social and employment services in accordance with national law to people who are socially marginalised. Besides the 98 municipalities, Denmark was divided into five regions with the responsibility of administering and delivering treatment to people with mental illness, hereby, also people who were socially marginalised. As this project focuses on the day-to-day practice of social work and not treatment, I was interested in the municipal services. And as the project focuses on the practices of the welfare state, I had the idea that I would get closest to the welfare state and its practices if engaging with the public services directly instead of the semi-public, private or voluntary services (like church organisations or NGOs which often carry a distinct ideological/theological perspective towards the work and methods. Perhaps even constructed against the common ideals and practices in the welfare state). Choosing between the 98 municipalities carried with it theoretical and pragmatic reasoning. Having worked in the public administration, I knew that diversity between municipalities might be quite varied and that some local policies might affect practices in one place and be downplayed in another. Ideally, it would have been great to be able to follow all 98 municipalities, but this was obviously not possible. As the aim was to make a general account of the social work practices, I chose to follow two municipalities instead of one, even though this might prove more difficult and demanding, for instance, because rapport might be harder to reach (and having to be reached in both municipalities), and the depth of analyses, therefore, might suffer from this. The importance and gain from having access to a cross-municipal practice overshadowed these hardships though. As the largest number of socially marginalised people are situated in the big cities and as only 1-7% of the Danish population is estimated to be socially marginalised (Benjaminsen et al 2017), the cities would most easily give access to services and people in the study. The larger cities are, however, often also characterised by having specialised services for socially marginalised people and would often also have special development units engaging with new research methods etc. in order to optimise their practice. Furthermore, my qualified guess is that they also pull in a larger amount of the government funded new projects (which today often involve try-outs of different types of evidence-based methods (as described in Chapter 2) than rural municipalities which often do not have special development units and that this perhaps would give some synergy to the standard social work practices. In contrast, rural municipalities are, because of their smaller size and smaller units, considered to have a more flexible way to manoeuvre and coordinate services between units and perhaps also between municipal and regional services. Many workers would know each other by name (though this also was the case with some social workers with long-term experience in the larger

municipalities). In this sense, the social work practice might take a slightly different form. These differences apart, however, I would argue that the general social work practice is accessible from any type of municipality as the general working conditions, the national law, the type of situation, and conditions of socially marginalised people, general public sentiments towards this group, social work etc. would reveal themselves in any Danish municipality. In the end, the two most populous city's municipalities; Copenhagen and Aarhus, became my field sites. Specific governmental development projects were left out as I was interested in the standard practices towards socially marginalised people. Choosing between services in the two municipalities proved quite difficult as they both had a myriad of special services, and many could prove relevant for the study. In the end, I chose two municipal services that seemed to address the group of socially marginalised people, which were delivering the day-to-day front-line practices directly (and not only the assessment of potential users) and which were organised and employed in the municipality itself. This PhD-project was part of a larger research project that focused on psychiatric services, drug treatment services and unemployment services and, as the two areas of drug treatment and psychiatric services were covered by my senior colleagues, I focused on employment services or employment-oriented services towards socially marginalised people.

The specific setting

Danish municipalities are highly specialised units, and services and treatment might be delivered from various places and offices in the municipality. Citizens are not expected to know the organisational layout of their municipality, and any municipal unit is, therefore, required by law to be aware of other problems the citizens might need help with and inform them about the possibilities for help in other units in order to offer services. Though both municipal units chosen for the project were aimed at the employment of socially marginalised people, they were based differently in the municipal administration. One unit, which we might name Crossroads, was organised under the employment authority and carried the practices, policies, and law from the ministerial area of employment. The other unit, which I name Octavia House, was organised under the authority of the social services and was related to the law on social services. The psychiatric services of both municipal units were based in the region each was adhering to. As I have described in Chapter 2 on the discussion of social work across Europe, the US. and the particular Danish context, I argue that social work practices might be viewed as both similar and different across space and time. This goes for local and regional practices as well. Thus, though we might refer to two diverse municipalities with their own political, organisational and economic conditions and layout similarities across both municipalities existed. In this dissertation, I focus on the similarities and what we might gain from a cross-regional and cross-municipal analysis.

Crossroads; the unit administered under the Employment Authority, was a special unit originally formed to serve as development projects of various employment projects but was, at the time of studying, aimed at helping young socially marginalised people between the ages of 18-30 to get an education or a job. Crossroads was located near the city centre, and one manager and circa 7-8 social workers with various educations were working at the office servicing ca. 10-12 users each. The services provided were divided into various group sessions such as talks on societal issues and local, national, or global political events, cooking classes, excursions to various sites of interest, sport activities etc., and the mandatory individual counselling sessions as required by national law in order to secure each young person's cash benefits.

Octavia House; the unit administered under the Social Service Department, was a special unit aimed at providing general services to people who were socially marginalised and who wanted to participate in employment activities. The unit was located about 10 kilometres from the city center and consisted of five to six workshops spread out in different locales at a compound with shelters, a drop-in center and a medical clinic for socially marginalised people. The workshops were organised with two to three

social workers in each servicing from three to 20 citizens. The number of service users in each workshop would vary during the month as service users could voluntarily drop in and out of the workshop with some showing much steadier attendance than others. The workshops offered training in carpentry, mechanic repair, laundry, cleaning etc. About 20 social workers were employed at the unit with various educational backgrounds. Quite a few were trained in craft-professions such as carpentry, bike mechanics, gardening etc. due to nature of workshops, in addition to a manager and vice-manager in charge of the daily work.

I will not provide a further layout of the organisational setup of the employment authority and social department in each municipality here as both underwent great changes during the course of fieldwork (see Article B for further discussion on this topic).

Access
Access to the two field-sites proved challenging. When wanting to do fieldwork in larger municipalities, it is always a question as to which level to address the request to enter. Is one to address the highest management levels of the department (the director of the social services or the employment services, for instance), the management level of the specific service unit, or the social workers who will, in fact, be disturbed by one's presence and are the ones with whom one wishes to engage? We decided that formal contact with managers would probably have to be done first, and seeked access via formal channels. I wrote to managers in the two municipalities and outlined the project briefly, asking to engage with service units they deemed relevant for this type of study. In one municipality, this proved a very tiresome process as management, though expressing enthusiasm about the project, was hesitant to apply the practical conditions for me to start the project and denied me the opportunity to make contact myself. During circa a month I waited for permission calling occasionally calling to check on the progress or try to negotiate my way to better terms by asking to contact the unit myself, which kept being denied me for some reason. In the end, I succeeded in gaining access to the unit, and a meeting was set up with the manager at the time. In the other field-site, access proved easier but was problematised by the many relevant places I might attend. I was overwhelmed by the opportunities, and a sort of paralysis set in. Which field would have the types of users I was looking for? Which field would be more relevant for the study? Which type of setting would prove best for the purpose of the project? Which workers would prove most interested in it and least disturbed by my presence? In the end, a former colleague suggested the Octavia House. Although administered under the Social Service Department and not the Employment Authority, it seemed very relevant for the study because I was certain of the user group and it provided a good space for participation so I decided on this. Hereafter began the process of gaining more informal access to the social workers and building trust so that they would expose me to their everyday work and the users of services.

As expected, I also experienced the general tendency of the ethnographer to be seen as a somewhat weird, unknown category in the field and had difficulty explaining the project. Some users would ask whether I was a spy or a journalist. A few social workers kept referring to the project as some sort of an evaluation of their work even though I had stated the main purpose of the project and how it was particularly *not* aimed at evaluating their services. Every time this came up, I corrected my position and explained the aim of the project, but I suspect that it did not really become clear that I was studying a work practice without evaluating it. Perhaps the heavy emphasis on evaluating the effects of public services in Denmark at the time left little room for more neutral descriptions than evaluations.

Participant observation

Participant observation can range in intensity and form. It has been construed as a continuum ranging from complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant (Junker [1960] in: Hammersley and Atkinson 2010, 93). In complete participation, the researcher's role is completely concealed, and for the complete observer, there is no interaction with those she/he is observing. I would place my type of participation in the units somewhere in between though with my attempts at getting as close to complete participation as possible. This, however, proved counterproductive as situations arose in which social workers would go to meetings and ask me to keep an eye on the workshop for a while or help out the young service users with their applications, assignments or test on my own. All of a sudden I became the object of my study, and even though it felt nice to be able to help the overly busy social workers and afforded good insights into my own impatience with the social work practice, I could not help but feel it was a bit of a waste of time in relation to the overall purpose of the project.

I conducted full-time participant observation during the entirety of the social workers' workday in both units (interrupted only by meetings at the university or other employment demands of mine) (for a precise description see Appendix A). At the end of the workday or at intervals during the workday, I wrote fieldnotes to record impressions, situations, remarks and actions of the day.

At the workshops in Copenhagen, I was able to participate full-time in the day-to-day work. As described, the unit consisted of five to six different types of workshops spread out over a larger compound, and I had to pick the workshops to attend. I managed to participate in two workshops during the fieldwork and chose two which, in the field, were contrasted by displaying two types of social work; one was defined as a workshop most concerned with outcome (since this workshop focused on orders and meeting the demands of customers), and the other was mostly focused on care (since no or very few orders were put here, and the social work practice more took the shape of care). Most workshops were organised with about two to three social workers (one workshop was closed down adding extra workers to some of the remaining workshops) and having two trained social workers with a specific focus on social work practices serving as councillors in particularly difficult situations and extra help in case of sickness. At first, I aimed at following the special social workers around but felt my presence disturbed the work or evoked insecurity in the relations. Afterwards, I spent time in one workshop, which I chose for its heavy focus on employment and keeping the workshop as close to a normal workplace as possible. Thereafter, I chose the one most focused on care (as described above). Both workshops had relatively few users (ca. three-eight) compared to some of the others. As this service is provided through the Danish social act towards people who are socially marginalised, users were here voluntarily except for the five to six users who were sent to the workshops from the Employment Authority to meet requirements for their cash-benefits. Thus, the service was voluntary for almost all users who could drop in and out of the workshops as they saw fit, though some of the workshops tried to keep the workshop as close to an ordinary workplace asking users to call in when sick, lacking the desire to go, or being unable to show up. I gained rapport quite easily in this field and was able to share my questions, concerns etc. openly and directly from very early on in the fieldwork process. Social workers would even ask me for advice in a few problematic situations.

At the unit in Aarhus, I was able to participate in most of the general educational services for the young socially marginalised people but less in certain therapeutically-aimed group sessions and not in the individual council-talks conducted by each social worker by law. As this unit was placed under the Employment Authority and the social workers were granted the authority to conduct the bi-monthly talks with each young person to assess whether they were eligible for their cash benefits, I had the possibility to participate in these talks. I was initially not granted access to these talks, however, as the social workers claimed they could be very difficult and emotionally upsetting for users. I hoped with time to participate in some, and I gained rapport with a few users who probably would happily have

let me in. However, I felt that I encroached on the social workers' spaces and, while we did develop more trustworthy relations, we were on more shaky ground. Data is therefore, constructed from participant observation in the educational settings, a few group-sessions and the excursions. Each social worker had about 10-12 users at the time making this one of the less heavy caseloads in the Employment Authority in the municipality. This unit was, however, mostly made up of social workers with long experience (more than 25 years), and they would often take their practice for granted and display a certain congeniality. I worked hard to get them to verbalise the implicit knowledge and their experiences in this field. In this unit, social workers were particularly concerned about their verbal construction of social problems and aware of the popular social constructivist critiques of how power was defined through the meeting between client and user. They would recount to me how they were the ones in a position of enforcing power over users and that they took this part of their position very seriously. Thus, they would correct me for lapsing into applying terms such as 'citizen' or 'users' stating that they preferred the category of 'young', 'course participant' (as they construed their service offer as a type of course) or by the individual user's name and this field, in particular, showed very deep concern with the theme of power and governmentality which I discuss in Article A and the critique of representations as discussed in Chapter 2.

Interviews

Interviews with employees of the two units were done at the end of the fieldwork period when social workers and clients were more familiar with me. Interviews with collaborators outside the two units were mostly done at the very end of the fieldwork period for pragmatic reasons. (see Appendix A for an overview over the interviews and Appendix B for interview guide)

As the interviews were both directed at the study of the social work practice and the overall research project on the collaboration between services, the interview guide was relatively broad. One part of the guide focused on the social work practice and another on the collaborations with other municipal, regional or national services. Since the project was mainly focused on the social work practice, I have only eight interviews with users of the services compared to 46 interviews with social workers. Since the day-to-day practice of social work is embedded in the management and organisational layout and priorities of the units, managers were also interviewed though adding a different set of questions to them. The number of interviews grew as new relevant employees were identified during the interview (not out of the ordinary since this was also part of the interview guide. It seemed impossible to exhaust the pool of relevant people to interview as new employees kept being mentioned to me or showed up as part of the research. In the end, I ended up interviewing all workers at Crossroads and their manager (he had, however, resigned, and during the fieldwork period a new one was hired whom I did not interview). At Octavia House, I interviewed most of the workers and the manager and deputy manager.

Interviews were conducted at the place where social worker, manager or user found it most convenient. This was often at offices or meeting rooms at hand. Interviews with employees most often lasted from 45 minutes to 1,5 hours. Interviews with users were much shorter, between 15 minutes to 45 minutes, often due to a general lack of patience with the formal setting. Outside the interview setting, however, users could be very talkative (though, quite understandably, sometimes mostly towards their direct private concerns or ideas or some topic at hand with some falling into streams of talk of an almost monological character). If allowed, I recorded the interviews, and all interviews were transcribed and coded in Nvivo in the research team.

The construction of data

One perhaps minor, though for ethnographic studies in general and the studies of social marginalisation in particular, relevant methodological aspect is how to study the structural conditions,

silences, and non-actions that are not visible during participant observation with socially marginalised people. This problem attests to the difficulty of studying political, economic, legal, administrative, technological and moral conditions, which has lesser or greater relevance to the variety of actions or verbal discourses observed. As social work is highly affected by the political, economic, public moral sentiments etc. (which I described in Chapter 2 and which I further elaborate in Articles B and C), considerations of these societal factors in analyses are very relevant but often not easily visible because they often will not be portrayed through individual actions or formulated verbally by people in the field. Sometimes, perhaps because they are obvious to the workers, other times because they are hidden from view. Even though the concept and use of structures are criticised by some in contemporary social science as posing fixed and distorted ontological claims about the world (see for instance, (Duff 2011, 2016)), I argue that we still need to take these different factors into account as they are not easily accessed in interaction during participant observation. (I describe this further in Article C).

A further elaboration on this problem is the tendency of ethnography to capture and enlarge individual action (or agency) (O'Neill 2017a, 2017b). Through participant observation, social marginalisation is most often described through the actions of the interlocutors. Thus, human agency and an active human agent is often exposed in participant observation even though interlocutors might claim the reverse (ibid.). During participant observation, there is a natural tendency to notice the actions in the field, which will often be particularly foregrounded (not least when it comes to analyses based in a symbolic interactionist focus (for further elaboration see Article C). Therefore, I agree with O'Neill that ethnographers have a tendency to foreground activity at the expense of inactivity, and it seems that many analyses are "bend towards optimism by reframing (maybe even rescuing) those claiming to be "doing nothing" as actually active and even creative". Descriptions of actions such as building shelter, collecting bottles, street vending etc. are often foregrounded whereas endless hours of doing nothing; on a bench, in line to a soup-kitchen etc. often are not. Thus, "the ethnographic move to foreground productive agency has a way of obscuring deeply felt emic concerns about a growing set of practices that are not, or are no longer, happening, particularly among the economically vulnerable" (O'Neill 2017b, 25). Thus, ethnographic methods have a tendency in contemporary times to presume an active creative subject. Homeless people who hang around at benches, in parks or waiting in line at a soup kitchen might feel boredom and express fatigue and ennui, but, more often than not, monographs are filled with descriptions of the tactics of surviving on the streets, in shelters etc. in face of despairing times; some almost give the feeling of a sort of eulogy to the creativity of man (O'Neill 2017a, 2017b). These actions are, of course, correct; they are probably observed very well but what about the long hours of doing nothing and of there being no situations to describe? How about all the hours waiting for the opening of a shelter, begging or selling papers in front of a store with no success, making time pass by playing with the dogs, hanging around for a 'friend' to stop by in order to pay off his debts or picking a fight with another guy or futile attempts at going to the bank to get out your transfer payments but being told off again and again by the bank clerk for having no money in your account? Many socially marginalised people might experience their daily life as uneventful and inactive. They might feel the monotonous stretch of long days of nothingness and refer to their actions as just 'hanging around', 'doing nothing', 'contributing to nothing' or 'being bored' (ibid.). These futile moments are almost never part of the situations picked in analyses (ibid.) though journalistic accounts or literature have given us good descriptions of the overwhelming ennui, boredom, paralysis or depletion of action one might feel in such situations or in general, such as when experiencing homelessness (Orwell 2018 [1933]) or going hungry or experiencing poverty (Dostojevskij 2003 [1866]; Hamsun 2016 [1890]) . By striving to present social reality in action, we risk overexposing human actions and forgetting to portray inactivity and the inner experience of this inactivity, paralysis, ennui, purposelessness, un-creativity and boredom. Or more eloquently put by O'Neill:

> *"The ethnographic record presumes an active subject. The recording of everyday actions, however*

mundane, allows the anthropologist to form a picture of the usual repertoire of life (Clifford 1995:98). Visibility as much as meaning is tied up in the ethnographic record of the things that people do (Geertz 1977:5), so ethnography is predisposed to reveal a world in constant motion. It is a methodological disposition that extends agency to the most vulnerable population segments and reveals the creative energy of life at the margins. The ethnographer's tendency to see productive agency everywhere, however, is not without its slippages. Such an ethnographic gaze struggles to account for the worldviews of those claiming, at times quite insistently, to be inactive, inert, and "doing nothing." Rather than confronting the absence of activity in a social world [...] the ethnographic inclination is to override emic interpretations, shaping, to borrow the words of Michael Taussig (2004:60), all manner of narrative, paradox, and so-called data of the ethnographic record so as to "jolt the emptiness with meaning". While such efforts are often profoundly revealing, and at times even empowering, what gets lost amid such efforts is the now growing distance between people's long-held expectations about the social and material orders that make up ordinary life and their undoing under wrenched historical circumstances" (O'Neill 2017b, 27)

I would, however, underscore that not considering human agency also leads to limited analyses. From fieldwork with Danish homeless, I remember a field saturated with active subjects who were themselves claiming their business and purposefulness of their actions verbally (Christensen 2011). My interlocutors would, for instance, verbalise their stress over having to show up at the Employment Center in order not to risk being cut in transfer payments but then losing that time of work (no quotation marks intended here because their preoccupation with selling the Danish homeless newspaper was indeed construed as their work and an income many came to rely upon). As always, empirical reality ought to guide ethnographers as to how to analyse the situation, but I agree with O'Neill (O'Neill 2017a,b) that contemporary analyses tend to view human agency and creativity in almost anything which risks creating distorted images of how the experience and reality of social marginalisation manifests itself in contemporary society at the risk of leaving important aspects of societal exclusion untold.

In the analysis of my empirical material, I have, therefore, experimented with how we might shift the focus from a near-sighted view on human agency in the human encounters and interactions between service users and service providers in general and to incorporate other relevant factors in order to understand the phenomenon of social marginalisation. Thus, in Article C I experiment with incorporating various types of contextual factors which were relevant for the users' experience of social marginalisation instead of a heavy focus and lengthy descriptions of individual actions and in Article A, I apply the concept of 'mere being' in order to capture a type of presence which illuminates how human actions cannot always be analysed as displaying human creativity, productivity or agency but on the contrary despair, unproductivity, being stuck, irrationality and lack of creativity.

Document analysis and analysis of contexts
One methodological tool which was extremely important for the analyses in this dissertation is document analysis and policy analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson 2010; Shore, Wright, and Però 2011). In order to extend the qualitative analysis of social work practices from primarily being seen through the lens of interaction, I needed ways to broaden the view to bring in the context and factors that were not directly observable in the encounter. This was done by interviewing managers and not only the social workers in order to learn about the type of expectations and policies the social workers were practicing in and also by reading a large number of documents describing the policies, laws (Danish), local action plans, housing conditions, and other general conditions which socially marginalised people (and the rest of the Danish population) live in today. From my experience with governmental and municipal services, I knew the types of policies which are highlighted on a national and local level, and through interaction and interviews with social workers and managers it is

highlighted which types of rationalities, policies and larger societal conditions and problems (such as lack of affordable housing in the two cities, Aarhus and Copenhagen) were relevant for social workers and service users. By reading governmental policies, reports from interest groups, and independent councils, research units etc. I gained knowledge of the context of social marginalisation and social work. Through the longer period of participant observation, it became clear which policies were foregrounded in each municipality and which types of conditions and problems socially marginalised people were grappling with. Thus, I have not made use of a systematic document and policy analysis but have been guided by the empirical field; that is in the conditions, experiences and actions in the two municipal units. As I described in Chapter 2, however, I have chosen to focus on the similarity of the social work practice across municipalities as I argue that most qualitative sociological and anthropological analyses have a tendency to overstate the difference despite clear national, and even cross-national similarities which I described in Chapter 2. Following O'Neil's argument above, I have tried to experiment with what an analysis, which to a larger extend suspends the descriptions of individual agency, might show us (see Articles C and B). By combining document analysis and participant observation, I have chosen to portray some of the main contextual conditions that intermix in the daily social work practice and the socially marginalised people's lives. Thus, in Article C, I describe various contextual factors that are relevant for socially marginalised people in relation to their often-precarious housing situation. In Article B, I describe some of the main contextual factors during the approximately one year of fieldwork that were relevant for the social work practitioners and influenced, or brought up for debate, their daily social work practice.

Data analysis

Methodologically, I have coded in hand and build the analyses from there. Like any ethnographic material, the data pool exceeds the analyses coming out of it by far. Some analyses have stood out more clearly than others. Perhaps because some themes carried with them a much clearer or sharper basis for analyses. However, in general, the analytical frame was not straightforward and clear from this fieldwork. Other topics could easily have found their way to an analysis also, and some have, indeed, been attempted in writing such as the emotional aspect of social work, a general description and definition of social marginalisation (which I, instead, have described in Chapter 2), and the symbolic aspect of a welfare state in relation to social marginalisation. By trying to stay as true or close to the original intent and goal of the project as possible as argued for above, I have, therefore, chosen the themes of descriptions of a general social work practice (Article A), changes in social work practices (Article B), and the importance of context when understanding the phenomenon of social marginalisation and social work practices (Article C). I describe these analytical points in each article and present an overview in the conclusion.

Besides staying true to the initial aim of the project (see Appendix C), I was also analytically guided by the possibility for experimentation that a PhD-project brings. Most importantly, I consider this PhD-project as an experiment into how we understand social marginalisation as a societal phenomenon and of the social work to socially marginalised people. Since I have experience in working in government and municipal offices administering and executing the social policies of the democratic state and how extremely time and energy-consuming this practical endeavour is, I am aware of the privilege of having three years of full time off to study and explore these phenomena and practices. I have, throughout, prioritised the hunches, experiments, ideas and new thoughts occurring to me and going along with this before considering its correctness or appropriateness in accordance with existent research. Thus, I have preferred to experiment with the new instead of laying bare already conventional wisdom within this field. This has, however, not been easy. From the start, I knew there would be no reason for stating yet again that the meeting between social workers (which is conflated as: 'the system') and service users (which is often conflated as 'the client') is embedded in power. I knew that 'networks', 'assemblages', 'assemblage thinking' and 'assemblic ethnography' were in vogue at the time of writing, and that symbolic interactionism and social constructivism still were. In this

sense, the academic starting point has left me in a hurdle though, of course, also inspired on how to go about the study. In this sense, I, first of all, consider the analyses as experiments into our understandings of social work practice and social marginalisation. Thus, this dissertation's three years of study is grounded in an effort to step further from the knowledge about social marginalisation and social work today in order to gain some further ideas and insights into the social work practice and social marginalisation as a phenomenon in contemporary society. In Article A, it is an attempt to step from the theme of power and governmentality to a more basic understanding of social work practices. In Article B, it is a way to experiment with how we might step from the postmodern conundrum of not being able to describe the object under study in clear definite terms but as elusive processes or even end up by annihilating the object (such as, for instance, stating social work practices to be so diverse across time and space that no common practice is to be found). In Article C, it is an attempt to not only state the structural contextual forces of the field at the beginning of an analysis but to describe how deeply and continuously entangled social marginalisation is and how an analysis of social marginalisation might look if we reversed the tendency to delve deeply into individual actions in the field and instead allocate the space to the contextual forces. Finally, as mentioned in the chapter on the categorisation of social marginalisation and social work, I have chosen to privilege space in the analyses for the description of the social work practice and the phenomenon of social marginalisation instead of how to define or categorise these two concepts.

Ethics

To meet the formal ethical demands, I provided both service units with a confidentiality agreement. I told social workers, managers and users about the scope of anonymisation in a field as relatively small as social work and in a relatively small country as Denmark. Therefore, social workers names and the name of the units are not provided, though I am certain some social workers, users and researchers in the field will have some idea as to where I conducted fieldwork. In interviews, I told users and social workers that they could always decline to continue the interview, and for participant observation, I informed all users and social workers that I engaged with for a longer period of time during fieldwork and to let me know if it affected them negatively or disturbed in any way along the way. As new users kept arriving in the two units, I had to keep informing new arrivals of the project.

As is the nature with ethical problems, there is no way to put one simple formula that can guide all practices towards ethical correctness. Every day, new situations would erupt that demanded on-the-spot decisions. Social work is a practice which, though often tried standardised through some evidence-based models, relies heavily on action in the situation. Socially marginalised people's situation was often unstable or even chaotic. As such, ethical dilemmas arose constantly, for social workers, users and me as researcher: Was it okay to participate in the meeting between service providers, municipal management and a service user whom I was supposed to ask for permission before the meeting (since I was not able to locate him all the days before but then knew probably would show up at this meeting since housing was on the agenda) but who was now so drunk that I was unsure of whether agreement would be made in a whim of confident recklessness and a pleasing demeanour towards me though perhaps feeling unfairly treated, embarrassed or displeased about the possible intimate facts revealed at such a meeting when waking up sober after his drinking binge? Or how to respond when a senior manager asks for an evaluation of the state of one of the interlocutors you know well as this might shape their new ways of approaching his problems? Or when a service user denies using drugs and alcohol at the quarterly meeting for assessing his general situation but only three days ago told you of his last forays involving heavy drinking and drugs? Or when a social worker quickly going over a user's physical health stating that perhaps it is fine forgetting the user has had back-pain for weeks now? Or when asked to help prepare a new survey for the yearly evaluation of service users' condition which has a focus on drugs and alcohol but only little on mental illness? In every case, I chose to act but tried to be as diligent as possible. In general, I felt most comfortable with helping as much as I, in my humble position, could. In fact, I find that if having the betterment of the

user's condition and the social workers' working conditions in mind, the choices to be made in various ethical dilemmas, though still present, became less difficult. All in all, however, no blueprint would prove possible for ethically correct actions in this field leaving us to only abstract generic rules of thumb such as 'do no harm' and to try not to 'be caused any harm' (American Anthropological Association 1998).

The most pertinent ethical dilemmas in fieldwork with social workers who try to help socially marginalised people that I identified were; keeping disturbance at a minimum, non-interference in pivotal professional decisions or assessments in the social work practice, the question of how to engage with social work practitioners' professional and sometimes personal problems, securing anonymity and the possibility for withdrawal of participation, having an eye for how academic research has a more direct link to political decisions than the social worker's position and, in particular, also the socially marginalised people's position (and therefore how to administer this role as conscientiously as possible). A further ethical dilemma, which is almost always highlighted and forefronted in most of the ethical discussions in social scientific qualitative research on social marginalisation in a contemporary setting, is the stigmatising or labelling effect of categories applied and used by the researcher (as I have discussed in Chapter 2).

Chapter 4
- Analyses –

Article A:
"Practice and Power?
Exploring Social Work Practices Towards Socially Marginalised People"

Submitted to: Journal of Social Work, 2nd of August 2018

See Appendix –Article A

Article B:
"Metaphors for Change
Descriptions of Changes within the Practice of Social Work for Socially Marginalized People"

Published in: Journal of Organizational Ethnography, 4th May 2017

See Appendix –Article B

Article C:
"Entanglements
An exploration of the phenomenon of social marginalisation and social work for socially marginalised people"

Submitted to: Qualitative Social Work, 2nd of August 2018

See Appendix –Article C

Chapter 5
– Conclusion –

In this dissertation, the arguments, discussions and excursions into ideas or experimental ways of viewing social marginalisation and social work practices have been spread throughout. Besides the condensed arguments of the three articles, I have also presented various arguments throughout the extended summary. Ethnographic analyses most often mix the knowledge from the field with theoretical insights gained elsewhere. Here, I have both provided some results which are guided by other researchers' theoretical discussions and material and some which have been guided by my own empirical material (most notably in the three articles). In this final conclusion, I gather the different results from each section in order to give a coherent overview and conclusion of the discussions, ideas and experimentations I have delved into in relation to the original aim of exploring the phenomenon of social marginalisation and the practice of social work towards socially marginalised people.

Results in chronological order
In Chapter 2, I presented a compilation of some of the main discussions, concepts and theories of the phenomenon of social marginalisation across time, geographic space and in social science. I consider the most popular contemporary ways of describing social marginalisation in a European and American context (such as through the characteristics of drug addiction, mental illness and homelessness (and a mixture of these) and discuss how these factors, though certainly part of the situation for many socially marginalised people, are perhaps not the general or main characteristic of social marginalisation; or perhaps only a smaller part of it. With the inspiration from social scientists and practitioners (H. Vigh 2007; Brandt 1992; Lamb, Bachrach, and Kass 1992), I experiment with how we might view social marginalisation as a phenomenon in more general, transnational and historically less transient terms than contemporary social science and social policy tend to. I argue, that though the group that comprises socially marginalised people change through place and history and though the category applied to refer to this group is changing as well, we might, in more abstract or general terms, actually be referring to the same type of phenomenon. That is, to a group that might be extremely varied across a population such as: young/old, women/men, native-/non-native-born, from a resourceful background/from less resourceful background, with an ethnic background/non-ethnic background, dropped out of school/longer education, in a relationship/out of a relationship, drug addiction/no drug addiction, mental illness/no mental illness, physical problems/no physical problems, homeless/non-homeless, financial resources/less financial resources, with a criminal record/no criminal record, abused/not abused, abuser/non-abuser and so on. Variations in a population that, nevertheless, shares the same type of situation and, therefore, a sort of similar reference point in society. Paraphrasing Vigh, I argued that though the complex human life of each socially marginalised individual cannot be reduced to a type or generality, their ways of creating a path through the movement of Danish society is representative of the majority of my interlocutors' lives. Thus, it is not each individual's life course that is representative of all socially marginalised people but each person's attempt at navigating in and through Danish society.

Characterising social marginalisation as the mixture of drug addiction, mental illness, homelessness, long-term unemployment, or whatever other more or less fleeting categories might be available at a certain time and place might be picking at the surface of things or at the most visible operational of things but might not get very close to the phenomenon. Inspired by Lambech, Brandt and Moore, I argue that social marginalisation might more generally be specified as the lack of ability, or less capability, of making use of societal institutions broadly defined. Thus, it is the societal layout (with its variety in time and geographic space) and some people's lack of resources, abilities, and possibilities, which more generally capture the phenomenon of social marginalisation. As such, it is the many institutional demands, restrictions and prohibitions combined with each individual's lack of means to

make use of these institutions or to make use of them in a proper way, that characterise them as a group. As such it is the lack of understanding and using formal institutions like hospitals, psychiatric services, employment services and the wealth of informal institutions or institution-like settings; making do in a group or at a workplace, fitting into a family or family-type relations, making use of the housing market (as I describe more elaborately in Article C), managing general human relations in various settings etc. In general, then, social marginalisation is not being able to participate in society at the same level as the general population, or perhaps one would say being unable to participate in society's informal and formal institutions.

Thus, it is an experimentation of getting back to a more general abstract level in social science and to experiment with meta- or grand analyses again in order to see where this might bring us in relation to understanding the phenomenon of social marginalisation. I think cross-country and comparative analyses might produce greater insight into this phenomenon, and I agree with Manuel Castells that the shared experience of socially marginalised people across the world's cities are perhaps more alike than their national neighbours next door with whom they share language and local geographical space.

In this chapter, I also presented some of the main discussions in the field of social work. I discussed the difficulty of defining and tracing the origin of social work and discussed the simultaneous process of de-skilling and professionalisation of social work due to the increasing formal education possibilities for social workers and the rising popularity of new public management and evidence-based methods due, in part, to the general tendency to introduce private-sector values and methods into the public sector. I relate the practice of social work to social policy and claim, along with social researcher Walter Lorenz that different welfare states give way to a specific type of setting, which gives a very specific context and condition for social workers to work in. On the other hand, I agree with sociologist Christopher Hood that the introduction of private-sector values and methods into the public-sector attests to a general neo-liberal tendency across Europe, which affects the welfare states in toto. Furthermore, the social work practice might also be seen as sharing similar traits in that diverse literature on social work across the world exposes some of the same themes such as the problem of balancing self-determination and neglect ((Hollander in: Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009)), the use of discretion (Lipsky [1980]), the emotional impact on social work on social work practitioners (for instance Simonova 2017), the double role of social workers as both providers of care and control agents of the state (Green and Clarke 2016), and the general fact that social work seeks to address people who are socially marginalised. In this sense, the aim of reducing, alleviating or solving the problems of socially marginalised people and the relations and experiences such a practice amounts to most probably also cuts across borders. Thus, besides being highly influenced by each local welfare state, social work also shares common ground across countries. Therefore, I argued that social work practices, indeed, are manifested in very highly specialised contexts in national and even regional parts (as I further described in Article B), but it also shares some highly significant resemblances, which leave ground for a lot more comparative work in the research into social work practices. Thus, I argue that social work, therefore, might be much more general than contemporary qualitative social science and social work tend to give clue to in these postmodern times.

In Chapter 2, I also discuss the representation crisis in the human and social sciences and its effect on the study, analyses and descriptions of social marginalisation. In combination with a heavy focus on social constructionism and symbolic interactionism, the crisis of representation affects analyses of social marginalisation in profound ways. Edward Said's seminal work on 'Orientalism' and its trenchant critiques on the critique of representations of the orient sparked the representation crisis in the academic world in general (Jebens and Kohl 2013, 5; Said 2003 [1978]). In anthropology, the writing culture movement criticised the naïve realism of the past and called for more reflexive and experimental ways of writing (Clifford and Marcus 1986). A logical consequence from this is the commitment or exaggerated concern about categorisations and self-reflection on the use of categories.

As anthropologist Kohl states it in connection to anthropology: "The discipline's self-criticism, justified though it may have been with regard to its past, paralysed the production of first-hand anthropological knowledge. Ethnographers became so intimidated by their own hidden prejudices that nothing seemed more difficult than writing down a single [ethnographic] sentence" (Jebens and Kohl 2013, 5). Though connected to the field of anthropology, Kohl's statement of a sort of writer's block or writers' malaise fit across the disciplines in the social sciences in general and, as I describe in Chapter 2, in the general public as well. In the field of social work and social marginalisation, one prominent consequence of this is heavy morally laden debates on *1:* whether to describe social marginalisation at all (see for instance, (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009), *2:* whether to censor parts of the phenomenon out or distort it in order not to alienate this group in society further (see (Loïc Wacquant 2002) and *3*: discussions about which categories are applied by whom and the preoccupation of constructing categories as neutral and less demeaning as possible. Thus, a wealth of studies spring forth describing how influential groups in society or well-established institutions are categorising and constructing less powerful groups in society such as immigrants and socially marginalised people (Winlow and Hall 2013). By analysing verbal and written texts and the close encounter of citizens and welfare state practitioners in different types of institutions, for instance, it is illuminated how identities are constructed and power enacted by the implication of words and human behaviour. Categories such as 'patients', 'users', 'socially marginalized', 'immigrants', different types of nationalities etc. are analysed as creating a certain type of identity making language (one of) the most powerful tool(s) in society all of a sudden. Though categorisations, and language in general, are a powerful tool, and social scientists did well in exemplifying and stressing this point, I argue along with Winlow and Hall that the focus on categories and labelling processes have put way too much focus on the linguistic part of our empirical worlds to the detriment of the material, political, economic, more general, and perhaps even more abstract concepts or transcendental phenomena which also shape our world. Thus, I argue that a fixation on categories, language, discourse etc. privilege the verbal constructions of social marginalisation to the detriment of understanding other aspects of the situations and conditions of social marginalisation. Thus, I argue with Winlow and Hall that a "growing proportion of twenty-first-century social exclusion analysis appears to be more interested in the ways in which powerful and influential social groups construct images of the poor as profligate, lazy, immoral and dangerous. [...]. [Researchers] approach the danger of the 'stereotype' with a broad-spectrum antibiotic, simply denying that all universal forms and categories exist. [...]. Very little interest is now paid to the realities of social exclusion" (Winlow and Hall 2013, 30).

In the methodology chapter, I have presented some of the major methodological concerns as well as the concrete methods used in the project. In this chapter, however, I also discuss a general methodological tendency when applying ethnographic methods and, in particular, participant observation to foreground individual actions on account of structural conditions (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009). Further, I explore American anthropologist Bruce O'Neill's (2017a, b) call for an 'ethnographic negative' arguing for a countermove to the methodological tendency to overexpose individual action and agency. He argues that there is a tendency for ethnographers to focus on action, productivity and creativity and neglecting the experienced non-action, inactivity and non-productivity of the people studied. As O'Neill writes:

> *"Visibility [...] is tied up in the ethnographic record of the things that people do (Geertz 1977:5), so ethnography is predisposed to reveal a world in constant motion. It is a methodological disposition that extends agency to the most vulnerable population segments and reveals the creative energy of life at the margins. The ethnographer's tendency to see productive agency everywhere, however, is not without its slippages. Such an ethnographic gaze struggles to account for the worldviews of those claiming, at times quite insistently, to be inactive, inert, and "doing nothing."* (O'Neill 2017b, 27)

In this sense, there is a tendency to describe interlocutors as productive (looking for places to sleep or eat, for instance), in motion (because they are often moving through cities, landscapes, shelters) and creative (making do ingeniously with what is at hand, getting money, constructing shelter etc.). As such, homeless people can, for instance, be portrayed as creatively building shelter in tunnels or parks. They can be portrayed as being in perpetual motion when roaming around the city streets productively looking for bottles to cash in or debts to collect. This risk portraying a group of socially marginalised people as overly productive, creative and in motion, even though long waits, boredom, feelings of inertia and ennui, being stuck, unable to participate, outside society etc. might also form a rather large part of the experience and reality of social marginalisation.

I would, of course not, claim that these productive and creative actions are not present and part of socially marginalised people's days (and I for sure would stress the presence of stressful events and actions in relation to homelessness in a Danish context (see (Christensen 2011)). But this is exactly the point of O'Neill's ethnographic negative; that actions perhaps do not always speak louder than words; or rather, that words and actions might be overexposed by the researcher because 'the situation' and 'events' overshadow the monotony of daily life or because interlocutors themselves foreground their actions perhaps as ways of exposing a more active self or perhaps as ways to boost a depleted identity (see (Snow and Anderson 1993; Thelen 2006; Christensen 2011)).

Thus, I argued for an ethnography that shows sensitivity towards actions of another sort and for illuminating structural and less visible conditions. For an ethnography that does not try to step as near the exact human actions experienced in the field such as, for instance, addiction, mental illness or homelessness/living on the streets but for analyses that transcends the obviously sighted to the neglected inactivity, unproductivity and less visible but no less experienced (I explore this further in Article C).

In Article A, I wanted to make use of the general insights from the field and provide a description of the main characteristics of the social work practice towards socially marginalised people in Danish society today. Further, I wanted to provide a more general view on the social work and welfare state practice in Denmark than the more dominant ones which, since the 1990s, have focused on power as, for instance, the power relation between service provider and service user or the powerful construction of service users identities (see for instance Caswell et al. 2017, Mik-Meyer 2008, Andersen 2014, Järvinen and Ravn 2014, Järvinen and Andersen 2009, Børner-Stax 2005, Fahnøe). Thus, the social work practice is often viewed through a lens of power or with the theme of power more or less distinctly or directly portrayed in the analyses. This is, perhaps, understandable since the social work practice; embedded as it is in the state and its policies and practices, are obviously powerful and since the social scientific analyses of (welfare) state practices in postmodern Western societies have been heavily influenced by the popularity of Foucault's writings and the later governmentality studies' preoccupation with this theme (see for instance (Dean 2009; P. Miller and Rose 2013; Cruikshank 1999)). Thus, we find a wealth of concepts, terms and images in social scientific analyses which circle around the theme of power when describing the development or conditions of (postmodern) society such as 'biopower' (Foucault 1979 [1976]; Hewitt 1983), 'disciplinary power' (Foucault 2013 [1975]), 'punishment' (Foucault 2013 [1975]), 'pastoral power' (Foucault 1982), 'governmentality' (Dean 2009; Valverde 2010; Foucault 2014 [1977-1978]; P. Miller and Rose 2013; Cruikshank 1999), various types of 'regimes' (Foucault), 'symbolic power' (Bourdieu 1979), 'structural violence' (Galtung 1969; Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016; Farmer 2004), 'mundane governance' (Woolgar and Neyland 2014), 'caring power' (Van Drenth and de Hahn 1999; Svensson 2010), '*homo sacer*' and 'state of exception' (Agamben 2016 [1998]) etc. These have, in general, invoked potent images of the theme and presence of what broadly can be termed as power, and though power is an obvious and relevant part of state practices which have been described since the classical social scientific analyses of the state and Western society, I argue that this wealth of analyses

overexpose the theme of power in welfare state practices leaving the impression of immensely powerful institutional actions which invokes and effects its power through individual coercion in institutional settings in various direct and subtle forms.

Thus, in Article A, I described the general practices in social work across the two municipalities and described the practices of 'motivating-to-motivation', 'goal-work' and 'mere being' as central to the social work practice in a Danish context. Further, I showed how social work practices, and, in particular, the meeting between system and user might not only be viewed through a lens of power. I applied the concept of 'mere being' in order to capture how social workers would many times fall upon situations with users that proved not to align very well with any form of power. In the article, I argued that these situations exposed another type of presence and had a somewhat different quality or character than power and thus ought not to be reduced to it.

This is, of course not, a negation of the many descriptions of the effectuation of power in the meeting between service user and service provider or negations of how states are powerfully effectuating their policies through various institutions but an effort to expand our rather one-sided view on the powerful meetings in which the social work practices are taking place and welfare state practices in general.

Thus, this article illuminates some of the main characteristics of social work practices in a contemporary Danish setting and experiments with a renewed sensitivity towards the social work practice by suspending the theme of power for a while.

In Article B, I wanted to engage with a problem I faced empirically; the fact that the social work changed or was discussed as needing to change while I studied it. Through the relatively short time span of circa a year fieldwork changes to the social work practice was being debated or implemented in the two municipalities (for examples see the article). As such, the social work practice was changing whilst I studied it. In this article, I therefore posed the more methodological and abstract question of how to describe a practice that is changeable. This question is, however, also linked to a more general theoretical discussion of the role of description in social scientific analyses and the trenchant postmodern critiques of analyses that end out with describing the objects of study in a stable and clear form.

In this article, I related the problem of describing social work practice in a stabile form to the critiques of describing culture in postmodern anthropology (Liep and Olwig 1994) or organisation in organisational studies (Du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). In anthropology, from the 1960s and onwards 'culture' was perceived as a bounded, coherent and integrated whole which all members of a culture are socialised into and which creates one universe of meaning that is clearly demarcated from other cultures (and that members of these cultures differed from one's own). In postmodern anthropology, however, a dissolving of the understanding of culture as coherent and clearly demarcated units in the world and a distancing from the concept of 'culture' occurs (Liep and Olwig 1994, 7). Thus, the "concept of culture has so far most often been used descriptively; both in daily speech and in science-language it has referred to a certain life pattern or a set of inherited habits and perceptions. In this way, culture has a fairly imprecise content, which generally, however, is characterized by being observable. In anthropology the concern is not about *seeing* culture because its most significant quality is *coherence* rather than actual content. That is why the concept of culture is used analytically as a designation for that pattern which connects the mixed experience-data" (Hastrup and Ramløv 1998, 8). As such, many anthropologists distance themselves from studying and describing 'culture' as stable bounded units in the world (Lhugod) and focus on processes, transformations and micro-studies of identities instead. Thus, a practice of describing ephemeral, dynamic processes (for instance identity-formation etc.) instead of describing culture and cultural diversity by units of relatively stable content is favoured.

In organisational studies, a sort of similar process has occurred within the last half-century. Sociologists Paul du Gay and Signe Vikkelsø describe how "organisational studies became sceptical towards its key concept and object of study" (Du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017, 52). Descriptions of organisations as bounded units are considered as reifying and essentialising something, which in reality ought to be seen as dynamic and ever-changing. Studies that describe organisations have fallen out of favour as organisations today are construed as dynamic ephemeral anti-essential non-objects (Du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). Thus, they argue that "organizational studies today is increasingly devoid of 'an object', having spent much of the last half-century to actively 'disappearing' it" (ibid.). Like the studies of culture, organisations thus have to take a certain form which incorporates an ephemeral anti-essential object, or which denies the object in toto. Du gay and Vikkelsø ponder whether this is a general tendency in the human and social sciences as it seems that various disciplines within these fields have "come to dispense with the core objects that afford them their practical relevance" (Du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017, 149).

I agree with Du Gay and Vikkelsø that the objects of analyses indeed seem to have disappeared or very easy lend themselves to always-changeable forms, which therefore might disappear at any moment. I would, however, argue that, even though the objects of study in postmodern anthropology and organisational studies are defined as unbounded, anti-essential, ephemeral, ever-changing non-objects, this might not be the entire picture. If we apply the insights from the theory of 'Social Navigation' (H. Vigh 2009) the practice of social work can be described as a specific actual bounded practice, which, however, is performed within a transformative environment that is capable of influencing it. As such, all social environments ought to be viewed as in perpetual motion (ibid.) and instead of abstaining from describing social work practices because of these dynamic conditions we ought "to tune our social-scientific gaze to practice as motion within motion. Acknowledging that for our interlocutors the social environment is not stable or static, but an unfolding process requires that we analyze practice in a manner that is sensitive to the fact that strategy, tactics and practice [...] are constructed and actualized in, and constantly attuned to, a shifting environment and its imagined configurations" (H. Vigh 2009, 431).

Thus, this article described the various changes, or debates of changes, in the social work practice during fieldwork and argued that, even though social work practice empirically is a changing object, it might still be construed and described as one practice.

In Article C, I wanted to experiment with our understanding of the social work practice if we viewed it as fundamentally embedded in the society to which it is practiced. This further gave way to discussion of the ongoing debates regarding the role of context in the social sciences in general and in the studies of social work and welfare state practices in particular.

In the article, I provided an ethnographic analysis of social marginalisation and social work in contemporary Danish society and discussed the role of context in social science. Thus, this article both provided a thorough description of social marginalisation and social work viewed through various local, national and global conditions and debated on the role of context (structure) in social science.

By focusing on the experience of homelessness and precarious housing for socially marginalised people and combining it with the near and more distant forces to which they take part, I wanted to depart from the many popular interactionist accounts of welfare state practices (see for instance, (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2013; Spanger et al. 2017; Smith 2011; Matarese and Nijnatten 2015; Gubrium and Holstein 2000)) and show the myriad of contextual forces that might intermix with the experience of homelessness or precarious housing. In the article, I showed how the intimate experience of homelessness or precarious housing that many, if not most, socially marginalised people

experience are deeply connected to local, national and global structural conditions in a Danish context. I illuminated aspects of the housing market in the capital city in Denmark and some of the actual local, national and global events and policies that have influence on the housing market in general and, therefore, for socially marginalised people in particular. I also described local and national social policies such as shelter policies that also have an influence on socially marginalised people's housing situation and possibilities. I argued that societal forces such as those surrounding the housing market are particularly powerful in relation to socially marginalised people as they are more dependent on this layout or vulnerable to changes to this setting than ordinary people in society. Further, I argued that this intermix of specific local conditions and lived experiences of social marginalisation becomes crucial to the social work practice as these are the realities social workers have to engage with on a daily basis. Thus, societal contextual forces are influential and relevant in the day-to-day social work practices.

Finally, I engaged with the contemporary critique in social science on the notion of 'structure' or 'context' and the claim that the division of structure/context and individual action builds ontological restricted and fixed worlds of structure and agency (Duff 2011, 2016; Zigon 2015). Thus, analyses that apply the analytical lens of context have been criticised as positing 'fixed ontological categories' (Duff 2011, 406) which provide an unnatural division between what can be viewed as 'individual' and 'structural'. Though proponents of this divide have never, to my knowledge, made the claim that 'structures' and 'agency' ought to be viewed as ontologically fixed and discrete units of reality but rather as tools of analysis (for instance: (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009)), these types of analyses have been criticised for positing a world made up of structural and individual conditions respectively. Instead, it has been claimed that we ought to view the world as being constantly (re)produced, folded or assembled (see for instance: (Duff 2011, 2016; Mol 2011)). In order not to risk fixing and reifying societal structures and individual agency through our analyses, we must "replace the 'subject' and 'social context' as a discrete unit of analysis" (Duff 2016, 1). The solution, it is argued, is to apply a type of 'assemblage-thinking' (Duff 2016), which seeks to "demonstrate how subjects, agencies, networks and spaces are produced" and how they are constantly being shaped. And further, to be aware of affects, atmospheres, technological and non-human entities that are produced in the field. If we look at the very insightful analyses which apply such 'assemblage-thinking' though (see for instance, (Duff 2016)), I argued that the very notion and application of an assemblage seems not to have provided us with so much more analytically than classical ethnography. Indeed, being aware of affects, atmospheres, and other types of non-human entities are part of some of the very first methodology books on doing participant observation (Spradley 2016 [1980]; Hammersley and Atkinson 2010 [1983]). Borrowing an image from Sausdal and Vigh, I argue that it looks like 'very old-hat anthropology' (H. E. Vigh and Sausdal 2014).

Thus, I argued that ethnographies that are sensitive to the material, affective, non-human, abstract etc. conditions are as good as ever whether they be defined and designed through assemblages or structure/agency analytical means.

Bibliography

Abbott, Pamela, and Liz Meerabeau. 1998. *The Sociology of the Caring Professions*. Psychology Press.

Abrahamson, Peter. 1998a. *Postmodern Governing of Social Exclusion, Social Integration or Risk Management?* Sociologisk Rapportserinr. 13, 1998. Kbh: Københavns UniversitetSociologisk Institut.

———. 1998b. 'Social Exclusion in Europe : Old Wine in New Bottles?' 1998: 18.

Agamben, Giorgio. 2016. *Homo sacer: den suveræne magt og det nøgne liv*. Aarhus: Klim.

American Anthropological Association. 1998. 'Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association *Approved, June 1998*'. *Anthropology News* 39 (6): 19–20. https://doi.org/10.1111/an.1998.39.6.19.2.

Andersen, Ditte. 2014. *Staging and Storying Change, an Ethnography of Everyday Practice in Drug Treatment for Young People, PhD Dissertation*. 1. oplag. Arhus: Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research, Arhus University.

Becker, Howard S. 1963. *Outsiders, Studies in the sociology of deviance*. (New York).

Beijer, Ulla. 1999. *Tiggeri: ett nygammalt fenomen*. Forsknings- och utvecklingsenheten, Socialtjänstförvaltningen.

Benjaminsen, Lars. 2009. *Hjemløshed i Danmark 2009: national kortlægning*. Vol. 2009. København: SFI: Det Nationale forskningscenter for velfærd.

———. 2017. *Hjemløshed i Danmark 2017: National kortlægning*. Vol. 2017. Kbh.: VIVE - Det Nationale Forsknings- og Analysecenter for Velfærd.

Benjaminsen, Lars, Stefan Bastholm Andrade, Ditte Andersen, Morten Holm Enemark, and Jesper Fels Birkelund. 2015. *Familiebaggrund og social marginalisering i Danmark: en registerbaseret kortlægning*. SFI, 15:41. København: SFI.

Benjaminsen, Lars, Stefan Bastholm Andrade, Morten Holm Enemark, and SFI - Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd. 2017. *Fællesskabsmålingen: en undersøgelse af livsvilkår og social eksklusion i Danmark*. SFI - Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd.

Benjaminsen, Lars, Bence Boje-Kovacs, and Heidi Hesselberg Lauritzen. 2011. *Hjemløshed i Danmark 2011: national kortlægning*. Vol. 2011. Kbh: SFI: Det Nationale forskningscenter for velfærd.

Benjaminsen, Lars, and Ivan Christensen. 2007. *Hjemløshed in Danmark 2007: national kortlægning*. Vol. 2007. København: SFI: Det nationale forskningscenter for velfærd.

Benjaminsen, Lars, and Heidi Hesselberg Lauritzen. 2013. *Hjemløshed i Danmark 2013: national kortlægning*. Kbh.: SFI - Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd.

Benjaminsen, Lars, Heidi Hesselberg Lauritzen, and Danmark. 2015. *Hjemløshed i Danmark 2015: national kortlægning*. Kbh: SFI - Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd.

Berkel, Rik van, Dorte Caswell, and Peter Kupka. 2017. *Frontline Delivery of Welfare-to-Work Policies in Europe, Activating the Unemployed*. First edition. Routledge Studies in Governance and Public Policy. New York: Routledge. http://ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/login?url=https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/978131743969 1.

Bjerge, Bagga. 2008. *Mellem vision og praksis, strukturreformen, rusmiddelbureaukrati og New Public Management*. Ph.d.-afhandling 51 Sociologisk Institut, Københavns Universitet. København: Sociologisk Institut, Københavns Universitet.

Bjerge, Bagga, Bjarke Nielsen, and Vibeke Asmussen Frank. 2014. 'Rationalities of Choice and Practices of Care: Substitution Treatment in Denmark'. *Contemporary Drug Problems* 41 (1): 57–90. https://doi.org/10.1177/009145091404100104.

Bjerge, Bagga, and Bodil Selmer. 2007. *Det sociale arbejdes daglige praksis, perspektiver på brugerinddragelse og retssikkerhed*. Århus: <<Aarhus=Århus>> Universitetsforlag.

Blau, Peter M. 1980. *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy: A Study of Interpersonal Relations in Two Government Agencies*. Chicago u.a.: Univ. of Chicago Pr.

Bømler, Tina Ussing. 2000. *Når Samfundet Udstøder*. Socialpædagogisk Bibliotek. Kbh.: Gyldendal Uddannelse.

Bourdieu, P. 1979. 'Symbolic Power'. *Critique of Anthropology* 4 (13–14): 77–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X7900401307.

Bourgois, Philippe I, and Jeff Schonberg. 2009. *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.

Brandt, Preben. 1992. 'Yngre hjemløse i København: belyst ved en undersøgelse af de socialpsykiatriske forhold hos de 18-35 årige brugere af institutionerne for hjemløse i København'. Kbh.: FADL.

Brodkin, Evelyn Z. 2011. 'Policy Work: Street-Level Organizations Under New Managerialism'. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 21 (suppl_2): i253–77. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muq093.

Bubandt, Nils, and Rane Willerslev. 2015. 'The Dark Side of Empathy: Mimesis, Deception, and the Magic of Alterity'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57 (01): 5–34. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417514000589.

Christensen, Louise. 2011. *Livet udenfor en etnografisk beskrivelse af hjemløses hverdagsliv i København og oplevelser af margianliksering*. København: Universitetet.

Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus. 1986. *Writing Culture, the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics' 1989: 31.

Cruikshank, Barbara. 1999. *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

'Danmarks Statistik'. 2018. 2018. https://www.dst.dk/da.

Davis, Inger. 1964. *Socialrådgivningens metodik (with a summary in English)*. Kbh.: Den sociale skole.

Dean, Mitchell. 2009. *Governmentality: power and rule in modern society*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Desjarlais, Robert. 1999. *Shelter Blues. Sanity and Selfhood among the Homeless*. Philadelphia: University of Pensylvania Press.

Deverteuil, G. 2006. 'The Local State and Homeless Shelters: Beyond Revanchism?' *Cities* 23 (2): 109–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2005.08.004.

Deverteuil, Geoffrey, Jon May, and Jürgen Von Mahs. 2009. 'Complexity Not Collapse: Recasting the Geographies of Homelessness in a "Punitive" Age'. *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (5): 646–666. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132508104995.

Deverteuil, Geoffrey, and R. Wilton. 2009. 'Spaces of Abeyance, Care and Survival: The Addiction Treatment System as a Site of "Regulatory Richness"'. *Political Geography* 28 (8): 463–472. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2009.11.002.

Dolgoff, Ralph, Donna Harrington, and Frank M. Loewenberg. 2012. *Brooks/Cole Empowerment Series: Ethical Decisions for Social Work Practice*. Cengage Learning.

Dostojevski, Fjodor Michajlovic. 2012. *Kældermennesket: optegnelser fra en undergrund*. København: Nansensgade Antikvariat.

Dostojevskij, F. M. 2003. *Forbrydelse og straf: roman i seks dele med en epilog*. Kbh.: Gyldendals Bogklubber.

Dreyfus, Hubert L, and Paul Rabinow. 1982. *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics. With an afterword by Michel Foucault*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Du Gay, Paul. 2000. *In Praise of Bureaucracy, Weber, Organization, Ethics*. Organization, Theory and Society. London: SAGE. http://ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/login?url=http://sk.sagepub.com/books/in-praise-of-bureaucracy.

Du Gay, Paul, and Signe Vikkelsø. 2017. *For Formal Organization: The Past in the Present and Future of Organization Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Duff, Cameron. 2011. 'Reassembling (Social) Contexts: New Directions for a Sociology of Drugs'. *The International Journal on Drug Policy* 22 (6): 404–6.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2011.09.005.

———. 2014. *Assemblages of Health*. Springer Netherlands.

———. 2016. 'Assemblages, Territories, Contexts'. *The International Journal on Drug Policy* 33 (C): 15–20. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2015.10.003.

Duneier, Mitchell. 2001. *Sidewalk*. Paperback. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Engels, Lars. 1990. 'Natlæger'. Bonanza | Lars Engels' Vesterbro | Natlæger. 1990. //www.dr.dk/bonanza/serie/238/lars-engels-vesterbro/53382/natlaeger.

———. 1994. 'Et glas vand til Johnie'. Bonanza | Valby socialkontor | Et glas vand til Johnie. 1994. //www.dr.dk/bonanza/serie/239/valby-socialkontor/52688/et-glas-vand-til-johnie-.

———. 1997. 'Nødvendigt TV', 1997. Politiken.

Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1990. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity.

Fahnøe, Kristian. 2016. 'Bekendelsesformer i gruppeterapi for alkoholmisbrugere: En interaktionistisk analyse af en magtteknik'. *Dansk Sociologi; Copenhagen* 27 (1): 36-54,76.

Farmer, Paul. 2004. 'An Anthropology of Structural Violence'. *Current Anthropology* 45 (3): 305–325. https://doi.org/10.1086/382250.

Farrell, Ronald A, and Victoria Lynn Swigert. 1988. *Social Deviance*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth.

Fassin, Didier, and Patrick Brown. 2015. *At the Heart of the State: The Moral World of Institutions*. London: Pluto Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1979. *The History of Sexuality, 1*.

———. 1982. 'The Subject and Power'. *Critical Inquiry* 8 (4): 777–95. https://doi.org/10.1086/448181.

———. 2013. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library.

———. 2014. *Security, Territory, Population Lectures at the College de France, 1977-78*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Freilich, Morris, Douglas Raybeck, and Joel Savishinsky. 1991. *Deviance: Anthropological Perspectives*. Greenwood Press.

Galtung, J. 1969. 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research'. *Journal of Peace Research* 3 (January): 167–190.

Glasser, Irene, and Rae Bridgman. 1999. *Braving the Street: The Anthropology of Homelessness*. New York: Berhahn Books.

Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma, Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Spectrum Book S-73. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.

Goode, Erich. 2004. 'Is the Sociology of Deviance Still Relevant?' *American Sociologist* 35 (4): 46–57.

Gowan, Teresa. 2010. *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Green, Lorraine Carol, and Karen Clarke. 2016. *Social Policy for Social Work: Placing Social Work in Its Wider Context*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gubrium, Jaber F., and James Holstein. 2000. 'The Self in a World of Going Concerns'. *Symbolic Interaction* 23 (2): 95–115. https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2000.23.2.95.

Guldager, Jens, and Marianne Skytte. 2017. *Socialt arbejde: teorier og perspektiver*. Kbh.: Akademisk Forlag.

Hall, Tom, and Robin James Smith. 2015. 'Care and Repair and the Politics of Urban Kindness'. *Sociology* 49 (1): 3–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038514546662.

Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson. 2010. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.

Hamsun, Knut. 2016. *Sult*. København: Gyldendal.

Hastrup, Kirsten, and Kirsten Ramløv. 1998. *Kulturanalyse: fortolkningens forløb i antropologien*. Kbh.: Akademisk Forlag.

Hewitt, Martin. 1983. 'Bio-Politics and Social Policy: Foucault's Account of Welfare'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 2 (1): 67–84. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276483002001007.

Høgsbro, Kjeld. 2015. 'Evidence and Research Designs in Applied Sociology and Social Work Research'. *Nordic Social Work Research* 5 (sup1): 56–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2015.1066706.

Høgsbro, Kjeld, Preben Brandt, Frank Ebsen, Ole Thomsen, and Merete Nordentoft. 2003. *Brugerne, de professionelle og forvaltningen: en diskussion af sammenhængen mellem brugernes livsverden, den professionelle og frivillige indsats og den samlede organisering af tilbuddene til mennesker med hjemløshed, misbrug eller sindslidelse som problem*. Kbh.: AKF.

Højdestrand, Tova. 2016. *Needed by Nobody: Homelessness and Humanness in Post-Socialist Russia*. https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801458798.

Holbraad, Martin, and Morten Axel Pedersen. 2017. *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/9781316218907.

Hood, Christopher. 1991. 'A Public Management for All Seasons?' *Public Administration* 69 (1): 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1991.tb00779.x.

———. 1995. 'The "New Public Management" in the 1980s: Variations on a Theme'. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 20 (2–3): 93–110. https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-3682(93)E0001-W.

Houborg, Esben, and Vibeke Asmussen Frank. 2014. 'Drug Consumption Rooms and the Role of Politics and Governance in Policy Processes'. *The International Journal on Drug Policy* 25 (5): 972–77. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2014.01.008.

Järvinen, Margaretha. 1993. *De nye hjemløse, kvinder, fattigdom og vold*. Holte: SocPol.

Järvinen, Margaretha, and Ditte Andersen. 2009. 'The Making of the Chronic Addict'. *Substance Use & Misuse* 44 (6): 865–85. https://doi.org/10.1080/10826080802486103.

Järvinen, Margaretha, and Nanna Mik-Meyer. 2013. *At skabe en klient: institutionelle identiteter i socialt arbejde*. Kbh.: Hans Reitzel.

Jauffret-Roustide, Marie, and Isabelle Cailbault. 2018. 'Drug Consumption Rooms: Comparing Times, Spaces and Actors in Issues of Social Acceptability in French Public Debate'. *The International Journal on Drug Policy* 56: 208–17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2018.04.014.

Jebens, Holger, and Karl-Heinz Kohl. 2013. *The End of Anthropology?* Wantage: Sean Kingston Publishing.

Kehlet, Jakob. 2001. 'Beskyldninger om social porno'. Journalisten. 2001. https://journalisten.dk/beskyldninger-om-social-porno.

Knutagård, Marcus. 2009. *Skälens fångar, hemlöshetsarbetets organisering kategoriseringar och förklaringar, Marcus Knutagård*. Malmö: Égalité.

Kvale, Steinar, Svend Brinkmann, and Bjørn Nake. 2015. *Interview, det kvalitative forskningsinterview som håndværk*. 3. udgave. Kbh: Hans Reitzel.

Lamb, H. Richard, Leona Bachrach, and Frederic Kass. 1992. *Treating the Homeless Mentally Ill: A Report of the Task Force on the Homeless Mentally Ill*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association.

Liep, John, and Karen Fog Olwig. 1994. *Komplekse liv: kulturel mangfoldighed i Danmark*. Kbh.: Akademisk Forlag : Institut for Antropologi, Københavns Universitet.

Lipsky, Michael. 2010. *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

LO. 2005. 'Fyret dokumentarist hædres af LO'. DR. 2005. https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/fyret-dokumentarist-haedres-af-lo.

Lützen, Karin. 2014. *Byen tæmmes: kernefamilie, sociale reformer og velgørenhed i 1800-tallets København*. Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Matarese, Maureen T, and Dorte Caswell. 2018. '"I'm Gonna Ask You about Yourself, so I Can Put It on Paper": Analysing Street-Level Bureaucracy through Form-Related Talk in Social Work'. *The British Journal of Social Work* 48 (3): 714–33. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx041.

Matarese, Maureen T., and Carolus van Nijnatten. 2015. 'Making a Case for Client Insistence in Social Work Interaction'. *Discourse Processes* 52 (8): 670–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2014.979974.

Maynard-Moody, Steven, and Michael C. Musheno. 2003. *Cops, Teachers, Counselors, Stories from the Front Lines of Public Service*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. http://ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/login?url=http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kbdk/detail.acti

on?docID=3414904.

Meeuwisse, Anna, Sune Sunesson, and Hans Swärd. 2009. *Socialt arbejde: en grundbog*. Kbh.: Hans Reitzel.

Mik-Meyer, Nanna. 2005. *Dømt til personlig udvikling: Fokus på patienters psykosociale situation i danske revalideringscentre*.

Miller, J. Mitchell, Richard A. Wright, and David Dannels. 2001. 'Is Deviance "Dead"? The Decline of a Sociological Research Specialization'. *The American Sociologist* 32 (3): 43–59.

Miller, Peter, and Nikolas Rose. 2013. *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mol, Annemarie. 2011. *The Logic of Care: Health and the Problem of Patient Choice*. London: Routledge.

Ocobock, Paul R, and A. L Beier. 2008. *Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective*. Ohio State University Press.

'Offentlige udgifter 2016'. 2016. 2016. https://www.dst.dk/da/statistik/nyt/NytHtml?cid=20049#.

O'Neill, Bruce. 2017a. 'The Space of Boredom: Homelessness in the Slowing Global Order'.

———. 2017b. 'The Ethnographic Negative: Capturing the Impress of Boredom and Inactivity'. *Focaal* 2017 (78): 23–37. https://doi.org/10.3167/fcl.2017.780103.

Orwell, George. 2018. *Down and Out in Paris and London*. S.l.: Harvill Secker.

Oute Hansen, Jeppe. 2016. *Den sociale konstruktion af pårørendeinddragelse i behandlingspsykiatrien, et flerstedsetnografisk feltstudie af politiske, kliniske og depressionsramte familiers diskurser om inddragelse og deres effekter*. 1. oplag. PhD-series Research Unit of User Perspectives, University of Southern Denmark <<No. 1, 2016=2016 1>>. Odense: Research Unit of User Perspectives, University of Southern Denmark.

Payne, Malcolm. 2007. *What Is Professional Social Work?* Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books.

Pedersen, Mads Uffe. 2015. 'En kommentar til 'Narkotikasituationen i Danmark'', 9.

Rådet for Socialt Udsatte. 2003. *Sociale ydelser set i et fattigdomsperspektiv*. Kbh.: Rådet for Socialt Udsatte.

———. 2010. *Udsat for forståelse: en antologi om socialt udsatte*. Kbh.: Rådet for Socialt Udsatte : [Eksp.] Indenrigs- og Socialministeriet.

———. 2018. 'Årsrapport 2018'. Årsrapport 2018. 2018. https://www.udsatte.dk/publikationer/arsrapport-2018.

Rhodes, T. 2009. 'Risk Environments and Drug Harms: A Social Science for Harm Reduction Approach'. *International Journal of Drug Policy* 20 (3): 193–201. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2008.10.003.

Richards, Kayla. 2017. 'Social Work or Social Control: Power, and the Values and Contradictions in Social Work Practice and the American Indian' 2017: 38.

Rogowski, Steve. 2010. *Social Work the Rise and Fall of a Profession?* Bristol: Policy Press.

Rylko-Bauer, Barbara, and Paul Farmer. 2016. 'Structural Violence, Poverty, and Social Suffering'. *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*, May. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199914050.013.4.

Said, Edward W. 2003. *Orientalism: Edward W. Said.* New York: Vintage Books.

Shore, Cris, Susan Wright, and Davide Però. 2011. *Policy Worlds: Anthropology and the Analysis of Contemporary Power*. Berghahn Books.

Siiger, Charlotte. 2004. *I en god sags tjeneste: møder mellem gadesygeplejersker og hjemløse : specialeafhandling til kandidateksamen*. Kbh.: Institut for Antropologi, Københavns Universitet.

Simonova, Olga. 2017. 'Emotion Management and the Professional Culture of Administrative Social Workers in Russia: Common Standards Versus the Moral Mission of Social Care'. *Zhurnal Issledovanii Sotsialnoi Politiki = The Journal of Social Policy Studies* 15 (1): 129–142. https://doi.org/10.17323/1727-0634-2017-15-1-129-142.

Singh, Bhrigupati. 2015. *Poverty and the Quest for Life: Spiritual and Material Striving in Rural India*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Smith, Robin James. 2011. 'Goffman's Interaction Order at the Margins: Stigma, Role, and Normalization in the Outreach Encounter'. *Symbolic Interaction* 34 (3): 357–376.

https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2011.34.3.357.

Snow, David A., and Leon Anderson 1950-. 1993. *Down on Their Luck : A Study of Homeless Street People*. Berkeley,CA: University of California Press.

Socialstyrelsen. 2018. 'Recovery hos borgere med psykiske vanskeligheder og samtidigt misbrug — Vidensportalen på det sociale område'. Webside. 2016 2018. https://vidensportal.dk/voksne/psykiske-vanskeligheder-og-samtidigt-misbrug/recovery-hos-borgere-med-psykiske-vanskeligheder-og-samtidigt-misbrug, https://vidensportal.dk/voksne/psykiske-vanskeligheder-og-samtidigt-misbrug/recovery-hos-borgere-med-psykiske-vanskeligheder-og-samtidigt-misbrug.

Soydan, Haluk. 1999. *The History of Ideas in Social Work*. Birmingham: Venture Press.

Spanger, Marlene, Claus Drejer, Kristian Fahnøe, and Signe Ravn. 2017. 'Med Michel Foucault i Marken: Praksis, Styring, Modstand Og Magt'. *Dansk Sociologi* 27 (1): 5–13.

Spector, Malcolm, and John I Kitsuse. 2009. *Constructing Social Problems*. New Brunswick (USA): Transaction.

Spradley, James P. 2016. *Participant Observation*. Waveland Press.

Staub-Bernasconi, Silvia. 2017. 'The Problem with "Social Problems" as Domain of Social Work: A Critical Approach to the Melbourne "Global Definition of Social Work" of 2014 and Constructivist Theories of Social Problems'. *European Journal of Social Work* 20 (6): 958–971. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2016.1278522.

Stax, Tobias Børner. 2001. *Én gang socialt marginaliseret - altid ...?: en analyse af ca. 1.000 menneskers livsforløb efter ophold på forsorgshjem, herberger, krisecentre mv. i '88-'89*. Kbh.: Socialforskningsinstituttet.

Stuart, Forrest. 2014. 'From 'Rabble Management' to 'Recovery Management': Policing Homelessness in Marginal Urban Space'. *Urban Studies* 51 (9): 1909–1925. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013499798.

———. 2018. *Down, out, and under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row*.

Sundhedsstyrelsen. 2017. 'Narkotikasituationen i Danmark 2017. Nationale data'. 2017. https://www.sst.dk/da/udgivelser/2017/narkotikasituationen-i-danmark-2017.

———. 2015. 'Ny rapport: Sygdomsbyrden i Danmark'. 2015. https://www.sst.dk/da/nyheder/2015/ny-rapport-sygdomsbyrden-i-danmark.

Svensson. 2010. 'Performing Caring Power in a Scandinavian Welfare State'. *Revista de Asistenţă Socială*, no. 3: 49–58.

Svensson, Kersin, Eva Johnsson, and Leili Laanemets. 2016. *Handlingsmæssigt råderum i socialt arbejde*. Kbh.: Akademisk Forlag.

Takahashi, Lois M. 1996. 'A Decade of Understanding Homelessness in the USA: From Characterization to Representation'. *Progress in Human Geography* 20 (3): 291–310. https://doi.org/10.1177/030913259602000301.

Teicher, Morton I. 1951. 'Anthropology and Social Work'. *Human Organization* 10 (3): 22–24. https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.10.3.e3841w2118237034.

Thelen, Lionel. 2006. *L' exil de soi: sans-abri d'ici et d'ailleurs*. Bruxelles: Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis.

Torfing, Jacob. 1999. 'Workfare With Welfare: Recent Reforms of the Danish Welfare State'. *Journal of European Social Policy* 9 (1): 5–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/095892879900900101.

Tsemberis, Sam. 2010. *Housing First, the Pathways Model to End Homelessness for People with Mental Illness and Addiction*. Center City, Minn: Hazelden.

———. 2014. 'Evidence-Based Values in Housing and Treatment'. *Psychiatric Services (Washington, D.C.)* 65 (3): 277. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.650304.

Uggerhøj, Lars, and Frank Ebsen. 2014. 'Når Forskning Trænger Sig På'. 2014. https://issuu.com/socialrdg/docs/28-udenfornummer.

Valverde, Mariana. 2010. 'Spectres of Foucault in Law and Society Scholarship'. *The Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 2010. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-102209-152951.

Van Drenth, A, and F de Hahn. 1999. *The Rise of Caring Power: New Perspectives on the History of*

Gender, Care and the 19th Century Women's Movement. Amsterdam; London: Amsterdam University Press ; Eurospan.

Vigh, Henrik. 2003. 'Navigating terrains of war. PhD.' *Ph. D.-række. Navigating terrains of war Nr. 24*.

———. 2007. *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. New York, NY: Berghahn Books.

———. 2009. 'Motion Squared: A Second Look at the Concept of Social Navigation'. *Anthropological Theory* 9 (4): 419–438. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499609356044.

Vigh, Henrik Erdman, and David Brehm Sausdal. 2014. 'From Essence Back to Existence: Anthropology beyond the Ontological Turn'. *Anthropological Theory Anthropological Theory* 14 (1): 49–73.

Villadsen, Kaspar. 2008. 'Freedom as self-transgression: transformations in the "governmentality" of social work'. *European Journal of Social Work* 11 (2): 93–104. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691450701357067.

Wacquant, Loïc. 2013. *Urban Outcasts, A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*. 1. ed. Oxford: Wiley. http://ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/login?url=http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kbdk/detail.action?docID=1174303.

Wacquant, Loıc. 2002. 'Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography'. *American Journal of Sociology*, 65.

Winlow, Simon, and Steve Hall. 2013. *Rethinking Social Exclusion: The End of the Social?* London: SAGE.

Woolgar, Steve, and Daniel Neyland. 2014. *Mundane Governance: Ontology and Accountability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10826249.

Zigon, Jarrett. 2015. 'What Is Situation?: An Assemblic Ethnography of the Drug War' 30 (3): 501–524.

Zufferey, Carole. 2017. *Homelessness and Social Work: An Intersectional Approach*. New York: Routledge.

Practice and Power?

Exploring Social Work Practices Towards Socially Marginalised People

Abstract

Drawing on extensive fieldwork and interviews with social workers and socially marginalised people in Denmark, I analyse key themes that were central to the social work practice and develop the concept of 'mere being' in order to describe an aspect of the practice which, despite its ever-presence during the fieldwork, tend to be undescribed in qualitative social science. I argue that this non-description might be connected to a tendency to perceive and analyse social work through the lens of governmentality with its inherent focus on power. Thus, I expose certain situations in the social work practice that we might term 'mere being' in order to capture the empirical existence of certain types of presence which had a somewhat different quality than power and thus ought not to be reduced to it.

Keywords: Social Work Practice, Welfare State, Power, Governmentality, Anthropology

- Introduction -

"Surely, life is more than just relations of power [...]. Human relations are also composed, for instance, on bonds of affection and attraction and repulsion" (Singh 2015, 136)

The main purpose of this paper is to explore contemporary social work practices from a Danish context and develop the concept of 'mere being' in order to elucidate an aspect of the social work practice which tends to be left underexposed. In this paper, I particularly engage with the analyses and body of literature that are inscribed in the field of governmentality (Dean 2009; Miller and Rose 2013; Valverde 2010), (also dubbed 'post-Foucauldian governmentality' (Mckee 2009)), as the popularity of governmentality studies with its focus on power have tended to dominate the qualitative studies of welfare state practices since the 1990's. However, more recent social scientific studies that focus on atmosphere, emotions and affect give way for other themes than power in their analyses of various social phenomena and practices (see, for instance, (Bøhling 2015; Simonova 2017)), and analyses of welfare state practices that highlight diverse types of power and powerlessness in the (welfare) state (see for instance, (Singh 2015; Fassin and Brown 2015)) serve as inspiration on how to explore other themes than power and governmentality in welfare state practices.

In this paper, I analyse the key themes 'goal-work, 'motivating-to-motivation', and 'mere being' as central to contemporary social work practices. The actions of 'motivating to motivation' and 'goal-work' are connected to the Danish social-political context, which I describe below while I develop and apply the concept of 'mere being' in order to describe specific situations in the social work practice that capture the empirical existence of a certain type of presence in the field. I engage with the popular lens of governmentality and its inherent theme of power to illuminate the foundation on which analyses of many social work practices (and welfare state practices in general) are built. Through an analysis of my empirical data from participant observation with social workers in two Danish municipalities, I give a few examples of incidences of '*mere being'* and the *'absence of power'* and *'powerlessness'* which expose why the popular theme of power in governmentality studies cannot be used as a sole lens of analysis of welfare state practices such as social work. Finally, I engage with political scientist Haugaard's identification of power as a family resemblance concept (Wittgenstein in: Haugaard 1997), wherefore power might serve as a common reference point in a multitude of situations. Power, though referring to extremely diverse actions and phenomena, might be applied to and explain almost any type of human action, which is why we ought to be more attentive of its

application and use in our analyses: not least in studies of welfare state practices such as in governmentality studies.

Even though the data is restricted to a Danish context, I suspect that it might find resonance and relevance in a broader context as well.

Social work and social marginalisation

The definition of social marginalisation and social work (practice) is undoubtedly difficult (see for instance; (Abrahamson 1998a, 1998b; Christensen 2011) and for social work; (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009)). Most researchers and policy-makers in the field of social marginalization (also categorised as social exclusion) agree that social marginalisation is only difficultly defined (for instance, (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2010; Benjaminsen et al. 2017)), and a full description of social work is also difficult as it spans a vast area of practices, target groups and ideals (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009). Here I refer to social marginalisation as the people who experience a mixture of homelessness, mental illness and dependency on drugs/alcohol, and I use the term 'socially marginalised' or 'service user'. I am using the terms 'service provider', 'social work practitioner' and 'social worker' for the general population of people who are employed to deliver services of various types to the above-mentioned group of socially marginalised people.

In a Danish context, social work can be defined in various ways and through various lenses. In this article, I focus on the social work towards socially marginalised people who were of legal age and full legal capacity. Social work towards socially marginalised people most often takes the form of assessing and handling citizens' cases (casework) or the direct delivery of services such as help with allocation of housing, connecting users to other types of services such as unemployment services and so forth (which we might refer to as 'social caretaking'). The daily social work practices in the social service units are inscribed in the national and local social policies and in national law. The law on social services (Law on Social Services 2018) delineates the groups eligible for help and types of services offered though the municipalities.

During the daily social work practice, certain themes stood out as particularly relevant in the social work practice, that is of: 'motivating to motivation' and of 'goal-work'. These themes can not only be interpreted as local practices in the two municipalities but can be seen promoted and encouraged in national law and national and local policies. In the Danish Social Service Act, it is, for instance, stated clearly that services have to be delivered voluntarily, that no force must be used in the delivery of services to people of legal age and full legal capacity and that in the rare cases where force must be applied (for instance, in cases of risk of loss of life), the least extensive form of action must be taken. Thus, the individuals' wishes, capacity and energy for change or help become pivotal wherefore motivation becomes an important part of social work practices. Further, one might argue that the general societal sentiments and call for less expensive and more effective public services which is being expressed in the Danish population have given way to working with goals and in applying evidence-based methods that can ensure effective services (see a discussion in: (Høgsbro 2015)). Goal-work is stated and applied in various ways in the Danish municipalities. On a general municipal level, goal-work is, however, often connected to goals such as getting or sustaining 'housing', 'employment'/'education', dealing with 'drug/alcohol abuse' or harm reduction etc. This is also reflected in the systematic assessment tool (dubbed VUM[1]), which social workers in most Danish municipalities use to assess the scale of social problems and which involves key themes that might be problematic or challenging in socially marginalised people's lives. Goal-work and working with goals are often enforced via various tools and templates introduced by municipal management and

---

[1] In Danish: Voksenudredningsmetoden
[2] In Copenhagen municipality, the model named 'The Compas' was applied for this

conducted by social workers who were in contact with the service users[2]. Goal-work is, however, not a one-time endeavour but often follows a set timeframe where each individual's progression or regression is assessed in order to reach these goals. Thus, social worker and service user will regularly reflect on the goals and how the person has progressed or regressed from their stated goals and as such the social work practice could be construed as a goal-oriented activity or a 'problem-solving' activity aimed at the individual goals.

Thus, the social work practices of 'motivating to motivation' and 'goal-work' must, in general, be seen in relation to actual national and local social policy. Here, I focus on the actual daily social work practices as they were performed by social work practitioners in order to provide a general view of what social work towards socially marginalised people entails in a contemporary Danish context. Further, I apply the concept of 'mere being' to add a renewed sensitivity to our understanding of social work practices which does not reduce social work practices to governmentality and the inherent theme of power which follows from this concept.

- Methodology -

This paper is based on data from ca. one year of participant observation and ca. 50 interviews with service providers and service users in two public service units in the two most populous municipalities in Denmark, Copenhagen and Aarhus, from December 2016 to October 2017. One unit organised under the municipal employment authority strove to help young people between 18-30 years of age gain employment in the ordinary labour market or/and education. Besides unemployment, these youths experienced various social problems such as homelessness, mental illness, dependency on drug/alcohol, disrupted families etc. The other unit was organised under the municipal social affairs department and sought to help people between 18-65 years gain access to the ordinary labour market. Users were mostly middle-aged or older men experiencing various social problems such as homelessness, dependency on drugs/alcohol, mental illness, physical illness, criminal charges and prostitution. The service providers were mostly of Danish origin, had different lengths of professional experience ranging from more than 25 years of experience in delivering social services to newly employed service providers and they had different educational backgrounds ranging from social workers, pedagogues, a few academics, and in the workshops, carpenters, bike mechanics etc. with or without further pedagogical or social work training.

Participant observation took place during the scheduled workday of the service providers (ca. from 8 am to 4 pm) in the office spaces, workshops and communal teaching facilities in the two units following service providers and service users during their day. I interviewed the service providers in the two units, a few of the users and other key actors in the two municipalities that provided services for this group such as employees and managers in drug rehabilitation and treatment centers, health clinics, social service units, psychiatric units etc. This article is based on an analysis of the themes that could be identified across the two municipalities with a focus on the social work practitioners' daily practice.

- Theoretical Foundation -
Power as a Lens to Understand Social Work Practices?

Power is a slippery and difficult concept to define (Haugaard 1997; Jenkins in: Clegg and Haugaard 2009; Wrong 1995 [1979]) and it may be connected to other categories and concepts such as authority, domination and manipulation (Jenkins in: Clegg and Haugaard 2009; Haugaard 1997).

---

[2] In Copenhagen municipality, the model named 'The Compas' was applied for this

Power has been described in varied ways and it has been stated "there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of more recent definitions of [...] power, or of the power of men over other men, in the literature of social science" (Wrong 1995, 2 [1979]). Some reoccurring themes seem to concentrate or describe power as: resources, efficacy, intentionality and/or capacity. Power has, for instance, been defined as a "matter of efficacy, the capacity of individuals and groups to achieve their own ends and/or frustrate those of others" (Jenkins in: Clegg and Haugaard 2009, 152) where "power/efficacy depends on the availability of resources" (Jenkins in: Clegg and Haugaard 2009, 152–53). As 'the power to realise goals' (Haugaard 1997, 119) or as "the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others" (Wrong 1995, 2 [1979]). The focus here is, however, not to compile or construct a coherent, comprehensive definition of power but on analysing the uses of the theme of power in social scientific analyses of the social work practice to people who are socially marginalised in order to make room for other themes in the analyses of these practices.

Power as a general theme, phenomenon or process is often evoked in social scientific analyses. Various concepts, terms and images used in social scientific analyses such as 'biopower' (Foucault 1979 [1976]; Hewitt 1983), 'disciplinary power' (Foucault 2013 [1975]), 'punishment' (Foucault 2013 [1975]), 'pastoral power' (Foucault 1982), 'governmentality' (Dean 2009; Valverde 2010; Foucault 2014 [1977-1978]; Miller and Rose 2013; Cruikshank 1999), various types of 'regimes', 'symbolic power' (Bourdieu 1979), 'structural violence' (Galtung 1969; Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016; Farmer 2004), 'mundane governance' (Woolgar and Neyland 2014), 'caring power' (Van Drenth and de Hahn 1999; Svensson 2010), '*homo sacer*' and 'state of exception' (Agamben 2016 [1998]) etc. have invoked potent images of the theme and presence of what broadly can be termed as power. The wave of governmentality studies, which have dominated the studies on welfare state practices up through the 1980s and 1990s (Miller and Rose 2013) and to this day also revolve around this theme. In this article, I engage particularly with the theme of power in governmentality literature of welfare state practices.

Inspired by Foucault's writings in general and his notions of different types of power such as disciplinary power, biopower, and the illustration of government as the 'conduct of conduct', social scientists have focused their attention on how power was produced in society in general and in the welfare state institutions in particular (Miller and Rose 2013; Dean 2009; Cruikshank 1999). The concepts of 'conduct of conduct' and 'biopower' can be described as ways of securing and heightening the well-being and welfare of the general population through the conduct of citizens' conduct. That is, it is not a direct enforcement of power on each citizen but a less visible type of power, which works on citizens to conduct themselves in a certain way that secures and heightens their welfare and well-being. It is, in some way, a regime of power that makes citizens responsible for their own conduct and forces them to apply this conduct on themselves. Thus, it is literally power enforced through the conduct of conduct. Foucault's writings illustrate the important, powerful roles institutions and welfare state practitioners play in enforcing these types of power, and this Foucauldian ethos and mode of analysis have given way to numerous analyses of welfare state practices as examples of governmentality (Miller and Rose 2013). By scrutinising the 'mundane practices' of various welfare state practitioners, the regime of power could be revealed (Miller and O'Leary 1987, Miller 1980, 1981, 1986a, Rose 1985, 1986, 1989a, 1989b in: Miller and Rose 2013, 5). Thus, the "little engineers of the human soul and their mundane knowledges, techniques and procedures [such as] psychologists, psychiatrists, medics, accountants, social workers, factory managers, town planners and others" (Miller and Rose 2013, 5) became the object of analysis and examples of the manifestation of a modern regime of power.

Due to the rise and popularity of governmentality studies, various types of service delivery in different Western welfare states (and also states with a more authoritarian bent (see (Fimyar 2008)) have been viewed through the lens of power (McKee 2009). Though governmentality is not reducible only to the actions of the (practitioners of) the state and state institutions, it has often

been exemplified through these (Miller and Rose 2013). Through concepts such as governmentality, biopower, and conduct-of-conduct, the welfare states' service delivery methods, practices and policies have been analysed as enactments of power or the product of power even though the social work research field traditionally *has* recognised their practice as one of both care and control (and power); that is, as caring for the citizens *and* serving as an 'agent' of control of the state (for instance: (Green and Clarke 2016; Dolgoff, Harrington, and Loewenberg 2012; Richards 2017)).

Power is an obvious feature in policymaking and state practices, but I argue that these practices ought not be reduced solely to this incentive. Indeed, the problem with governmentality and the theme of power is that it might be applied everywhere. Indeed, it has shortcomings 'due to the fact that everything can potentially be gathered under its banner, as it is hardly possible to delineate a single process in society or self which is not influenced by the 'conduct of conduct' (Dean 1999:10-16, Foucault 1982:220-221, Gordon 1991:2 in: Fimyar 2008). Below I discuss these ideas of governmentality and enactments of power in welfare state institutions in relation to the social work practices I observed during fieldwork, but first, I describe three themes that were central to the social work practice: 'goal-work', 'motivating to motivation' and 'mere being'.

- Empirical analysis –
Characteristics of Social Work Practice

1. Goals or a Matter of Life and Death
One March morning, a service provider defined the goal of her social work practice to me as helping the citizens get started on an education or getting a job. The service provider focused on the problem-solving part of her practice, the main task of helping service users into an ordinary job or an education. This is also reflected in a myriad of national governmental policies that aim to get people with social problems into an education or a job (Bjerge, Oute and Christensen, forthcoming). However, later that day, another service provider, Ella, tells me she has received an SMS from one of the users who has asked if he can come talk to her today. But Ella wants to know why he wants to know and texts him back. He answers, "Because I've got a diagnosis…". She thinks he might show up today and talk with her. But he might be sidetracked onto a lawn somewhere if some of his friends sit there and drink and so on, she says matter-of-factly. Ella tells me the story of this young guy. How he has a providing resourceful family who take care of him, but he has an addiction problem, has had drug-induced psychoses and has been committed to a mental hospital several times. Ella says the goal is to "stop these young people from dying or from ending their days as bums on the street". Here, Ella expresses her experience of what the goal of their social work practice might also be defined as: to stop them from dying and ending their days as bums on the street. Putting aside the risk of offensive language such as the category 'bum' and the possibly prejudiced and norm-enforced negativity of 'ending on the street', aside this particular service provider, who has worked with users for more than 25 years and has hands-on experience with the user-group, expresses the nature of social work quite clearly; When working with socially marginalised people, you are not just providing social services to socially marginalised people (as expressed by the other social worker as 'helping them find a job or start an education') but also providing social services to people in a precarious and perhaps even existentially vulnerable situation. Quantitative data on the conditions of socially marginalised people in Denmark back this argument. In Denmark, socially marginalised people die 20 years earlier than the average population (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2018; SUSY Udsat 2017). They most likely experience several social problems at once ((SUSY Udsat 2017; SIF 2007, 2012), have a higher risk of chronic diseases (ibid.), and experience more physical and mental problems (ibid.) and suicide attempts (ibid.). Defining social work as the practice of providing services, as for instance helping them start an education or getting a job, as stated as the main goal by the social worker in the interview earlier in the day, is for this population, therefore, only part of the practice as it also involves engaging in repeatedly potentially emotionally straining situations such as experiencing attempts of suicide, moral

infringements, physical and verbal violence (often between users and not directed at the service provider), deterioration of the body, social *deroute*, loss of hope and death. In this sense, social work defined in social policies of the state and municipalities as the job of solving the individual's social problems might as well be defined as the act of stopping people from dying or ending socially excluded on the street. Both descriptions seem relevant, although the latter, perhaps, frames the core and nature of the problem more precisely. Though policies and state and municipal management frame the social work practice as the task of alleviating or reducing certain specific social problems, the actual experience of this practice is also one of life and death, not just of instrumentally solving problems. Besides the task-oriented practice of solving the problems at hand, goals were manifested as central to the social work practice in both municipal units.

Goal-work seemed to take up a large part of the service providers' day in both municipal units. They were not only working to alleviate the stress, pain or suffering of the service users but also to help them get from one situation to another. As the two units focused on employment, the ultimate movement was to move from unemployment to employment. However, the service providers were actually working with different levels and with a plethora of goals. Staff would explain that each user had their own goals. They would say, "We have 70 goals –one for each user we are working with" or "The goals are as different as the users". Besides the users' goals, however, staff also described other goals. These would be described by each worker individually but could be framed as: helping to reduce drug and alcohol abuse, to try to create a meaningful daily life for the user (or an alternative to 'sitting on the bench'), to create a positive network for the user, to create a work-community, to build up vocational qualifications, to motivate the user to change, to heighten living standards, to bridge or connect users to help in other services such as treatment for drug and alcohol abuse or mental health treatment, to be a representative of the good (welfare) system etc. Besides the users' own goal(s), staff therefore also held goals of their own. In addition, local municipal management and national policies also espoused goals such as lowering the number of citizens receiving transfer payments or strategies of trying to get young people to engage in trainee positions in order to get them into the ordinary labour market. Users of the services, however, would not always succeed in working with goals; they could have difficulties sticking to one goal at a time and very often it seemed difficulties setting them or difficulties sustaining their effort in obtaining it. Some users seemed to lack the energy or desire even to set goals or could be in situations where goal-setting seemed a long way off as users experienced more pressing needs. Ways to reach the goal(s) were rarely, if ever, experienced as linear. Service providers had to get used to the fact that evolution did not follow a linear path but kept being interrupted by setbacks or sometimes, though less frequent, jumps forward. Taking a linear route of becoming motivated for treatment, getting into treatment, sustaining treatment and fulfilling treatment, to getting a job and a house were not the normal experience. Sometimes users had different or more pressing needs than setting or following goals.

Besides 'goal-work', an important theme in the social work practice was the practice of 'motivating-to-motivation' or waiting for motivation to appear. I describe this key theme in the social work practice below.

2. Motivation as Key

Service providers would often claim that motivation was a key aspect of their work if not the most important factor. Motivation was often seen as something inherent in the service user that he or she needed for the services to help. As Brian recounts, "The motivation has to be there in the citizen because otherwise you get nowhere [...]. Then you cannot move them [figuratively] [...]. If they aren't motivated with it [their problems], then we cannot move [figuratively] anything". Like Brian, other staff agreed about the necessity of motivation. Eik explained it as a universal human condition: "It is like I would very much like to stop smoking. So that has to come from inside. [...]. One has to have the desire to stop smoking. One has to have the desire to stop drinking and the desire for another kind of

life, right? [...]. So, they have to mo[tivate] themselves, you see... everyone else can't do it for them. They kind of have to themselves...". Motivation was often described as an inner desire. Like an energy source that had to be there for staff to succeed. The service providers could not provide the services unless the users wanted them. Thus, the job of the service providers became to try to 'motivate to motivation'. This was not an easy job because service users would not always show very much concrete inclination towards being motivated to changes in their lives, though many would often talk about wanting to change. Many times, these wishes to change were posed in common language that mimed the rhetoric and themes in popular media such as getting a nice place to live, getting a job, having a family etc., and, at other times, directed at their specific situation: about getting out of addiction. Furthermore, service users would often not show up at the service regularly. Both municipal units had trouble with this, and in one unit, they could be gone for days on end sometimes making staff worried about their condition.

Motivating to motivation was not easy because it seemed to be a balancing act between encouraging users to act openly or holding your time and waiting for the user to address them on their own. As Ann recounted one day, "It is challenging to be so motivating". Furthermore, service providers had the experience that the user's motivation often emerged quickly and had to be engaged with quickly or it would die out again. As Brian said, it did not do to say, "It is great you want to do something. You have to wait six weeks and then we will have room to do something. Then they have lost their motivation. So, we very much try to catch it the exact moment it is there". In a Danish specialised welfare state, this puts further demand on workers because services such as drug treatment or mental health treatment could be anchored in other units and, therefore, require the user to wait his turn. In larger municipalities, however, special services were often available whereby it was sometimes possible to circumvent the problem of waiting lists for these types of users.

Service providers, social researchers and policymakers would sometimes state that the act of solving social problems is 'not rocket science', but as shown in this paper, service providers work with goals that are defined as narrower than the actual problems they have to manage and they work with goals on different levels: they work with the users' goals, their own defined goals and with local- and national political goals (all of which might change). Furthermore, service providers work with users who have trouble formulating and following goals and with creating motivation in users who are often in a precarious life situation that demands the engagement of other more pressing problems than the goals set. Motivation has to erupt within the individual user and has to be acted on quickly in a specialised welfare system where other service units might risk prolonging or hindering this narrow room of possibility to act and where there are no obvious, clear-cut and straightforward ways of succeeding at inducing motivation.

The above-described engagements with 'goal-work' and 'motivating-to-motivation' may indeed be analysed as types of biopower, as a certain government of 'conduct-of-conduct' that seek to heighten the health and well-being of people who experience social problems. The social work practices might be seen as attempts to make the service users take on responsibility and set goals and motivate them. However, below I describe another central aspect of the social work practice, which does not easily lend itself to the theme of power, and I discuss a tendency to reduce actions to power and governmentality.

3. Social Work As 'Mere Being'
When it comes to understanding the state, state practices and its institutions, the presence of power is obvious and relevant and, therefore, as described above, also duly noticed within a wealth of social scientific analyses. However, when engaging with and observing the social services provided to socially marginalised people, other instances than power comes to mind, sometimes perhaps, the exact

opposite of power or perhaps something of a different nature than power. Below, I describe three types of incidences which might carry the overall theme of 'mere being': one where social work practice manifests itself as the exact opposite of power (as powerlessness), another that describes the absence of power and one which displays something of a different nature than power or governmentality. These types of incidences were, however, present in all kinds of shapes throughout the fieldwork, and I would therefore argue, that these types of practices and situations were also endemic to the practice of social work. They were not rare as they amounted to taking up a considerable part of the social workers' practices and energy during their workdays. Thus, in various instances, social workers were not just providing services in a powerful meeting between system and client, but rather, the work practice had a somewhat different quality or character, which we might refer to as 'mere being'.

Erika's Hug

One day, Sarah, a recently employed staff-member in one of the municipal workshops, heads off to see if Erika, who has not turned up in the workshop, wants to join today. Erika answers the door of her shelter room on the first floor. She smiles and welcomes us in. We enter the small square room with a very high ceiling. It is sparsely decorated and neat except for a table in the middle of the room where several art-materials lie scattered about. Erika shows us a birthday card she has been making for her dad (who is turning 70) and she wants to mail it to him in Greenland for the day. An orange-reddish coloured folded cardboard is in her hands. She opens it, and I see the crooked lettered writing in it. Sarah complements her, but Erika suddenly starts to cry. She starts to complain about all sorts of things in one go. I cannot get hold of what disturbs her. Sarah also tries to make sense of it. She pulls at each word and tries to comfort her. Erika keeps crying. Her tiny body is shaking and her face distorted. Pain, despair and desperation seem almost to emanate from her. It seems the entire situation is at fault. It is unbearable, and I intuitively want to help her out of this situation. Tears are running down her face. The whole situation is sad and, I get the sense that it is her entire situation that is weighing on her: the alcohol abuse she keeps stating she wants to reduce but keeps ending up in, the way she keeps trying to turn up at the workshop but half of the time end up going home because she is too drunk or too upset to work, the small shelter room she lives in, her family in Greenland, the inability to concentrate on the books she is reading or perhaps something completely different that is hard to get hold of. Erika says she misses Tanya, the other employee of the workshop so much. Sarah tells her in a kind and comforting manner that Tanya is on holiday, but she will be back soon. But I know that Julia already knows this, and the words seem to come as a sort of excuse or explanation for her desperate crying. The way she has positioned herself in the room towards Sarah makes it almost obvious or unnatural not to give her a hug. Intuitively, I feel this need emanating from her and that a hug would be the only comfort here. The position of her body, the arms drooping on each side, almost ready, and her tearful anguished expression. Sarah has sensed it too, but she tries comforting her with her words again. Nothing helps. Finally, Erika states the need for a hug verbally and Sarah gives in. She hugs her and lets her cry out in her arms. I feel relieved somehow to be out of the tense atmosphere of pain, though the sadness seems to linger in the room. After Sarah has comforted her, we walk alone back to the workshop.

Are these incidences of power and governmentality? Can they be reduced to a preoccupation with coercing bodies into well-being and happiness? Is this a social work practice enforcing its conduct-of-conduct? On a docile body? Not exactly, I would argue. One of the characteristics of power was that it had a certain intentionality about it (Jenkins in: Clegg and Haugaard 2009; Wrong 1995) which seems lacking in this case. This situation erupted and seemed to come from nowhere. The need for a hug. The apprehension of giving it. Is this then perhaps a reversed example of power? Of counter-conduct? Of a client exerting power over the situation and getting the hug that she wanted? I would argue no, as this was not a reaction to any social work practice or policy. More bluntly, this had no obvious counter-power to enforce itself against. The social worker stepped into the room, cherished the work of the

user and the situation of despair erupted. There did not seem to exist any deliberate intentions from either social worker or citizen to begin with. The situation demanded action of some sort, but it was not clear of what type and the power balance was not clear either. Therefore, I would characterise these incidences more as a way of being together which had no clear purpose, (intention), showed no clear demand (of resources) and the capacity to act was diffuse for both social worker and service user. There was a high degree of uncertainty about it all. Often, these situations were not planned but erupted and could be very despairing and invoke a tense and straining atmosphere. Often, there was not one clear tool to solve the situation as each situation demanded different aspects of the social worker's being and capacities. I would argue that these types of human interaction displayed no symbol of power or hierarchy thereof in the situation itself but gave way to a mutual experience of human suffering and powerlessness that eroded or blurred whichever hierarchy might exist and therefore not reducible to power. As such, the powerful meeting ought not always to be viewed through the lens of power but as a mutual experiential set of being in a difficult situation. As a sort of presence in the face of suffering perhaps. As such the social work to socially marginalised people is of a much larger content than mere application of force (of one type or another). It is, perhaps, a place of 'mere being' or mere presence and sensitivity to human sensitivity.

Another example display how daily interactions might be instances of absence of power.

Michel's Monologues

One day, I meet Michel on the second floor of the shelter compound. Initially, he starts to tell me how it went with the meeting in the jobcentre and his unemployment benefits but then starts his, by me only too well-known by now, monologues about Middle East policy and his views on it. I try to ask him about his jobcentre experience instead, but nothing deters him from the importance of his political topic. Every word of mine is caught but reflected back about the Middle East's condition. It seems impossible to steer him away from this topic. By now I know that this theme might possibly keep me locked into his words for time on end. Last time, it felt like at least half an hour, though I tried to direct his attention towards other aspects. There was no way to get into the conversations with his words running on end. Tanya (one of the social caretakers at the unit) passes us on her way into the room next to us. When I get myself untangled from the conversation, I see Tanya in the kitchen. She thanks me. I look puzzled at her. She explains that it is good for her and her colleagues to get a bit of a break from the never-ending monologues that Michel keeps addressing to them. It is nice to be relieved a bit, she says.

As stated, some of the reoccurring themes when defining power seem to evolve around power as: resources, efficacy, intentionality and/or capacity (Jenkins in: Clegg and Haugaard 2009; Wrong 1995; Haugaard 1997). However, this incidence does not display any open resources, intentions, capacities or efficacy. In this situation, the social workers are not actors of certain technologies of power. They are receivers of Michel's monologues again and again. Is this, then, an example of counter-conduct? The enforcement of power by Michel? A way for him to push against power? But, How can it be? These political disappointments had no immediate relevance for his life and these monologues showed no direct intentions. He, of course, knew very well that the social workers have no powerful Middle Eastern connections to gain influence on the Middle East policies he disagrees with. Was he perhaps using his monologues for something else? As a way to create human contact, a way to show off his competence in Middle East politics or a way to share a connection with another human being though being weighed down by their monological character? It might very well be argued for, but then again, where is the certainty of this, and do we not risk reducing anything to power then? Ought we, perhaps, view these incidences through other themes?

A final example displays how the service provision might take the course of powerlessness (from both caseworker and client) and illustrate how powerlessness erupted and manifested itself in the citizen's and social workers' life.

Charlotte's Worries

Charlotte explains that one of the young service users she is helping has suicidal thoughts. It weighs on her. He had told her, during an otherwise normal casework session, where they were supposed to have talked about which employment goals he had for his life and what thoughts he might have concerning education. Out of the blue it seemed, he had told her that he was thinking of 'making an end to his life'. He had then described the actions about his suicidal thoughts in detail; how he had been standing at the top of a large building last night getting ready to jump. Charlotte had, among other things, told him about the possibilities of help at the psychiatric unit in town which she knows he already knows since he has told her he has used it before. She had given him her work phone-number again and told him to call either her or his other caseworker at another municipal unit. He told her he would. But now, Charlotte was anxious. Should she take the work-phone home with her? Would she be too anxious if she left it at the office, which she initially had decided and usually did? But What if she would just worry all weekend anyway? Then she might as well have the phone on her, at least knowing that she was able to answer him if he happened to call.

In this situation, the social work practice is not straightforward as a certain form of powerlessness erupts. Both social worker and service user share a common existential situation, which does not lend itself to easy solutions. In this situation, the powerlessness of both service user and social worker shines through, and in this particular situation, there is no obvious powerful meeting but the difficult existential situation to be present in and try to guide through. But how does one do this best? Charlotte, though being a highly experienced social worker with more than 25 years' experience and knowledgeable about the normal procedures in cases of risk of suicide, is in doubt and worried. How does she handle this best? I would argue that these types of incidences ought not to be viewed as a powerful interaction but quite the opposite: as an interaction of powerlessness to human suffering and life's courses for both service provider and service user.

In the described instances, state power exceeds our usual analyses of it, as it cannot just be described as a type of conduct-of-conduct or counter-conduct but as actions of what I have named 'mere being' where the everyday actions of citizens exposed the need to just be and take in the reality and situation of socially marginalised people. The critical, abrupt, chaotic instances left few possibilities for manoeuvring for the social workers, and their only actions were to 'be' present in these instances and lend ear or body to the agonising or frustrated situations of the citizens and life.

- Discussion and conclusion -

Not a social work practice?

One might argue that these incidences are not examples of social work practices as proper social work can be defined as doing casework, the management of the citizens' cases, or the delivering of services as described above. I would, however, make clear that these types of incidences happened again and again and were, therefore, a substantial element in the everyday practices of social work. They were unavoidable and time-consuming. These incidences are ever-present in the provision of social services to socially marginalised people. Claiming that the actual social work practice was the delivering of these types of services only would be a way to force a reality down on the social work which was not present as social workers often were not only occupied with the actual provision of various services. Furthermore, it risks categorising the incidences of 'mere being' and tasks of a more emotional character as less relevant than the delivering of specific services when these might, indeed, be as much the essence of the social work practice when one engages with social marginalisation.

But still power?

A further argument might go that these examples, in the end, are bound in power anyway. That when it comes down to it, they are, in fact, examples of power or governmentality anyway. Erika's hug could be explained as a way to exert power against her powerlessness in society perhaps? The reactions to Michel's monologues a way for caseworkers to ignore him and Charlotte's worries and the suicidal thoughts of the user an extreme case of opting for the well-being of the citizen through the idea of individual freedom or (em)power(ment) of the user? A type of power manifested through the way the social worker gives way for the individual person's freedom to take his or her own life? One could argue that these examples might, indeed, also be examples of an extreme version of biopower. As a way of letting human subjects in the population sustain through non-interference. But is all then, reducible to biopower? Which relation and practice would, indeed, not be an example of power? In this way, every incidence potentially becomes reduced to a powerful interaction, even in the face of open powerlessness or where no theme of power has been openly stated and which only, I would argue, forcefully can be claimed to revolve around power (with its focus on intentionality, efficacy etc.). It seems impossible to escape the theme of power in contemporary social science research of a governmentality governmentality-inclined bent because, when it comes to it, this might be the theme on which all actions end. It seems no argument and case will ultimately escape it since power is a concept that can always be called upon to explain any interaction in the end. Consider this, however, what if power is not an overarching all-embracing all-present theme? What if power is only one aspect? Or not even the point? How are we, in general, to differentiate between power and other themes? And how come power is such an elusive concept and is seen applied to so many types of cases? Perhaps it is because power ought to be understood as a 'family resemblance concept' (Wittgenstein in Haugaard 1997).

Power as a 'family resemblance concept'

Haugaard applies Wittgenstein's idea of 'family resemblance' to the concept of power because it "is like the members of a family. Each family member may resemble another family member while there is no single core element which ties them all together". The original image was of the word 'game' which can be applied to games as varied as cards and soccer and defined through the general theme of involving winning or losing. The problem is that other games do not involve winning or losing, such as, for instance, someone playing a game of marbles with himself, but is still, however, considered 'a game'. "While all the members of the 'game family' do not have one single thread in common, they do, indeed, possess many overlapping characteristics which constitute them as a family" (Haugaard 1997, 2). Power can be seen as this type of concept. "The same applies to power: The power of the President; the power which individual A exercises over individual B, the power of love; the power of truth; the power of ideology; and electric power; all have elements in common but there is no single common essence which runs through all of these which can be extended to cover all usages of the concept of power" (Haugaard 1997, 2). As such, power can be applied to various instances and aspects of social work even though it perhaps displays different aspects of power. Since power can be viewed as a 'family resemblance concept', it might be evoked in all kinds of instances and perhaps risk overshadowing other empirical situations in the field.

Thus, in this paper, I have connected the social work practice to the central themes of 'goal-work', 'motivating-to-motivation' and 'mere being'. Other themes might be relevant as well, but these seemed particularly pertinent throughout the fieldwork. Thus, even though power and governmentality are useful lenses to understand social work practices and welfare state practices in general, I have here argued for a suspension of this theme in order to apply a renewed sensitivity to our understandings of the social work practices in particular and perhaps the welfare state practices in general.

Bibliography

Abrahamson, Peter. 1998a. *Postmodern Governing of Social Exclusion, Social Integration or Risk Management?* Sociologisk Rapportserinr. 13, 1998. Kbh: Københavns UniversitetSociologisk Institut.

———. 1998b. 'Social Exclusion in Europe : Old Wine in New Bottles?' 1998: 18.

Agamben, Giorgio. 2016. *Homo sacer: den suveræne magt og det nøgne liv*. Aarhus: Klim.

Benjaminsen, Lars, Stefan Bastholm Andrade, Morten Holm Enemark, and SFI - Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd. 2017. *Fællesskabsmålingen: en undersøgelse af livsvilkår og social eksklusion i Danmark*. SFI - Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd.

Bøhling, Frederik. 2015. 'Desires of the Night: an ethnography of urban alcohol and other drugs assemblages'. Aarhus: Aarhus University, School of Business and social Sciences, Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences, Center for drug and alcohol research.

Bourdieu, P. 1979. 'Symbolic Power'. *Critique of Anthropology* 4 (13–14): 77–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X7900401307.

Christensen, Louise. 2011. *Livet udenfor en etnografisk beskrivelse af hjemløses hverdagsliv i København og oplevelser af margianliksering*. København: Universitetet.

Clegg, Stewart R., and Mark Haugaard. 2009. *The SAGE Handbook of Power*. SAGE.

Cruikshank, Barbara. 1999. *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Dean, Mitchell. 2009. *Governmentality: power and rule in modern society*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Dolgoff, Ralph, Donna Harrington, and Frank M. Loewenberg. 2012. *Brooks/Cole Empowerment Series: Ethical Decisions for Social Work Practice*. Cengage Learning.

Farmer, Paul. 2004. 'An Anthropology of Structural Violence'. *Current Anthropology* 45 (3): 305–325. https://doi.org/10.1086/382250.

Fassin, Didier, and Patrick Brown. 2015. *At the Heart of the State: The Moral World of Institutions*. London: Pluto Press.

Fimyar, Olena. 2008. 'Using Governmentality as a Conceptual Tool in Education Policy Research'. *Educate~* 1 (1): 3–18.

Foucault, Michel. 1979. *The History of Sexuality, 1*.

———. 1982. 'The Subject and Power'. *Critical Inquiry* 8 (4): 777–95. https://doi.org/10.1086/448181.

———. 2013. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library.

———. 2014. *Security, Territory, Population Lectures at the College de France, 1977-78*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Galtung, J. 1969. 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research'. *Journal of Peace Research* 3 (January): 167–190.

Green, Lorraine Carol, and Karen Clarke. 2016. *Social Policy for Social Work: Placing Social Work in Its Wider Context*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Haugaard, Mark. 1997. *The Constitution of Power: A Theoretical Analysis of Power, Knowledge and Structure*. Manchester; New York, NY: Manchester University Press.

Hewitt, Martin. 1983. 'Bio-Politics and Social Policy: Foucault's Account of Welfare'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 2 (1): 67–84. https://doi.org/10.1177/026327648300200100.7.

Høgsbro, Kjeld. 2015. 'Evidence and Research Designs in Applied Sociology and Social Work Research'. *Nordic Social Work Research* 5 (sup1): 56–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2015.1066706.

Law on Social Services. 2018. *Bekendtgørelse Af Lov Om Social Service*. https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=197036.

Mckee, Kim. 2009. 'Post-Foucauldian Governmentality: What Does It Offer Critical Social Policy Analysis?' *Critical Social Policy* 29 (3): 465–486. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018309105180.

Meeuwisse, Anna, Sune Sunesson, and Hans Swärd. 2009. *Socialt arbejde: en grundbog*. Kbh.: Hans Reitzel.

Miller, Peter, and Nikolas Rose. 2013. *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Rådet for Socialt Udsatte. 2010. *Udsat for forståelse: en antologi om socialt udsatte*. Kbh.: Rådet for Socialt Udsatte : [Eksp.] Indenrigs- og Socialministeriet.

———. 2018. 'Årsrapport 2018'. Årsrapport 2018. 2018. https://www.udsatte.dk/publikationer/arsrapport-2018.

Richards, Kayla. 2017. 'Social Work or Social Control: Power, and the Values and Contradictions in Social Work Practice and the American Indian' 2017: 38.

Rylko-Bauer, Barbara, and Paul Farmer. 2016. 'Structural Violence, Poverty, and Social Suffering'. *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*, May. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199914050.013.4.

SIF. 2007. 'SUSY Udsat - Sundhedsprofil for Socialt Udsatte i Danmark 2007'. 2007. https://viden.sl.dk/artikler/voksne/socialt-udsatte/susy-udsat-2007/.

———. 2012. 'SUSY Udsat 2012 - Sundhedsprofil for Socialt Udsatte i Danmark 2012 Og Udviklingen Siden 2007'. 2012. https://viden.sl.dk/artikler/voksne/socialt-udsatte/susy-udsat-2012/.

Simonova, Olga. 2017. 'Emotion Management and the Professional Culture of Administrative Social Workers in Russia: Common Standards Versus the Moral Mission of Social Care'. *Zhurnal Issledovanii Sotsialnoi Politiki = The Journal of Social Policy Studies* 15 (1): 129–142. https://doi.org/10.17323/1727-0634-2017-15-1-129-142.

Singh, Bhrigupati. 2015. *Poverty and the Quest for Life: Spiritual and Material Striving in Rural India*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

SUSY Udsat. 2017. 'SUSY Udsat 2017'. SDU. 2017. https://www.sdu.dk:443/da/sif/publikationer/2018/susy_udsat.

Svensson. 2010. 'Performing Caring Power in a Scandinavian Welfare State'. *Revista de Asistenţă Socială*, no. 3: 49–58.

Valverde, Mariana. 2010. 'Spectres of Foucault in Law and Society Scholarship'. *The Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 2010. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-102209-152951.

Van Drenth, A, and F de Hahn. 1999. *The Rise of Caring Power: New Perspectives on the History of Gender, Care and the 19th Century Women's Movement*. Amsterdam; London: Amsterdam University Press ; Eurospan.

Woolgar, Steve, and Daniel Neyland. 2014. *Mundane Governance: Ontology and Accountability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10826249.

Wrong, Dennis Hume. 1995. *Power Its Forms, Bases, and Uses*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

Journal of Organizational Ethnography

Metaphors of change: Descriptions of changes within the practice of social work
for socially marginalized people
Louise Christensen,

Article information:

Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald
for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission
guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Metaphors of change

Descriptions of changes within the practice of social work for socially marginalized people

Louise Christensen

Center for Drug and Alcohol Research, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore how a study of a practice can lay the foundation to describe this very practice whilst transformations of it were taken place. Descriptions of changes to the practice of social work which was observed empirically serve as a starting point for experimenting with how social scientists, though often exploring transformative study objects, can remain focused on describing the object, under study.

Design/methodology/approach – The study was done through circa one year of fieldwork conducted with participant observation in two Danish municipal units offering services to socially marginalized people and interviews with social workers and employees in drug/alcohol treatment and psychiatric units.

Findings – The object of study within social sciences, though changing, is able to be described. Through the theories of "Social Navigation" (Vigh) and "Strategy and Tactics" (de Certeau), the practice of social work can be described as one concrete bounded practice but one which is performed within a transformative/changeable environment that are capable of influencing it. In this case, the experience of a changeable seascape might serve as a metaphor for how study objects change within an environment of change; how they can be viewed as "motion within motion" (Vigh).

Originality/value – Even though fields such as anthropology and organizational studies seem to rid themselves from their objects of study (culture and organization, respectively) and dissociate themselves from descriptions thereof these objects might still be of value to us. Even though the objects of study in postmodern anthropology and organizational studies are defined as unbounded, anti-essential, ephemeral, ever-changing non-objects, this might not be the entire picture. Despite their ever-changing shape, we might still be able to study and describe them if we take their changeable form and environment into account.

Keywords Change, Social work, Anthropology, Organizational studies, Social marginalization, Welfare state

Paper type Research paper

1. Continuous change

I set out to explore the practice of care or help for socially marginalized citizens[1] in the Danish welfare state at the start of this twenty-first century. The original aim was to better understand the actual practice of social work[2]; that is, how it was provided, what it was that was actually provided and, if possible, how this was received. As the empirical fieldwork unfolded, however, new demands, values and ideas for the work were put forth. The care and help provided and the terms on which it was provided seemed to be changing. In the short span of approximately one year of fieldwork, several changes to the practice of social care were introduced. As I was trying to grasp how to understand and describe the social work practice, it seemed to be changing in front of me. In this paper, I wish to explore these changes, how we can understand change and changeable study objects, and how, or if, we, despite this changeable object, can seek to describe social work for socially marginalized people. In this sense, I wish to experiment with how changes can be incorporated in the analysis of the practice of social work instead of either picking a stable/frozen situation of it and describing it

solidly from there or presenting it as an ever-changing elusive practice so changeable that it cannot be described. To escape the idea that a practice which seems so changeable cannot be described successfully or becomes described so fluidly that we are left more in the dark about the study object (here the practice), than before we engaged with it. In short, to not risk denying a practice as a practice because it is experienced as changeable and therefore hard to describe. It seems that studies that have the goal of mere description have gone out of fashion in the social sciences in the past half-century (du Gay and Vikkelsø, 2017). The postmodern critique and following decline of studies that engage with mere descriptions, such as descriptions of a culture (within anthropology) (Olwig, 1994) and descriptions of an organization (within organizational studies) (du Gay and Vikkelsø, 2017) serve as examples of this. By discussing this decline and critique, I want to explore how we can insist on analyses that try to illuminate the object of study even though it is changeable.

In this paper, I therefore wish to: first, describe four types of changes, or demands for change, to the social work practice experienced during fieldwork in two Danish municipalities; and second, discuss how the social work practice, though changing, can still be described. By exploring the postmodern critique and following decline of studies that have the goal of mere descriptions in the social sciences (such as describing a culture in anthropology or an organization in organizational studies), I wish to argue how mere descriptions might still serve as a way to illuminate the object under study. Third, by applying the theories of "strategy and tactics" by phenomenologist Michel de Certeau and "social navigation" by anthropologist Henrik Vigh, I will make a preliminary attempt at analyzing how we can keep describing (an aspect of) the social work practice in the Danish welfare state even though it seemed to be changing during fieldwork.

2. Changes in public administration offices

Studies of reforms and changes in the public sector are numerous and varied highlighting different aspects of the sector and different types of reforms and changes (for instance, Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011; Bjerge, 2009; Lane, 1997; Vohnsen, 2011). During my fieldwork in two Danish municipalities between December 2015 and fall/winter of 2016, several changes in the public services for socially marginalized people were initiated or were already taking place. Changes ranged from smaller local changes in one municipal office, through larger reforms affecting several municipal departments, to implementation of national legal reforms affecting all Danish municipalities. These changes, to a lesser or greater extent, were aimed at affecting socially marginalized people's behavior and attitudes, at changing the kinds of services delivered to socially marginalized people or at the service delivery praxis itself.

I observed these changes while conducting fieldwork in two public services that provided help in accordance with the laws of social and employment affairs in Denmark. I conducted fieldwork in these two services, choosing to follow: a social affairs department that tried to help socially marginalized people through a special employment program for users that accommodated their intoxication and abuse of drugs/alcohol, symptoms of mental illness, attendance difficulties, managing a workplace-setting with colleagues, etc.; and a municipal employment authority which provided help for socially marginalized youth to enter education or employment and, at the same time, handling other social problems such as homelessness, mental illness, drug/alcohol abuse, etc. which was perceived as standing in the way of this. I experienced these efforts by participating during normal working hours (most often circa 08:00-16:00) and by interviewing the employees, a few of the users and other actors that provided help for this group of people (for instance, employees in municipal drug rehabilitation centers, psychiatric outreach care units, etc.). Some of the changes I came to experience, or heard talk about, concerned a new law, a new municipal strategy, a new organizational structure and what appeared to be the dismissal of a certain

value or goal for the practice of social work. Some changes were already in the making and some were communicated as in the making. In this case, the different types of change included: organizational changes; legal changes; changes due to new municipal strategies; and changes in popular public sentiments and resentments. Below, I wish to elucidate the four types of changes and to use them as a starting point to experiment with ways of understanding change and how to describe "study objects" that change.

2.1 New organizational layout

On the notice board next to the desk of the social worker sits a quote, wrongly ascribed to Gaius Petronius, a public servant of the Roman Emperor Nero, which goes something along these lines: "We worked hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to succeed, plans for reorganization were initiated. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralization." I have seen this quote in different forms in several public administration offices, both municipal and national. Even though this quote cannot be attributed to this public servant of the Roman Emperor, the statement seems to tell a common story of change in public administration.

Some of the more experienced public administrators would sometimes reflect on these changes aloud to me. In an after work talk one day, for instance, the deputy head of a municipal department, supplying social services for socially marginalized people in one of Denmark's most populous cities, thought aloud along these lines:

> It seems that we reorganize every three to four years. Each time, we call the changes something new but, in reality, they are not as new as they sound. We reorganize, but then change it back some years later. I have come to recognize these changes now, even though they are called by a different name, because I have worked here so long. It seems they want to reorganize themselves out of certain problems, but every reorganization creates other challenges and, after a while, you come to recognize the kind of problems that come with each reorganisation and you think to yourself, but we have already tried this way of organizing our work.

She described how the organization kept demanding new organizational layouts and how, in the end, she came to recognize these changes, despite the different names they were given, as something they had already tried, more or less. These changes would cause new departments to be formed, for instance, and new working procedures, in the sense of where a service user might be referred to and which department would be responsible for what. The social work itself might, in this case, not be affected, but the framing of the work and who had an influence on it (that is to say, who set out the priorities for the work) could change. This type of change was often proposed from within local units themselves, or from a higher level within the municipality. The social workers, who provided the actual social care and assistance, appeared not to be involved in developing these change proposals. Instead, they heard about it after the new organizational layout was in the making. Much as we heard in the account of the deputy head, they appeared to be changes that shaped the layout of their work practice but not something they actively called for themselves. In this way, the changes were local but often formulated on a different level than that of the front line staff.

A second change, I experienced was at a national level and was driven by legal changes. It demanded action, within a specified timeframe, from the front line social work staff since all socially marginalized citizens were affected by it.

2.2 New bill

In April 2016, a new bill was scheduled for its final reading in the Danish Parliament. The bill was intended to motivate recipients of social security to get a job or to "get closer to

the 'Danish labor market" by requiring that they work 225 hours a year in order to keep their current social security allowances or face receiving a reduced level. The monthly allowance, it was estimated, would be reduced by about one-fifth or one-sixth of their current social security, depending on the recipient's civil status, the number of children, etc. The two largest Danish municipalities, where I conducted my fieldwork, were already aware of the law and its possible consequences for their citizens on benefit before its passing in Parliament or that is, front line staff became aware of the consequences of the bill before it was passed.

On my introductory day in the laundry workshop of a social employment center for socially marginalized people, situated in a compound of homeless shelters and a drop-in center, a social worker was providing help for a group of service users. I was introduced to the daily work and the social employment center in general. The social worker in charge of the workshop was helping a group of three to eight people with their day-to-day problems, trying to motivate them to turn up at the social employment, setting goals such as having some meaningful hours of occupation and perhaps reducing drug and/or alcohol abuse, symptoms of mental illness, etc. The social worker seemed to use their own motivation to show up and, from there, gain influence to help them with their problems.

A few days after my initial meeting in the laundry workshop, the social worker approached the manager of the social employment center. A man who worked in the workshop had received news of this new bill, which might affect his monthly disposable income. He had received advice from his local employment office to try and obtain a job as quickly as possible because this bill, if passed, might reduce his monthly pay if he did not work 225 hours a year. He had retold the story to the social worker in the laundry workshop where he worked and asked her for help. She did not know of this law, had never heard of it and did not know what to do. The deputy manager had received news of the bill, but did not know the effect of it yet or how to interpret it. The same afternoon, however, two staff members from the local municipal employment authority were scheduled to attend a meeting concerning some other issues and the manager promised to check up on the law and its consequences for the users of the workshops. I was able to gain access to the meeting and there followed a longer discussion of the bill and its possible consequences for the recipients of social security in the social employment service, and the social workers in the municipality in general. It turned out that the law would, in all probability, be passed in April, come into effect in July, but might have a retrospective effect, since the 225 hours might be counted from October last year. Citizens with social problems, such as severe drug/alcohol addiction and/or severe mental problems, might be excluded from the provisions of the law, however. They might, therefore, be unaffected by it all. But on this day, February 24, 2016, no one knew which criteria would be used for exemption from the law and no one was able to know the law for certain, because it had not been passed.

The manager and deputy manager debated how to handle this new situation for the citizens attending the social employment program. They knew they were very concerned about their economic situation and many were in an vulnerable position, some having debts, problems with drug/alcohol abuse and of keeping abstinences at bay, difficulties paying their rent or having problems accessing the housing market because of their already low monthly allowance. Many were very stressed about their economic situation and the manager was under the impression that a lowering would most probably only aggravate their level of stress in their everyday life. The manager and deputy manager debated whether they were to advise all workshop managers to work as hard as possible to push their users into part-time jobs or trainee positions to gain the 225 hours a year in order to keep their current social security level, or just keep on providing social support as usual by working with the individuals' own motivation and daily problems, hoping that the users would be exempted from the law because of their social situation.

The manager of the social employment center asked the deputy manager of the employment center how best to advise his social workers and users in the workshops. Should they put more pressure on the users to get a job, even though this was against their normal method of trying to work with the users' own motivation to better their situation? However, the deputy manager of the employment service did not know how to guide the manager. They had no knowledge of what the law might entail, or even whether the law would actually come into effect[3]. They ran the risk of the users being categorized as too well if they got a job or trainee position. As a result, they might not be exempted from the law because of their defined social problems and would instead be required to continue working for the 225 hours each year, which they might not be able to fulfill in the long run[4].

The vice manager had to report back to the social workers in the workshops that it was not possible for them to know the effects of the law and that they did not know if the users of the workshops might be exempt from it. He decided to wait for the passing of the law and not to change their social work praxis, hoping no users would be negatively affected by its inception.

In this case, the practice of social work was not altered, but the presence of the bill called for a re-evaluation of the practices, in some way or another, to avoid what was perceived as possible damaging reductions of the users' social security allowances. As a consequence, the social workers had to re-evaluate their current practice that is of supporting users in line with their own wishes and their conditions and instead try to encourage, pressurize or force the individual users into work.

These changes, arising from changes to national laws, were powerful ones that affected social workers in all municipalities across the nation at the same time. Other changes had a less strict timeframe and arose locally from new ideas, for instance, as to how to tackle unemployment through a new municipal employment strategy.

2.3 New municipal employment strategy

At a three day new-employee introduction program in the municipal employment authority I was attending, the head of the human resources department explained to the new employees that the department was working with a new paradigm which they had named "from caseworker to job consultant." He explained that, in future, employees in the municipality were to perceive their job more as consultants, who are coaching or guiding citizens toward employment or education, than as caseworkers, who simply "handle the citizens' cases." In the past, the priority for employees had been to understand the laws thoroughly, almost to the point of being able to recite them verbatim, and to have a profound knowledge of proper conduct in casework, due process, etc. This would now be regarded as less important than the employee's individual strategies and skills in helping citizens into employment or education as set out in the local authority's guidelines. He described a change where employees were rather to view themselves as consultants, guiding, coaching and empowering citizens. The future of helping unemployed people into work would, therefore, rest on individual coaching techniques. In this sense, he described how knowledge of the law, handling of cases in accordance with the rule of law, though still necessary, would be viewed as less important tools than personal skills in the actual practice of helping people into work itself. He mused aloud about how the development would probably result in an environment where formal professional or vocational skills and qualifications were less important than having personal drive and flair. By way of analogy, the past metaphor for the ideal worker who were so proficient in the law that she could be woken at 5 a.m. and recite the law and the amendments in Schutz (the IT system for handling new laws and adjudications) would no longer serve as example of the ideal caseworker.

This shift in paradigm and attitude toward casework was not only aimed at new employees but was also disseminated to experienced workers in the other offices of the

employment authority. The experienced workers told me that all employees had to attend a course aimed at changing their practices "from caseworker to job consultant." At the small municipal unit in which I did my fieldwork, employees said the manager had asked for attendance charts from the course provider to make sure all employees had attended. One employee recounted how the manager had spoken with her because her name was not on the attendance list. Every employee had to fulfill the course and, in this way, know the new priorities (and titles) of their job.

By describing the field of social work differently, new visions concerning social work in the departments of the employment authority were formulated. These were communicated and tried implemented through mandatory courses and new introduction programs for the employees. In effect, new priorities were set for interactions between social workers and citizens. New municipal visions, about how best to help citizens into employment, demanded a different take on how to perform the casework practice itself. In this sense, this type of change was instrumental more than organizational and were aimed at interfering with the services provided by front line staff directly.

Another form of change, which I experienced during fieldwork, also ended up addressing the front line work directly but stemmed from a different sphere entirely in that it seemed to be brought on by external factors, that is from actors beyond the municipality or the state. This type of change seemed to originate from research and from popular sentiments, or rather resentments, about focusing exclusively on the individual human capacity to solve problems in life and demanding the individual handle them on his own. This change seemed to be influenced by the changes in public popular debate concerning this individual focused idea, which formerly seemed to have shaped the visions of the social work prominent within one small employment authority unit I studied.

2.4 New methodological approaches

At the introductory meeting to gain access to do fieldwork in a municipal employment authority unit, the manager of the unit applied the concept and theory of "resilience," or "sturdiness,"[5] as a way to explain how he and his employees tried to help socially marginalized people fare better in their life and to handle and live with their individual social problems. In an interview with an employee of the unit, this concept was also referred to. She recounted how the employees had attended a course provided by a not-for-profit association in order to understand the concept and apply it to their work with socially marginalized people. The goal was to "boost the users resilience," giving them ways to cope with their individual problems and life situation. The concept of "resilience" seemed to have been a core concept guiding some of their work.

By the time I started fieldwork in this office, public debate and criticism of the concept had gained ground in the national media (Holmgren, 2014; Grumsen, 2016a; Mikkelsen, 2016b; Abrahamsen, 2014). The critique that originally had emerged a couple of years prior to my fieldwork started as a general popular resentment of "the culture of self-development," which was seen as promoting the aim of optimizing individual performance and the individual's life situation through "coaching and self-development techniques" (Brinkmann, 2014). This popular resentment promoted the avoidance of a culture of self-development and a critical attitude toward the idea of the individual as solely responsible for handling stressful and difficult life situations on their own (Grumsen, 2016a; Mikkelsen, 2016b; Willig, 2016). The critique came to encompass the idea of enforcing individual sturdiness as well and came to highlight skepticism toward the concept of "sturdiness" literally (Mikkelsen, 2016b; Willig, 2016). Even though this popular resentment was intended as a general critique of a culture of development originally (Brinkmann, 2014), and later a critique of work-environments that demanded sturdiness from employees in general (Willig, 2016), the vision of sturdiness as an aim in social work practice seemed to be affected by it as well.

The concept seemed less used than at the introductory meeting, and was criticized by the daily manager of the municipal unit. Employees, who at first told me they had spent time understanding and adapting to the theories of sturdiness, did not refer much to the concept in their daily work, though sometimes referring to some of the elements of the theory. In this way, the visions for the social work practice still contained residues of the theory, but this was downplayed, it seemed, by the time I got there. Social work practices, as I had wanted to describe them, seemed to a lesser extent than at the introductory meeting, to contain ideas of resilience. Instead, the ideas seemed to have given way to other visions, methodologies, approaches and concepts also used in the field.

In this sense, the public and popular debate criticizing the use of the term "resilience" and the idea of boosting the citizen's resilience seemed to interfere with the social workers' motivation to use the term. Despite initial references to the term, it almost died out entirely only a few months after it was enthusiastically applied by the manager of the department as a specific goal for their work and a positive method to be employed in work with users.

3. Adaptation or adoption of change

As seen in these four descriptions, the practice of social work met many and varied changes, prompted by a range of factors, both internal and external to the municipalities, which often seemed to originate externally from the front line staff. That is, the new practices sprang from ideas originating from other sources than the front line staff. Social workers were practicing in an environment of many changes, which to a greater or lesser extent spilled into the social work practice itself.

The question of whether the practice was changed or not, that is whether the social workers adapted the changes so they fitted with their existing practices, or adopted the changes as directly as possible by discarding old practices, varied from case to case and from caseworker to caseworker. It also varied in connection to which type of change the individual met. When reacting to the new bill, in the example I gave from one municipality, the social worker was very concerned with how to organize her practice so as to help her citizens gain the best footing when faced with this law, but the group of experienced caseworkers I was with in the other municipality did not show much use of energy on this change. Though discussing it and having a meeting about it they were not talking very worriedly of the consequences for their practice because of the new bill and seemed rather unimpressed with it being put through. One of them went to an introductory meeting about the law held by one of the municipal jurists, on what it entailed and the consequences of the law. They knew something was coming up and knew they had to engage with it in some way. But she left before the end of the meeting because she had other more pressing business and told her co-workers that they would just have to wait and see what the changes entailed. This group of, mostly experienced, social workers seemed less concerned by this new change and less put out of their daily routine by it. But then again, when negative public sentiments concerning the concept of "resilience" was gaining ground, not many of them used this concept, even though some had received training in it.

In this way, it is not possible to understand change as a constant causal factor, which results in the exact same outcome in every municipality or in every social worker. Changes occur but they cannot be understood as direct linear causations. The changes can so to speak not be seen as in a sort of architectural 1:1 model where one change can be seen causing the same practice in exactly the same way by every social worker in every municipality. Furthermore, the changes to the social work practitioners' practice cannot be viewed as a result of social workers either adopting or adapting to the changes in a linear practice of either resistance or compliance. Instead we can describe the social work practice as a practice that seem to be somewhat influenced or affected by all kinds of factors in an environment of change which the workers have to deal with in their work and which they do so in many different ways. The problem then poses itself: can we perceive of a social work

practice if changes are so heavily induced on it and if the individual social worker reacts in such varied ways to these changes? And how do you describe something, which is already in the process of changing while you are looking at it?

4. Studying objects that change

The fact that the practice of social work seems to be susceptible to forces such as a new bill, new organizational patterns, new methodological approaches, etc. might suggest that social work is not a stable practice and perhaps, therefore, that it is not possible to define and describe this practice in itself. The logical argument might be that the fact that the empirical object (the practice in this case) under study seemed to be so heavily influenced by different factors which cause it to change, that the practice itself is non-definable or even that it cannot be seen to exist as a practice on its own. In which case, we might as well give up on describing the practice as a specific practice in itself because what is the point of describing something if it changes the next second? How misleading would it be to describe something uniformly or as a stable entity or essence (a stable concrete practice) when it keeps transforming.

This problem somewhat resembles the problem of understanding and describing culture(s) and the development of the ways anthropologists came to understand cultural changes within the practice of postmodern anthropology (Olwig, 1994; Turner, 1993; Hastrup and Ramløv, 1998). The postmodern argument seems to have relied heavily on the idea that because the object (culture) are capable of change, and might do so even while we perceive it, descriptions of a culture must not produce a static and bounded picture of it but rather convey it as fluid, dynamic and in perpetual making (as changing)[6].

Anthropological understandings of culture, from the 1960's onwards, can be summarized as an idea of a bounded, communal and integrated whole which all members of society were socialized as carriers of (Olwig, 1994, p. 7). Culture was conveyed as a unity with clearly demarcated outlines or borders (Olwig, 1994, p. 7) and each culture made up its own universe of meaning, which separated it from other cultures that also had their own bounded unity and universes of meaning (Olwig, 1994). In postmodern anthropology this understanding deteriorates and an evolvement of dissolving the object starts:

> The concept of culture has so far most often been used descriptively; both in daily speech and in science-language it has referred to a certain life pattern or a set of inherited habits and perceptions. In this way, culture has a fairly imprecise content, which generally, however, is characterized by being observable. In anthropology the concern is not about *seeing* culture because its most significant quality is *coherence* rather than actual content. That is why the concept of culture is used analytically as a designation for that pattern which connects the mixed experience-data[7] (Hastrup and Ramløv, 1998, p. 8).

This evolution transforms anthropology from a study of cultural diversity and culture as content to more elusive analyses of coherences. It shifts toward analyzing ever-smaller units within "cultures," subcultures or so-called identities, or to analyzing processes instead of units, for instance processes of building identity (e.g. nationalism, ethnic groups, etc.). In a critique of multicultural understandings of culture, anthropologist Terence Turner describes how cultures ought not to be understood, and also therefore prescribes a more appropriate way to understand culture, when he describes the dangers of multicultural practices:

> It risks essentialising the idea of culture as the property of an ethnic group or race; it risks reifying cultures as separate entities by overemphasizing their boundedness and mutual distinctness; […], and by treating cultures as badges of group identity (Turner, 1993, p. 412).

This classical understanding and descriptions of culture is posed as a problem because it has reified and essentialised something that should, rather, be seen as dynamic, fluid and unbounded. As anthropologist Karen Olwig (1994) states, the anthropological endeavor of describing culture(s) as bounded, clearly demarcated units becomes criticized, deconstructed

and even given up within the field of postmodern anthropology itself (p. 7). Culture, as a concept in anthropology that is able to describe an entity, seems to be largely dispensed with or to be treated with blatant skepticism.

In a similar vein, organizational studies seem to have undergone a similar development in the past half century, though the origin of that development might arise from a different background. Sociologist Paul du Gay and Social Psychologist Signe Vikkelsø describe a process where protagonists in organizational studies also become critical toward the object of study, or of having an object of study, actually. They analyze how "organizational studies became skeptical toward what used to be its key concept and object of study" (du Gay and Vikkelsø, 2017, p. 10) such that "organization studies today is increasingly devoid of 'an object', having spent much of the last half-century actively 'disappearing' it" (du Gay and Vikkelsø, 2017, p. 52).

Just as in the field of anthropology, organizational studies have lost touch with their core object of analysis or, rather, brought forward an idea of how we should go about (not) analyzing the object (in that it cannot be perceived as such), which leaves a space for studies that are rather trying to describe processes or actions:

> The object of analysis is less the organization as a distinctive entity than ongoing, multifarious, and often ephemeral processes of "organizing". Here, organizations are never fully established, but always in the process of "becoming" tasks are not given bundles of activity to be undertaken, but the occasional result of interpretative processes; and actors are not engaged in practical, recurrent work, but in making sense of, experimenting with, and enacting in an unstable environment (du Gay and Vikkelsø, 2017, p. 77).

In this way, organization studies seems to also let go of its object of study as a distinctive entity in preference for a more fluid, dynamic and elusive object (if object at all). Instead of setting out to explore and describe empirical representations of culture(s) or organization(s), the disciplines seem caught up with an elusive empirical object and theory building which du Gay and Vikkelsø muses on as a general fate in the human and social sciences:

> Maybe this is a fate befalling not only organization studies, but other areas of human and social sciences too? Could it be that, in letting of the idea of themselves as "practical sciences" and embracing the "moment of theory", these disciplines have come to dispense with the core objects that afford them their practical relevance? Maybe in pursuit of new theoretical horizons, much work in the human and social sciences has reached an impasse in which a certain isomorphism has begun to develop; where the points and recommendations sounds remarkably alike across fields? If this is the case, […] the way forward may indeed be to revisit the core object of each discipline (du Gay and Vikkelsø, 2017, p. 149).

These developments within human and social sciences thus pose a risk to the act of describing the object under study, since we have dispersed with these objects (and concepts) by shrouding them in anti-essentialist form and, through this process, we lose an understanding of the empirical object. We risk analyzing ephemeral processes instead of what we set out for. Within anthropology the "disappearing" of description of cultures and in organization studies the "disappearing" of descriptions of organizations. The development of dismissing the analysis of a culture or an organization, and the denial of trying to grasp these as essential bounded units for analysis because we should rather perceive them as perpetually changing, unbounded, fluid and non-entities leaves us without a core object of study and the core concept. In this way, analyses that end out in descriptions of the core object are disregarded as some sort of archaic form of science. Following du Gay and Vikkelsø the solution is, however, not to dispense with the object but to return to the study and description of empirical realities and to using the concepts from, what they call, a "classical stance" once again. This, they argue, is a better way to contribute to knowledge of the object of study, instead of leaving it as

an ephemeral elusive object and theorizing about its ever-changing nature. Following this line of thought through in the field of social work, instead of declaring the practice of social work as an elusive, anti-essentialist and non-existent practice and, thereby, shrouding it in ever more mystery and risking denying the existence of the practice, the description of social work for socially marginalized people can be bounded in the empirical reality of the practice of social work, even though the object has an elusive and changeable character. Instead of refraining from creating descriptions and analyses of a certain practice because of its evolving nature, we must engage with its changeable character. But, then, how are we to understand and actually describe this changeable object?

4.1 Metaphors of change

One way to describe objects that change can perhaps be perceived through phenomenologist Michel de Certeau's (1988/1984) understanding, adapted from the military theoreticians von Bülow and von Clausewitz, of strategy and tactics and in anthropologist Henrik Vigh's (2009) work on social navigation. Inspired by de Certeau, human actions or practices can be guided or understood as a mix of strategies and tactics. In this way, the maneuvering of social workers, according to new laws passed in parliament, new organizational layout in the municipalities, new approaches spurred on by popular public sentiments or new municipal visions and strategies, can be seen as a tactical movement in the face of new strategies. Tactics are the maneuver of a body that "does not, […] have the options of planning a general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a distinct, visible and objectifiable space" (de Certeau, 1988/1984, p. 37). de Certeau states how the tactics do have a sort of mobility, that is a means and power to move, but it is "a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any moment" (de Certeau, 1988/1984). Tactics are movements made because the power of another is imposed, because of strategies already put in place. "The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power" (de Certeau, 1988/1984). The social workers can be seen as part of the system, the governmental and municipal system that make up the services to the socially marginalized people but, even so the passing of new laws in parliament, for instance, exemplifies a force that is foreign to the everyday workings of the social workers. As seen in the example from the workshop, their practice is shaped by an idea of how to help the citizens best in light of their situation, but the law poses a new idea of how to help citizens and enforces on them some deliberation and reorientation as to how to execute the work.

de Certeaus' "military" concepts, however, leave an impression of the field of social work as clouded in power and power relations, but there were also changes which seemed to stem from or address changes in public popular sentiments, such as the concept and method of "resilience." Perhaps social work practice can better be understood from a general perspective of environments susceptible to change or as an environment in perpetual motion. Through the concept of social navigation, stemming from his fieldwork among youth in Guinea-Bissau, anthropologist Henrik Vigh gives us a way to understand the environment of human practices as in perpetual movement. Based on this work, Vigh states that: "All social environments are in perpetual motion" which:

> […] forces us to tune our social-scientific gaze to practice as motion within motion. Acknowledging that for our interlocutors the social environment is not stable or static but an unfolding process requires that we analyse practice in a manner that is sensitive to the fact that strategy, tactics and practice […] are constructed and actualized in, and constantly attuned to, a shifting environment and its imagined configurations (Vigh, 2009, p. 431).

In this way, our lives are not just tactics played out to adhere to strategies of a higher power but lives lived in an ever-moving terrain or perhaps, rather, a seascape.

Vigh (2009) goes on to argue for an understanding of the social world as a metaphor from navigation rather than sedentary or terrestrial understandings, popular in the so-called "spatial turn". Instead of making use of landscape metaphors, he calls for metaphors from a seascape when understanding social settings in which people navigate:

> Invoking "navigation", we thus tacitly acknowledge that the agent is positioned within a force field which moves him and influences his possibilities of movement and positions […]. Where many social scientific illuminations of practice position people and their movement within relatively stable and solidified social settings, indicated in the words we use to describe the "ground" upon which we move – social structures, arenas, fields or landscapes – something interesting happens when invoking the concept of navigation: our analytical gaze moves toward the way people not just act in but interact with their social environment and adjust their lives to the constant influence (in potentia and presentia) of social forces and change (Vigh, 2009, p. 433).

The idea of motion within (or on) motion is not only relevant to areas of conflict or decline because:

> […] the concept of social navigation is not only restricted to West Africa or areas of political turmoil and volatility. As our social worlds are always in motion […]. Even entities as structured as Western bureaucracies can be experienced as opaque, volatile and wavering, when seen from the perspective of the people in whom the impersonal order acts (Vigh, 2009, pp. 430-431).

And, if used in this empirical field, not only citizens but also the workers within bureaucracies can experience this motion in motion. The social workers were working under conditions of perpetual motion. They were practicing within motion. Moreover, Vigh's (2009) idea of motion within motion builds up a picture of the way social environments are in perpetual motion but also of the way the pace of that motion can vary (p. 430). In this way, social work practice can fluctuate between fast paced and slower motion. In the examples, the change concerning the new bill was perhaps the most rapid one, which came with a pressing demand for change and action for the front line staff even though work on a bill in national offices often take a long time.

5. Conclusion

By describing four different types of change to the social work practice, I have tried to illuminate how that practice is influenced by a variety of factors emerging in the wider environment it is performed. More generally, the descriptions of changes to the practices of social work might serve as a starting point for experimenting with how qualitative-oriented social scientists and ethnographers, though often exploring transformative study objects such as phenomena or practices, can remain focused on descriptions of the original object of study even though it seems changeable.

By understanding the social environment as in perpetual motion, which by default expects change, we need not give up on the objects of our analysis or our core concepts though they are changing in front of us. In the social work practices, influenced by diverse changes such as a new bill, a new municipal strategy, new public sentiments and new organizational layout in the municipalities, the changes indeed seemed to be quite heavily present in the field. But these changes need not cause us to characterize the practice itself as an ever fluid and changeable practice, but rather as a practice performed in an environment of motion, which might contain elements of some stability or endurance through time. As the concepts or analysis of culture and organization as bounded entities need not be discarded because of changeable traits or a changeable environment, so social work practice might still be described. In this way, the changeable traits need not promote a renouncement of the description of practice but as a description that is sensitive to a changeable practice in an environment of motion.

Even though fields such as anthropology and organizational studies seem to rid themselves of their objects of study (culture and organization, respectively) and

dissociate themselves from descriptions thereof, these objects, and their description, might still be of value to us. Even though the objects of study in postmodern anthropology and organizational studies are defined as unbounded, anti-essential, ephemeral and ever-changing non-objects, this might not be the entire picture. Through the theories of "Social Navigation" (Vigh, 2009) and "Strategy and Tactics" (de Certeau, 1988/1984), the practice of social work can be described as a specific actual bounded practice which, however, is performed within a transformative environment that is capable of influencing it. Despite its ever-changing shape, we might still be able to study and describe it if we take its changeable form and environment into account.

Notes

1. I use the term "socially marginalized citizens," "users" and "socially marginalized people" to cover the citizens with complex social problems such as mixture of drug/alcohol abuse, mental illness and unemployment that receive social services from the municipality.

2. I use the term social care and social work intermittently as I perceive these two types of work as interchangeable or as minor differences in practice. However, the type of work will, in the Danish practice, often be of two different sorts; of first, an assessment of the social or unemployment problems and a determination of which services to provide (often described as casework), and second, in a social care practice that involves the execution of the actual services to the socially marginalized citizens (often described as social care). For the type of argument in this paper, it matters not where we place the analytical level of reflection and the two practices are used interchangeably.

3. At this point, the Danish umbrella organization of disabled groups was heavily criticizing the new law and several amendments had already been made. Furthermore, a scandal concerning an agricultural reform had resulted in a vote of no confidence to the minister of the environment, threatening the prime minister's credibility and raising the prospect of an early election, thereby risks canceling of all new bills, including the law concerning the 225-hour rule.

4. Several social workers told me that based on their year-long experiences with the socially marginalized people they worked with indicated that only one to two persons out of a 100 was able to get an ordinary job. And that some of these only held it for a while and returned to the special social employment service again afterwards. Furthermore, their experience from the social employment service was that, on average, a normal full-time workload of an ordinary employee could be handled by circa ten people with social problems. That was the extent of their social problems in connection to their capability of handling an ordinary full-time workload..

5. In Danish: Robusthed.

6. An argument which seems rather strange since many classical works in anthropology mentions cultural developments or adaptations such as E.E. Evans-Pritchards (1940) descriptions of "The Nuer."

7. Translated from Danish: "Kulturbegrebet har hidtil oftest været brugt deskriptivt; både i daglig tale og i videnskabssproget har det henvist til et bestemt livsmønster eller et sæt af nedarvede vaner og forestillinger. I den betydning har kultur et temmelig upræcist indhold, som dog generelt er karakteriseret ved at kunne iagttages. I antropologien drejer det sig ikke om at *se* kultur, fordi dens væsentligste kvalitet er *sammenhæng* snarere end konkret indhold. Derfor bruges kulturbegrebet analytisk som en betegnelse for det mønster, som forbinder de blandede erfaringsdata" (Hastrup and Ramløv, 1998, p. 8).

References

Abrahamsen, S. (2014), "Hold op med at mærke efter i dig selv", available at: www.information.dk/kultur/2014/09/hold-maerke (accessed April 6, 2017).

Bjerge, B.B. (2009), "Mellem vision og praksis: Strukturreformen, rusmiddelbureaukrati og new public management", Københavns Universitet, København.

Brinkmann, S. (2014), "Stå fast. Et opgør med tidens udviklingstvang, Gyldendal Business, København".

de Certeau, M. (1988/1984), *The Practices of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, CA.

du Gay, P. and Vikkelsø, S. (2017), *For Formal Organization: The Past in the Present and Future of Organization Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1940), *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Grumsen, N. (2016a), "Forskere: Robusthed er et modeord", available at: www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/robusthed-er-et-misforstaaet-modeord (accessed April 6, 2017).

Hastrup, K. and Ramløv, K. (1998), *Kulturanalyse. Fortolkningens forløb i antropologien*, Akademisk Forlag, Copenhagen.

Holmgren, A. (2014), "Psykolog udgiver genial bog om at afvikle udviklingen", available at: http://politiken.dk/kultur/boger/faglitteratur_boger/art5544103/Psykolog-udgiver-genial-bog-om-at-afvikle-udviklingen (accessed April 6, 2017).

Lane, J.-E. (Ed.) (1997), *Public Sector Reform: Rationale, Trends and Problems*, Sage Publications, London.

Mikkelsen, M. (2016b), "Rasmus Willig: Ikke mere brok. Fremtidens medarbejder skal være robust", available at: www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kultur/ikke-mere-brok-nu-skal-vi-alle-vaere-robuste (accessed April 6, 2017).

Olwig, K.F. (1994), *Kulturel kompleksistet in: Komplekse liv. Kulturel mangfoldighed i Danmark*, Akademisk Forlag, Copenhagen.

Pollitt, C. and Bouckaert, G. (2011), *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Turner, T. (1993), "Anthropology and multiculturalism: what is anthropology that multiculturalists should be mindful of it?", *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 8 No. 4, pp. 411-429.

Vigh, H. (2009), "Motion squared: a second look at the concept of social navigation", *Anthropological Theory*, Vol. 9 No. 4, pp. 419-438.

Vohnsen, N.H. (2011), *Absurdity and the Sensible Decision. Implementation of Danish Labour Market Policy*, Aarhus University, Aarhus.

Willig, R. (2016), *Afvæbnet kritik*, Hans Reitzel, Copenhagen.

Corresponding author
Louise Christensen can be contacted at: lc.crf@psy.au.dk

Entanglements

An exploration of the phenomenon of social marginalisation and social work for socially marginalised people

Abstract

Based on ethnographic fieldwork among social work practitioners and socially marginalised people in two Danish municipalities, this article investigates social marginalisation and the social work practise. In anthropological and qualitative sociological analyses from the mid 1980s and on, welfare state practises, such as social work practises have often been dealt with and analysed through the lens of interactionism. As such, these studies have paid primary attention to the meeting between service users and service providers contributing with detailed descriptions of the speech, bodily comportments, actions and near observable material conditions the meetings are being held in and less on the larger context. In this article, my aim is to reverse this tendency by adding a dense description of external contextual forces that are not directly observable in the encounter between service provider and user but which, I argue, inform an important part of the encounter and the general social services provided. Further, I engage with the critique of the application of structure in social scientific analyses and the call for 'assemblic ethnography' (Zigon 2015) or 'assemblage thinking' (C. Duff 2016) in order to contribute to the ongoing debate on the role of context in the social sciences

Key-words: Social work (practices), Social marginalisation, interactionism, context, structure, welfare state.

- Introduction -

In this paper, I explore the phenomenon of social marginalisation and the social work practice towards people who are experiencing social marginalisation such as homelessness in order to extend our understanding of these and contribute to the ongoing debates of the role of context in the analyses of welfare state practices in particular and in the social sciences in general. In this article, I particularly engage with the dominant tendency to ground analyses of social work practices in an interactionist focus on the meeting between service provider (social workers) and service user (socially marginalised person).

The definition of social marginalisation and social work (practice) is undoubtedly difficult (for discussions of the concept of social marginalisation see: (see for instance; (Abrahamson 1998a, 1998b; Christensen 2011)) and for social work: (Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009)). Most researchers and policy-makers in the field of social marginalization (also categorised as social exclusion) agree that social marginalisation is only difficultly defined (for instance, (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte 2010; Benjaminsen et al. 2017)), and a full description of social work is also difficult as it spans a vast area of practices, target groups and ideals

1

(Meeuwisse, Sunesson, and Swärd 2009). Here, I refer to social marginalisation as the people who experience seclusion from, or an inability to make use of, societal institutions broadly defined who are also often experiencing a mixture of homelessness, mental illness and dependency on drug/alcohol use. I am referring to social work as the practice of the general population of people who are employed to deliver social services of various types to the group of socially marginalised people mentioned above.

Since the mid-1980s anthropological and qualitative sociological analyses of welfare state practices, such as social work practices, have often been analysed through the lens of interactionism and the theme of governmentality (Miller and Rose 2013). Thus, these studies have paid primary attention to the meeting or encounter between users of services and providers of services offering detailed descriptions of the speech, bodily comportments, actions and near observable material conditions in which the meetings are being held and less on the larger context in which these interactions are taking place. In this article, my main aim is to reverse this tendency by adding a dense description of external contextual forces that are not directly observable in the encounter between service provider and user but which, I argue, inform an important part of the encounter and for the general social services provided.

By applying a dense description of certain structural conditions, I wish to describe how structural conditions and individual lives connect and solidify in certain ways and how the intimate individually lived lives of people who are socially marginalised mix with structural conditions that these lives are lived in and through. By persistently and continuously connecting the intimate lived experiences of individually socially marginalised people with political, economic and historical settings in the Danish welfare state, I wish to elucidate how social marginalisation as a phenomenon is manifested and played out. The central aim of this article is, therefore, to persistently elucidate relations between large-scale national and local societal conditions and forces in connection to individual ways of being in order to elucidate the phenomenon of social marginalisation in one of the world's most comprehensive welfare states and wealthiest nations in the world and the implications this has for the social work practice. Thus, I seek to reverse the more common popular descriptions of welfare state practices which privilege individual actions between service provider and service user in

order to experiment with an ethnography that privileges the structural conditions of social marginalisation and its implication for the social work practice.

Finally, I engage with the critique of the concept of 'structure' and the division of 'structure and agency' in the social sciences and the call for a development, use and application of 'assemblages' (C. Duff 2011, 2016; Zigon 2015) as these prove highly popular in the social sciences of today. I engage with the trenchant critiques of the division of context and agency in social scientific analyses and the call for application of 'assemblages' instead to capture elements in the field such as affects, atmospheres and emotions. Thus, I seek to discuss the popular tendency to discard the concept of structure in favour of the concept of assemblage but ask whether this in actuality provides us so much more knowledge of societal practices and phenomena.

- Methodology -

This paper is based on data from ca. one year of participant observation and ca. 50 interviews with service providers and service users in two public service units in the two most populous municipalities in Denmark, Copenhagen and Aarhus, from December 2016 to October 2017. One unit organised under the municipal employment authority strove to help young people between 18-30 years to gain employment in the ordinary labour market or/and education. Besides unemployment, these youths experienced various social problems such as homelessness, mental illness, dependency on drug/alcohol, disrupted families etc. The other unit was organised under the municipal social affairs department and seeks to help people between 18-65 years gain access to the ordinary labour market. Users were mostly middle-aged or older men experiencing various social problems such as homelessness, dependency on drugs/alcohol, mental illness, physical illness, criminal charges, prostitution etc. The service providers were mostly of Danish origin, had different lengths of professional experience ranging from more than 25 years of experience with delivering social services to newly hired employees, and they had different educational backgrounds ranging from social workers, pedagogues, a few academics and, in the workshops: carpenters, bicycle mechanics etc. with or without further pedagogical or social work training.

Participant observation took place during the scheduled workday of the service providers (approximately from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.) in the office spaces, workshops and communal teaching facilities in the two units following the service providers and service users during their day. I interviewed service providers in the two units, a few of the users and other key actors in the two municipalities that provided services for this group such as employees and managers in drug rehabilitation and treatment centers, health clinics, social service units, psychiatric units etc. Data for this analysis is illustrated mostly through the Copenhagen material as the length of this article does not allow enough space to provide details from both municipal units.

Studying context is a difficult and time-consuming endeavour. By studying documents and written material on the contextual conditions, I gained insight into the material, economic and institutional forces that surround the daily life of socially marginalised people and, therefore, also the daily work life of social workers at this specific setting and point in time. The method of prioritizing contextual factors by gaining an understanding of them through policy papers, government reports, research reports, quantitative data etc. (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Hammersley and Atkinson 2010; Shore, Wright, and Però 2011) made it possible to incorporate more of the context into the human encounter between service provider and service user. Thus, by analysing documents, it is possible to gain insight into which policies, material, economic and institutional settings surround or is embedded or mixed in a certain field and, through participant observation, then to link how these structural conditions intermix in the daily lives of socially marginalised people and the workday of social workers.

- Theoretical Foundation -

Qualitative analyses of welfare state practices such as social work practices are, in contemporary social science, often analysed through the lens of interactionism. This seems to be both a symptom of *theoretical inspirations* such as the popularity of symbolic interactionism, labelling theory and social constructionism but also on the *methodological conditions and premises* of participant observation and interviews in qualitative studies (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Hammersley and Atkinson 2010) with a heavy focus on human action (O'Neill 2017a) (which I describe further below).

The perspective of interactionism is prevalent in anthropological and qualitative sociological analyses of welfare state practices up through the 1980-1990s and to this day (see for instance, (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2013; Matarese and Caswell 2018; Andersen 2014; Järvinen and Andersen 2009; Mik-Meyer 2005; Fahnøe 2016; Matarese and Nijnatten 2015; Smith 2011; Gubrium and Holstein 2000) and, for a critique of the Danish context, see (Uggerhøj and Ebsen 2014)). These studies have paid primary attention to the meeting and encounters between users of services and providers of services offering detailed descriptions of speech, bodily comportments, actions and near observable material conditions in these meetings. As such we have rich descriptions of the close encounter between service provider and client even in very close details such as how words and the pauses between words are manifesting themselves in the conversation between the service provider and user (for instance, (Matarese and Caswell 2018)), service providers' laughter (Mik-Meyer 2005) etc. By focusing close attention to the encounter, these studies have given us insight into diverse aspects and effects of these meetings though providing less attention to the specific larger and local context these meetings are being held in.

Though many studies of an interactionist bend do incorporate descriptions of contextual conditions, their main focus is heavily on human interaction. The contextual conditions are manytimes not organically incorporated into the analyses but are left in a prefix or suffix to the analyses themselves or take up only a small part. Therefore, there is a tendency to describe structural and contextual forces in a part on their own and/or in more abstract or general terms such as through concepts like neo-liberalism, diverse policies etc. It has been argued that many analyses "describe a series of structural forces that remain forever "outside" the contextual field, originating elsewhere and powered by unfamiliar and seemingly incomprehensible historical processes" (D. C. Duff 2007, 505). These conditions are for example described as economic, managerial, gender-based, consumerist, neo-capitalist and so on. When context is defined in relation to a familiar matrix of broad structural conditions such as social, economic and political forces, "the specific local characteristics of context tend to remain obscured" (Katz [2002] in: D. C. Duff 2007, 505). In this sense, the structural conditions are deemed relevant, but it is less clear in what specific ways they connect to individually lived lives thus leaving these elements out of our understanding of the

social work practice and of social marginalisation. That is, it is "not immediately clear how the forces of social change, commodification, gender and sexual identity formation, politics, class and so on differentially impact on specific local contexts" (Katz [2002] in: D. C. Duff 2007, 506).

Besides the popularity of studying welfare state practices through interactionism, a further addition to this interactionist focus on encounters might lie in the methodological conditions and possibilities that participant observation and interviews give. Because participant observation is "attuned to observations of individuals in action; it tends to miss the structures of power and of historical context because these have immediate visibility in the heat of the moment" (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009, 33). This is sometimes also described as being "less ethnographically visible" (Farmer 2004). As such, the focus on interactions provides an easier and more obvious route for analysis than the less visible and complex changeable surroundings these actions are done from, in or with. In this sense, participant observation only poorly, if at all, captures the historical and contemporary societal conditions that actions are part of. Larger societal forces and conditions risk being left out of the analyses in favour of near descriptions of the meetings or they are ascribed to a contextual chapter in the analysis or as "some vague notion of background, culture or setting" (D. C. Duff 2007, 504). In this sense, the everyday contextual conditions, possibilities and influences of structural forces, which might be relevant for the actions and speech in the encounters, risk being left underexplored.

The favouring of human interaction and action is, however, not solely a methodological problem as many classic works in ethnography do provide a solid focus on societal contexts, conditions, and forces (see for instance, (Evans-Pritchard 1950; Malinowski 1922)). The privileging of human agency is, perhaps, also inscribed in a tendency to foreground action even though interlocutors might claim the reverse or even though this human agency is only showing itself partially through otherwise inactive and uneventful days (O'Neill 2017a, 2017b). Descriptions of actions such as building shelter, collecting bottles, street vending etc. might be foregrounded whereas endless hours of doing nothing; sitting on a bench, in line to a soup-kitchen etc. are not. It seems "the ethnographic move to foreground productive agency has a way of obscuring deeply felt emic concerns about a growing set of practices that are not,

or are no longer, happening, particularly among the economically vulnerable" (O'Neill 2017b, 25). Ethnographies of contemporary times tend to foreground and portray an active, creative subject. It seems many analyses are "bend towards optimism by reframing (maybe even rescuing) those claiming to be "doing nothing" as actually active and even creative" (O'Neill 2017b, 25). Many socially marginalised people might experience their daily life as inactive and uneventful, so by striving to present social reality in action, we risk overexposing human actions and forgetting to portray inactivity, paralysis, ennui, purposelessness, un-creativity and boredom.

There are many things to gain from focusing on and giving near-sighted descriptions of the close encounter, but here I wish to experiment with what we might learn from applying as thick descriptions of the less visible structural and contextual forces surrounding and entangling in the meeting between service provider and user. Thus, I wish to experiment with what we might learn from having as thick descriptions of the less visible structural forces that are not verbalised in the encounters but which, I argue, exert a very tangible force in the encounter, and in the general social work practice and socially marginalised people's lives. Thus, this paper is not a call for non-interactionist accounts or for an obliteration of these but an experimentation of what an analysis that reverses these accounts and instead applies a heavy focus on the less visible structural conditions can do for our understanding of social work practices and social marginalisation. Here, I present the theme of lack of, or unstable, housing as that was one of the common problems for people in the field and as the role of housing and home play an important part in Danish society and for the Danish population in general (Vacher 2006), and through participant observation, it became clear that it also served as an important part of socially marginalised people's lives. However, other themes such as health (somatic and psychiatric), crime, mental illness, unemployment, ethnicity, prostitution etc. could also have served as important entryways into illustrating how social marginalisation is a phenomenon that mixes certain structural forces, conditions and common sensibilities and values in society with individual lives.

Lack of, or unstable, housing

At the bike-mechanic workshop on the shelter compound managed by the municipality, Rafiq tosses an oil-stained cloth at the ground and fixes me with frustrated eyes. He is not himself today. He is usually talkative, joking and energetic to the point of restlessness. Today, he is quiet and arrives a couple of hours too late. He normally arrives on time early in the morning and engages with almost everyone entering the mechanic workshop throughout the day, but today, he keeps to himself and, apart from the outburst, is rather subdued. He usually messes with me and the other people there and often in a too quick or subtle way for anyone to have a good reply. He will frequently visit people in the other workshops at the compound comprising two shelters, a drop-in facility and medical clinic for homeless people. Today, however, he seems discouraged. After a while, the workshop employee (trained bicycle-mechanic) and I, realise the problem. He has received yet another neighbour complaint for making too much noise in his apartment. He tells us it affects him and that he does not want to slip back into having to live in a shelter again. The workshop employee tries to comfort him and tries to get a scope of the problem. This is his second (or did he say third?) complaint. Rafiq attributes the problem to his neighbour. He is racist, he says, as if this ends all further discussion. The neighbour bangs on the pipes and the walls telling him to be quiet. Rafiq claims he cannot even watch TV because it upsets the neighbour, or have visitors, he exclaims frustratingly. The employee asks whether he had visitors last night. Yeah, he sometimes has visitors and he also had last night but they had just been talking Rafiq retorts back in a defensive manner. 'Why do I have to sit all still and quietly in an apartment because my neighbour is oversensitive to noise and sits there all quietly by himself every night just watching TV', he seems to indicate. The employee advises him to 'keep his path clean' and keep quiet in the evening. Even though his neighbour is acting unfairly, it is Rafiq who risks losing his apartment, he warns him. Rafiq already knows this, and it stresses him. In an earlier complaint, the neighbour stated that he had already gathered signatures from all other residents of the housing units and sent it to the management of the social housing unit. Rafiq dreads having to go back to shelter life again and having to give up his apartment.

Rafiq lives in one of Denmark's approximately 750,000 social housing units (Kiørboe and Zarrehparvar 2017, 24) comprising ca. 550,000 homes (Landsbyggefonden 2014, 8). He is, therefore, one of the approximately 960,000 Danish people living in social housing (ibid.) and making him one of the ca. one in five who live in social housing in Denmark (ibid.). I can not determine whether he is happy about this place or not. Some days he talks about wanting to move to another social housing unit in another outskirt of the city where he has some friends. Other times, he says he is happy living there because it is more secluded, and he does not get as many visitors. However, when threatened with eviction because of a neighbour's complaint, it is obvious that the alternative of living at a shelter frustrates and perhaps even frightens him. The Danish housing market can be characterised as a tripartite-division in owner-occupied housing, cooperative housing and a rental market (divided between a private rental market and a public rental market through social housing associations) (Kiørboe and Zarrehparvar 2017, 14; Institut for Menneskerettigheder 2015). Housing associations have, since the mid-18th century, been part of the Danish housing market with the aim first of providing more sanitary conditions for people living in destitution in the overcrowded city (Landsbyggefonden 2014, 23), then later also with the aim of providing affordable housing for people with a lower income (ibid.). The first buildings were erected by the Danish medical association and later continued by the state through an arrangement with different social housing associations (ibid.). The social housing units were once meant as clean, green spaces clearly demarcated and protected from the rest of the city (some restricted access by cars thus making children's play more free). However, many have later come to symbolise destitute and impoverished areas (especially the ones that have been demarcated as 'ghettos' to which different Danish governments have tried to improve conditions or, with the current government, talked of their demolition (Løkke 2018)). In Denmark, there is no right to housing by law, but government policies see to it, through the municipalities and social housing associations, that people in need might be able to get help to get into housing. It is up to the municipality, which often has set up a special social housing unit, to decide to whom they will distribute the houses, and citizens have no way of appealing being either removed from or added to the list (Kiørboe and Zarrehparvar 2017; Institut for Menneskerettigheder 2015). Social housing units keep a fairly low rental price and the municipality in which the houses are situated has a right to assign circa every fourth apartment to people they deem in need of one. In this way, people who have social problems and who might also have

difficulties finding housing on their own can obtain housing through the municipality. However, some municipalities are forced to return the housing units offered by the housing associations as the rent is too high for their citizens to afford (Statsrevisorerne 2016, 34). Further, some municipalities, experience a much higher demand than there are apartments available. In Copenhagen, at the shelter compound, it was said that you had to wait about a year to get into housing, sometimes longer.

Rafiq and other formerly homeless people at the shelter compound who used to live in rural areas would sometimes tell me of life outside the city. 'Everything closed at 18 o'clock', one reminisces to me with a look that seems to indicate the tragedy of that place and as if this sentence need no further explanation. For whatever reason, the highest concentration of homeless people is gathered in the two largest Danish cities (Benjaminsen 2017) but housing in the larger Danish cities can in general be characterised as much coveted and sought-after; a tendency found in the rest of the worlds' cities[1] (UN 2014). People continuously strive for housing in the cities, which affects socially marginalised people's opportunities to live in the larger Danish cities. From 2006 to 2013, the population in the three largest residential areas: Aarhus, Odense and the greater Copenhagen capital-area, has increased by 37% (Landsbyggefonden 2014, 17). Furthermore, the private rental market has seen an increase in rent since the law makes it possible for landlords to increase the rent after renovation (LLO 2015). The Danish Renters Association explored the number of renovations in the private rental market and estimated that about 42,000 of the 188,000 private rental apartments (landlords with more than six rental homes) had been renovated over the last 10 years (Lejernes Landsorganisation 2017b). The Renters Association reported a 32% increase in rent between 2012-2016 in the Copenhagen capital area (Lejernes Landsorganisation 2017a). This leaves fewer options for people with low income (and income levels have for some groups of unemployed decreased further because of new national unemployment reforms (Kiørboe and Zarrehparvar 2017, 137)). An assessment of the general housing situation in the private and public rental market in Denmark in 2013 found a 55% decrease in number of housing units with a rent 3000 d.kr. pr. month, a decrease of 27% for housing units with a

---

[1] The urban population of the world has grown rapidly from 746 million in 1950 to 3.9 billion in 2014 (UN 2014: retrieved the 12th of January 2018 at http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/world-urbanization-prospects-2014.html)

[2] Housing through shelters is quite expensive for the municipalities (in 2013 the lowest pay was 473 d.kr. pr. day and the

rent between 3-4000 d.kr. pr. month while housing above 4000 d.kr. pr. month has increased with 71% (Statsrevisorerne 2016, 37). All in all, this leads to a very rigid, exclusive and hard-to-get-into housing market. These are factors that Rafiq would not mention to me but which he had experienced and, therefore, knew the effects of, leading to despair as he saw his only options as living on the street or in a shelter if he lost his apartment.

Besides the conditions in the Danish housing market, social policies also interfere with the housing conditions for Rafiq and other socially marginalised people. Since the advent of the national Danish homeless strategy in 2009 (Rambøll and SFI 2013) and newer parliamentary calls and prioritisations of social policies being based on evidence-based methods and results, American 'invented' social services methods such as ACT, CTI and CM have made their entry into the Danish social services landscape in a number of Danish municipalities (Rambøll and SFI 2013) as well as the principle of 'housing first' (Tsemberis 2010, 2014). Housing first states the intention of providing housing to homeless people right away and most often with social assistance to manage a living also provided. In this way, the more conventional way of having the user prove his abstention from drugs and alcohol or a certain satisfactory show-up frequency is side-tracked by providing housing straight away (Tsemberis 2010, 2014). The methods of ACT, CTI and CM are adopted from the US, though the models show less effect in European countries, which in various ways try to lend assistance to homeless people with social, mental and health problems.

Shelter stay, according to the national Danish Social Act, was never meant as a permanent housing solution, though earlier times witnessed cases of people living in shelters for many years, some for more than 10 years (Copenhagen municipality 2014, Personal communication) and still today experience homeless people who stay at a shelter for more than a year (Statsrevisorerne 2016). However, the Danish homeless strategy's focus on shortening the length of shelter stay to a maximum of three-four months became a priority (Rambøll and SFI 2013), and it seems some municipalities became more profoundly aware, of the heavy cost of sheltering their citizens[2]. Some municipalities would go through cases systematically with citizens who had stayed for more than a year in a shelter and engage with

---

[2] Housing through shelters is quite expensive for the municipalities (in 2013 the lowest pay was 473 d.kr. pr. day and the highest at 8308 d.kr. pr. day (Statsrevisorerne 2016) with the possibility of a 50% reduction from the state.

shelter staff to provide housing for them. In this way, the political goal of 'housing first' (though for most municipalities including Copenhagen, not implemented as the general housing policy) increased the focus of getting people into housing whereby socially marginalised people would be sought to be housed as quickly as possible to the benefit of Rafiq for instance. However, not all homeless people preferred housing. Some preferred the sheltered life and did not want to stay alone in their homes, seeking instead the streets, drop-in centers, friends and acquaintances or shelters (personal communication)[3]. Besides the housing policies, social service policy, and unemployment reforms, the so-called global refugee crisis might also exact a toll on the housing market. Municipalities are by law obligated to secure housing to the amount of refugees allocated to the municipality (Institut for Menneskerettigheder 2015, 15) and if no other housing is available, municipalities might have to make use of the social housing units, thereby leaving even fewer low-income homes for socially marginalised people. In a study form 2012 based on survey and register data from 70 municipalities and 1140 social housing departments, found that most municipalities prioritize refugees and single parents with one child when they allocate housing (Ellerbæk et al. 2012, 17). All in all, the cocktail of policies and conditions such as housing-, social services- and labour-oriented policies and the conditions of the housing market with public and private housing possibilities and a heavy demand for housing in the big cities, left little space for socially marginalised people with low income to manoeuvre.

Besides volunteering in the municipal employment unit at the shelter compound, Rafiq has agreed to receive help from a contact person assigned to him through the municipality's social service unit. His particular type of help is ascribed according to CTI, one of the above-mentioned American-invented service models to help former homeless people in their transition from sheltered housing or the streets to permanent housing. Each service provider form an individual relationship with the homeless person with the overall aim of helping him or her into and then keeping their housing. In Rafiq's case, his contact-person, Anton, seems mostly to be going along with Rafiq's immediate needs in what appears a strategy of both empowering and not paternalising Rafiq in his situation. He tries to help him along and

---

[3] At a night drop drop-in center in Copenhagen neighborhood former manager mentioned how people with a mental illness would stay the night even though they had an apartment and from my personal experiences with homeless people on the street and in municipal services quite a few preferred, or sought perhaps because of fear of staying alone, to stay out of their homes.

motivate him towards solutions that will enable Rafiq to stay in the apartment. Anton has helped him with a previous neighbour complaint, for instance, and has asked him about the possibility of starting to pay off on more of his debts (it seems Rafiq has a few debts). Rafiq dismisses paying more for the debt-collectors but is willing for Anton to write yet another letter to the housing association asserting his view in the case. Anton apparently tries again to let him speak with his neighbour in an effort to mediate between them. Rafiq's earlier social worker had apparently done the same with some success. However, Rafiq refuses. For some reason he does not wish for this. The solution he chooses so far is the letter. They agree to a day to write it together and drop it by at the housing association office in the center of town. What is left is for Rafiq to hope it works and to try to 'keep his path clean', as the workshop employee stated it.

Though many homeless people who were provided a home through the Danish homeless strategy succeed in keeping a home (Rambøll and SFI 2013), it is not rare for social workers to experience homeless people 'falling back' or being at risk of falling back into shelter life or life on the streets. It is not uncommon for the workers of the workshop and the social workers to experience precarious housing situations for the people they work with. The social workers would tell of the difficulty of some users dropping in and out of housing and some living in the shelter, drop-in facility or the streets for long periods at a time. Some were particularly hard to keep housed. They illustrated the situation with Mohammed, who lost an apartment twice before and is now back in the shelter. Incidentally, Anton is also working with him. I try to find out what new solutions will be implemented for Mohammed since he twice has not managed to remain a living in the social housing units appointed him. Anton says he is leaving him alone for a while and hoping times will become easier for him and sensing Mohammed's need to be left alone and fend for himself for a while without municipal interference. Another social worker says he will manage but gives me no specific solution. When I meet Mohammed later, he tells me his caseworker in the municipality apparently has told him that he will not be written up on the municipal waiting list for a new home until he shows fairly frequent attendance at the workshop. In this way, housing becomes a conditional object to obtain and something one must wait for. Rafiq's dread of going back into sheltered housing seems relevant as his loss of apartment will leave him in a certain position in Danish society.

Thus, between the state of the urban housing markets, the refugee crisis, new job reforms and social policies, the socially marginalised people's ways to manoeuvre in case of unstable housing situations are at best described as rigid and demanding. Rafiq and Mohammed know this and most experienced social workers also know it. This experiential knowledge frames the services they are able to provide, the type of pressure put on social worker and service user and the nature of the actual meeting between the citizen and the social worker.

A while later, Rafiq tells me a man known by many at the shelter compound has died. He was stabbed to death by a man in his apartment in the southern outskirts of Copenhagen. Several people were gathered in the apartment, and these two ended up in an argument, which ended in a fight and the stabbing. Rafiq is concerned about it. He tells me agitatedly that this guy was at his apartment once as well, and how he had gotten into a fight with him also. Then he composes himself and says in a light bragging tone that he had thrown him out, mimicking a kick and a push all the while. He tells me this man had come over together with some other visitors. The guy was annoying them and got into a verbal fight with one of the others. Rafiq had told him to leave, but the guy would not. In the end, he threw him out, he says. I am not sure how much of the story is true and how much is exaggeration since Rafiq liked to brag about his martial arts skills, but the fact that Rafiq had visitors in his apartment is probably true, and it seems not all visitors are equally quiet. In this case, his one-sided view of his noise being innocent and his neighbour reacting to nothing seem not to fit the entire truth. Anton is left to find a way to help Rafiq between Rafiq's stated behaviour in his home, his motivation and the neighbours' complaints. And Rafiq has to navigate in the insecure and unstable situation of his specific housing environment and the Danish housing market, social policies, refugee crisis and unemployment reforms as well as his own competencies and way of life.

Thus, the individual challenges, sentiments and situations that socially marginalised people are experiencing are entangled with specific contextual situations. By relating the theme of housing to actual lived experience, it becomes clear that housing serves as an important part of socially marginalised people lives and that the experience of social marginalisation also relates to specific challenging conditions and limited possibilities in relation to the Danish housing market, homelessness and shelter policies, market forces etc. By incorporating the specific contextual situation and condition at the time of participant observation instead of

focusing mostly on the interaction, it becomes clear that the meeting between service user and service provider is, perhaps, not predominantly about human interaction but also of experiences, interaction and encounters with larger contextual societal forces such as the housing market and the challenges for socially marginalised people and social workers to engage with these. Thus, by broadening our view from human interaction to human interaction *in context*, and applying a much heavier focus on contextual conditions which organically melds observation of human interaction with specific contextual conditions, we gain insight into how it is perhaps not the human encounter between service provider and service user which stands out but the general conditions in which these encounters are taking place.

By focusing on the specific contextual situations and conditions in which human actions and interactions are taking place, I argue that we get a stronger sense of the entanglement of societal and individual forces that are important for understanding social phenomena like homelessness and practices like welfare state practices more fully. Thus, I argue for a renewed sensitivity for incorporating the invisible or less visible context or structures of individual action.

- Discussion -

Though there has been a call for a reworking and re-entering or strengthening of the contextual dimension in social scientific analyses, the concept of context, or more specifically the concept of 'structure' and the division between structure and agency have been heavily criticised (C. Duff 2016, 2011; D. C. Duff 2007) . This criticism of structure is connected to the proponents of 'assemblage-thinking' or the general construction of assemblages (C. Duff 2016, 2011).

Though the division between structure and agency has long been sought reconciled in the social sciences (Bourdieu) and though the dynamic and changeable nature of the concept of 'structure' has been ascribed and nuanced ((Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Vigh 2007)), the very notion of 'structure' and 'agency' continues to be called into question in contemporary social science (C. Duff 2016, 2011; D. C. Duff 2007). The application and thinking with these concepts have been criticised as analyses that drop and posit 'fixed ontological categories'

(ibid.) of 'agency/individual' and 'structure/context' and which, furthermore, provide an unnatural division between what can be viewed as 'individual' and 'structural'. Though proponents of this divide have not made the claim that 'structures' and 'agency' ought to be viewed as ontologically fixed and discrete units of reality but rather as units of analysis, these types of analyses have been criticised for positing a world made up of structural and individual conditions respectively.

Instead, it has been claimed that we ought to view the world as being constantly produced, assembled or folded (Latour, Mol, Law in: C. Duff 2011). In order not to risk reifying societal structures and individual agency, we must "replace the 'subject' and 'social context' as a discrete unit of analysis"(C. Duff 2016, 3). The solution, it is argued, is to apply a type of 'assemblage-thinking' (C. Duff 2016) or 'assemblic ethnography' (Zigon 2015), that is, to seek to "demonstrate how subjects, agencies, networks and spaces are produced" (C. Duff 2011, 406) and how they are constantly being shaped. One example is the construction of 'drug assemblage', which mixes diverse factors such as atmospheres, affections, non-human entities etc. in order to describe drug use (D. C. Duff 2007; C. Duff 2016, 2011).

Thus, the world does not 'exist' of structural or contextual conditions and individual ones (which however most social scientist would agree) but rather of assemblages: a mixture of individual affects, materiality, sentiments, atmospheres, bodies etc. In this sense, it is a refusal to accept "either subjects or structures as either ontological conditions or discrete units of analysis" (C. Duff 2016, 5). However, one could then rightly ask: does this not just risk reifying assemblages as new discrete units of analysis and ontological fixants in the world? How are we to believe assemblages a so much better fit for descriptions of social reality than structure or context?

Indeed, I would argue that if we look closer at the results of the however very insightful analyses which apply such 'assemblage-thinking', the very notion and application of assemblages seem not to provide us with so much more analytically than classical ethnography which has a general eye for any type of situation, factor and condition that might have relevance in the field. Indeed, being aware of affects, atmospheres and so on were part of the first methodology books in ethnography (Spradley 2016 [1980]; Hammersley and

Atkinson 2010 [1983]). Thus, I argue that ethnographies that are sensitive to the material, affective, non-human, abstract, transcendental etc. are as good as ever, whether they be defined through assemblages or structure/agency. Whether we apply assemblages, structures, contexts, social facts and so on, I would argue, matters less than the fact we remember to take the abstract/less visible context into account.

Instead of investing large amounts of time understanding and constructing assemblages, one might return to classical ethnographic methodology that open-mindedly and reflexively try to capture the empirical reality during fieldwork in all its aspects; whether affects, material, non-human etc. The important thing for any social science being, as I have described in this article, that the context and less visible conditions of human encounters are reflected on for its potential relevance for human action and interaction.

- Conclusion -

In this paper, I have described how the entanglement of structural and individual lives have implications for the experience of social marginalisation and for the practice of social work. As social workers are engaging with socially marginalised people and their problems, the societal structural conditions that frame, or perhaps even spur, these problems become elements or important aspects to address. As such, the reforms of the unemployment policy, new housing policies, labour market, refugee intake, private and public housing conditions, debt conditions and more have the very real potential to become direct forces in socially marginalised people's lives and, therefore, in the social worker's work life. Because socially marginalised people grapple with multiple (potential) problems at once, the rapid changing and societal conditions surrounding the construction and solutions to these problems mixed with the actions, sentiments and affects of the individually socially marginalised people become the working conditions for social workers, wherefore social workers will have to address this entanglement and multitude of problems. Thus, I argue, that it is not the encounter between service user and service provider that exclusively shapes the actions towards one another but perhaps rather the general condition of society and individual sensibilities which characterise the social work practice (and the phenomenon of social marginalisation) wherefore a near-sighted focus on the encounters, though highly relevant for addressing certain aspects in

these meetings, might positively be broadened by analyses that incorporate the contextual societal factors interspersed in the meetings.

Bibliography

Abrahamson, Peter. 1998a. *Postmodern Governing of Social Exclusion, Social Integration or Risk Management?* Sociologisk Rapportserinr. 13, 1998. Kbh: Københavns UniversitetSociologisk Institut.

―――. 1998b. 'Social Exclusion in Europe : Old Wine in New Bottles?' 1998: 18.

Andersen, Ditte. 2014. *Staging and Storying Change, an Ethnography of Everyday Practice in Drug Treatment for Young People, PhD Dissertation*. 1. oplag. Arhus: Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research, Arhus University.

Benjaminsen, Lars. 2017. *Hjemløshed i Danmark 2017: National kortlægning*. Vol. 2017. Kbh.: VIVE - Det Nationale Forsknings- og Analysecenter for Velfærd.

Benjaminsen, Lars, Stefan Bastholm Andrade, Morten Holm Enemark, and SFI - Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd. 2017. *Fællesskabsmålingen: en undersøgelse af livsvilkår og social eksklusion i Danmark*. SFI - Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd.

Bourgois, Philippe I, and Jeff Schonberg. 2009. *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.

Christensen, Louise. 2011. *Livet udenfor en etnografisk beskrivelse af hjemløses hverdagsliv i København og oplevelser af margianliksering*. København: Universitetet.

Duff, Cameron. 2011. 'Reassembling (Social) Contexts: New Directions for a Sociology of Drugs'. *The International Journal on Drug Policy* 22 (6): 404–6. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2011.09.005.

―――. 2016. 'Assemblages, Territories, Contexts'. *The International Journal on Drug Policy* 33 (C): 15–20. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2015.10.003.

Duff, Dr Cameron. 2007. 'Towards a Theory of Drug Use Contexts: Space, Embodiment and Practice'. *Addiction Research & Theory* 15 (5): 503–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/16066350601165448.

Ellerbæk, Lise Sand, Anders Høst, SFI - Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd, Danmark, and Bolig og Landdistrikter Ministeriet for By. 2012. *Udlejningsredskaber i almene boligområder: en analyse af brugen og effekterne af udlejningsredskaber i almene boligområder*. Kbh.: SFI - Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1950. *The Nuer, a Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Reprint. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Fahnøe, Kristian. 2016. 'Bekendelsesformer i gruppeterapi for alkoholmisbrugere: En interaktionistisk analyse af en magtteknik'. *Dansk Sociologi; Copenhagen* 27 (1): 36-54,76.

Farmer, Paul. 2004. 'An Anthropology of Structural Violence'. *Current Anthropology* 45 (3): 305–325. https://doi.org/10.1086/382250.

Gubrium, Jaber F., and James Holstein. 2000. 'The Self in a World of Going Concerns'. *Symbolic Interaction* 23 (2): 95–115. https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2000.23.2.95.

Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson. 2010. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.

Holbraad, Martin, and Morten Axel Pedersen. 2017. *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/9781316218907.

Institut for Menneskerettigheder. 2015. 'Retten Til Bolig'. https://menneskeret.dk/files/media/dokumenter/udgivelser/status/2014-15/delrapporter/retten_til_bolig.pdf.

Järvinen, Margaretha, and Ditte Andersen. 2009. 'The Making of the Chronic Addict'. *Substance Use & Misuse* 44 (6): 865–85. https://doi.org/10.1080/10826080802486103.

Järvinen, Margaretha, and Nanna Mik-Meyer. 2013. *At skabe en klient: institutionelle identiteter i socialt arbejde*. Kbh.: Hans Reitzel.

Kiørboe, Emil, and Mandana Zarrehparvar. 2017. *Hjemløse borgeres rettigheder i kommunerne*. København: Institut for Menneskerettigheder.

Landsbyggefonden. 2014. *Nye udfordringer for det almene boligbyggeri*. Kbh.: Landsbyggefonden.

Lejernes Landsorganisation. 2017a. 'Ja! Boligmarkedet Er En Lukket Fest'. 2017. http://llo.dk/politik-og-presse/nyhedsarkiv/vis-nyhed?Action=1&NewsId=330&M=NewsV2&PID=1342.

———. 2017b. 'Modernisering Temahæfte'. 2017. http://llodjursland.dk/politik-og-presse/nyhedsarkiv/vis-nyhed-5?PID=16095&M=NewsV2&Action=1&NewsId=438&currentPage=9.

LLO. 2015. 'Lejernes talerør: »Moderniseringer af lejligheder er det rene gift«'. Politiken. 2015. https://politiken.dk/oekonomi/bolig/tagoverhovedet/art5582125/Lejernes-taler%C3%B8r-%C2%BBModerniseringer-af-lejligheder-er-det-rene-gift%C2%AB.

Løkke, Lars. 2018. 'Statsminister Lars Løkke Rasmussens nytårstale den 1. januar 2018'. 2018. http://www.stm.dk/_p_14610.html.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. Studies in Economics and Political Science 65.

Matarese, Maureen T, and Dorte Caswell. 2018. '"I'm Gonna Ask You about Yourself, so I Can Put It on Paper": Analysing Street-Level Bureaucracy through Form-Related Talk in Social Work'. *The British Journal of Social Work* 48 (3): 714–33. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx041.

Matarese, Maureen T., and Carolus van Nijnatten. 2015. 'Making a Case for Client Insistence in Social Work Interaction'. *Discourse Processes* 52 (8): 670–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2014.979974.

Meeuwisse, Anna, Sune Sunesson, and Hans Swärd. 2009. *Socialt arbejde: en grundbog*. Kbh.: Hans Reitzel.

Mik-Meyer, Nanna. 2005. *Dømt til personlig udvikling: Fokus på patienters psykosociale situation i danske revalideringscentre*.

Miller, Peter, and Nikolas Rose. 2013. *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

O'Neill, Bruce. 2017a. 'The Space of Boredom: Homelessness in the Slowing Global Order'.

———. 2017b. 'The Ethnographic Negative: Capturing the Impress of Boredom and Inactivity'. *Focaal* 2017 (78): 23–37. https://doi.org/10.3167/fcl.2017.780103.

Rådet for Socialt Udsatte. 2010. *Udsat for forståelse: en antologi om socialt udsatte*. Kbh.: Rådet for Socialt Udsatte : [Eksp.] Indenrigs- og Socialministeriet.

Rambøll, and SFI. 2013. 'Hjemløsestrategien - Afsluttende Rapport'. 2013. https://viden.sl.dk/artikler/voksne/socialt-udsatte/hjemloesestrategien/.

Shore, Cris, Susan Wright, and Davide Però. 2011. *Policy Worlds: Anthropology and the Analysis of Contemporary Power*. Berghahn Books.

Smith, Robin James. 2011. 'Goffman's Interaction Order at the Margins: Stigma, Role, and Normalization in the Outreach Encounter'. *Symbolic Interaction* 34 (3): 357–376. https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2011.34.3.357.

Spradley, James P. 2016. *Participant Observation*. Waveland Press.

Statsrevisorerne. 2016. 'Notat Om Beretning Om Indsatsen over for Hjemløse Af 8. Januar 2016 - Rigsrevisionen'. 2016. http://www.rigsrevisionen.dk/publikationer/2014/222013/302-16/.

Tsemberis, Sam. 2010. *Housing First, the Pathways Model to End Homelessness for People with Mental Illness and Addiction*. Center City, Minn: Hazelden.

———. 2014. 'Evidence-Based Values in Housing and Treatment'. *Psychiatric Services (Washington, D.C.)* 65 (3): 277. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.650304.

Uggerhøj, Lars, and Frank Ebsen. 2014. 'Når Forskning Trænger Sig På'. 2014. https://issuu.com/socialrdg/docs/28-udenfornummer.

UN. 2014. 'World's Population Increasingly Urban with More than Half Living in Urban Areas | UN DESA | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs'. 2014. world-urbanization-prospects-2014.html.

Vacher, Mark. 2006. 'Et Hjem Er Noget Man Gør', 2006. http://boligforskning.dk/et-hjem.

Vigh, Henrik. 2007. *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. New York, NY: Berghahn Books.

Zigon, Jarrett. 2015. 'What Is Situation?: An Assemblic Ethnography of the Drug War' 30 (3): 501–524.

Appendix A

Overview of fieldwork:

Copenhagen:
Participant observation (full time) from
January to March 2016
(and split between Aarhus and Copenhagen
from July to October)

Interview total: 32
Employees and managers at service: 9
Special services: 4*
Drug treatment: 4
Psychiatry: 4
Employment services: 3
General social services: 4
Users: 4

*Health services

Aarhus:
Participant observation (full time) from
April to June 2016
(and split between Aarhus and Copenhagen
from July to October)

Interview total: 21
Employees and managers at service: 9
Special services: 4*
Drug treatment: 0**
Psychiatry: 0**
Employment services: 3
General social services: 1
Users: 4

* Employment consultant, health service,
special social service
***performed by colleague

Appendix B

Interviewguide –professionals [translated from Danish]

Introduction and opening of baseline-stories
- What do you work with, where and how long?
- Can you describe your primary work-assignments and your workplace more exhaustive?

Questions about policy in practice
- Own examples on complex citizens
- What is important in your job?
- What counts as a good argument when you have to argue for a certain service?
- How do you secure the best possible service for the users? Both on an organizational and ideological level
- What is the end-target for the users in your job-position and how do you think you reach this goal best?
- Which values are central in your work?
- What are the biggest challenges in your daily work?
- Which policies do you lean on in your work? Which are central in your field? Can you give any exampes to this?
- How do you experience the relation between policies and your daily practice?

Daily management of citizens and navigation of demands
- How do you experience the possibility to offer the citizen, what you think is needed for the citizen in relation to the framework you work in (for instance laws, local rules, economical ressources)?
- Do you sometimes have to cross your work-description in order to help a citizen? Can you give any examples?
- How do you refer to/who do you cooperate with?
- How does these cooperations happen in practice (formally as well as informally)?
- Which challenges are there in the cooperation?
- How would you describe the relation between the three areas of employment, psychiatry and drug/alcohol treatment? What do you think has caused these types of relations?
- If there are any disagreements about the handling of a citizens' problems who do you settle it? Can you give an example?
- Can you give a good example of when the cooperation runs particularly well and it is possible to help a citizen particularly well?

Theme: reflections on future actions, possibilities and changes
- How would you describe the ideal approach to citizens with complex problems?
- Do you know anyone which it might be relevant for me to talk to?
- Is there any documents that are particularly relevant?

Appendix B

Interviewguide - user [translated from Danish]

Soft intro grand tour question	Grand tour question to open with descriptively • Can you tell me a bit about yourself or if too open: • Can you tell me a bit about your daily life/what do you enjoy doing? or • Demographic questions like; age, place to stay, education/employment experience, family/network, basis of income etc.? (NB: these might be questions which are vulnerable for this group to answer too though –for instance for some; staying at a shelter, receiving money from the state etc., so be aware of these might not provide useful as opening questions anyway)
Users descriptions of the services	• Which services do you receive? • How many people do you receive services from? • How long have you received the services • How often do you receive the service? • How many types of services do you received through your life? • Is there services you have declined to recive? –why?
Assesment of the services	• What do you think of the services you have received during your life course? • What do you think of the specific service which you receive now? • What is the best and the worst about the service you are receiving? • If you receive more services, is there any which makes more sense to you than others? • What can you use the services to? Do you find them useful? • Which meaning/importance do you in general think the services has for your daily life? • Is there any situations or things in your daily life you would like to receive support with?
Abstractions on the services	• Do you know of others who receive the same types of services as you? • Which types of services do you think generally are important/good to have in a society like ours?
The users' situation	• What do you like most in your daily life? • What are the biggest challenges in your daily life? • How big is your need for the type of services you receive? • How long do you expect you might need the service?

Appendix C

Original PhD-project Description [translated from Danish]

Ethnographic Research in Social Marginalization and Social Work

Sketch: The purpose with this PhD-project is to develop a deeper understanding of how social marginalization is experienced from a contemporary perspective as well as how the social work towards socially marginalized people is practiced and gains influence in socially marginalized people's lives.

The project departs from a phenomenological perspective on social marginalization and social work in order to depart from the phenomenon itself and suspend existent established categories and assumptions about what social marginalization is and what the social work towards socially marginalized people comprises (Desjarlais 1999, Desjarlais and Throop 2011, Throop and Murphy 2002, Zahavi 2003).

Participant observation and interviews with socially marginalized people who receive social mentor-support [Danish: mentorstøtte] and the social workers who provides this type of support are used in order to explore these themes. This, the project is aimed at contributing with a newer Danish ethnography on social marginalization and social work based on a phenomenological study of these fields.

Background for the PhD-project: Conceptions of people living on the margins or 'outside' of society are widespread in Western discourses (Desjarlais 1999, Larsen 2009, Wacquant 2002). The designation for this phenomenon amongst others; social marginalization. Representations of socially marginalized people have in European and American studies, as well as in the general Danish debate, been criticized for being stereotypical, simplifying or distorted representations of social marginalized people's lives and situation (Wacquant 2002, Desjarlais 1999, Bourgois 2012, Pedersen 1997, 2004). The popular scientific and scientific representations are criticized for being unnuanced and to highlight aesthetical individual aspects of a phenomenon which might as well be embedded in a complex simultaneity of political, economical and legislative conditions as well as different perceptions of what social marginalization is and thus of the social works' basis and practice.

The social work, which is provided in the Danish welfare state in order to solve complex social problems, have in recent decades been subject to increasing attention (Ebsen and Uggerhøj 2014). In the Danish political institutions this attention have increasingly centered on measuring the results and effects of the work and most recently in an increasing preoccupation with evidence-based methods (Socialstyrelsen 2013, Socialministeriet 2014). This has also increased the interest in what the social work specifically consists of. Research in social work in Denmark has since the end 1990s predominantly been inspired by a social constructivist approach where studies have focused on the 'clients and social workers' interaction which have resulted in a sort of deconstruction and close study of the social workers' actions and language (Ebsen and Uggerhøj 2014). Thus, the research has mostly concentrated on the visible and explicit linguistic and practical actions in the specific meeting between citizen and social worker (ibid.) and not to the same extend illuminated other aspects of the daily life of socially marginalized people and the working days of the social workers. In this sense, the foundation for a more holistically understanding of how the social work affect citizens' daily lives and situation in society is not made possible.

Appendix C

Furthermore, the social work to socially marginalized people often involves a broad range of services from different actors because socially marginalized citizens often receive support and treatment services from several municipal or regional bodies for instance: from the health-, social- and employment-oriented fields. Thus, the different services which the individual receives reaches beyond the specific meeting between social worker and 'client' and this one specific context each service is provided in as it will also be embedded in a complex simultaneity of (competing) political and administrative approaches in the different sectors as well as different understandings of what constitutes social problems and what is needed to solve these problems.

Thus, when dealing with the phenomenon of social marginalization and the framework of the social work and practical provision of social services a certain neglect of conditions and perspectives might occur which might be relevant in order to understand social marginalization as a phenomenon and the social work as a practice.

The starting point for this PhD-project is thus to explore how social marginalization as a phenomenon is experienced from a contemporary perspective and how the social work with socially marginalized people is practiced in the Danish welfare state and gains influence in socially marginalized people's lives.

The problem statement is sought illuminated through these research questions:

- How does socially marginalized people express (in words and actions) their situation and daily life and how do they relate to the surrounding society?

- How do socially marginalized people experience the social work? How do they receive the social work and which meanings do they attribute to the social work in their daily life and for their situation?

- How is the social work towards socially marginalized citizens practiced and which framework and approaches exist in relation to practicing social work?

Theoretical starting-point: Social marginalization have not been a classical area of research for anthropology (Freilich 1991) even though social marginalization in diverse forms pressumably have existed throughout history and in all societies (Farrell and Swigert 1998 [1975]). Classical anthropological monographs have not illuminated this phenomenon (Freilich 1991) which is explained by anthropology's original goal of discerning (and sometimes imposing) "patterns and structures (Freilich 1991:1) in foreign cultures in order to render the exotic and mysterious societies outside Europe recognisable and understandable.

From a practice-theoretical perspective social marginalization can be understood as constituted in between individual acts (agency) and societal institutions broadly understood (structures) (Ortner 2006, Bourdieu 1997, Bourgois 2011). This understanding also frames the solutions to the problem such as social works' framework and practice.

Social marginalization is, in official Danish understandings, explained as a mixture of structural and individual problems though often clearly demarcated in already established problems in society and predefined problems for the individual (Socialministeriet 2011, Statsministeriet 2014, Benjaminsen 2011). Often social marginalization is not understood in relation to each other or as a phenomenon in its

own terms. Even though these predefined problems also comprise obvious and visible parts of socially marginalized people's lives, they are not necessarily sufficient or crucial to describe the phenomenon.

Newer ethnographic descriptions of social marginalization, which among other things is based on phenomenological approaches, illuminates how social marginalization contains more than the individuals problems and more than the structural framework (Bourgois and Schonberg 2012, Desjarlais 1999). This is also the departure point for this investigation of social marignalization and social work in a contemporary Danish context.

Methodology: Social marginalization is a diffuce concept, which does not cover a defined phenonenon in society nor a clearly defined group in society. The definition of socially marginalized people has changed throughout history (Bømler 2000, Järvinen 1993) and has among other been linked to diverse categorisations such as homeless, drug/alcohol users etc. (ibid.)

In this project, the designation 'socially marginalized' if linked to people who experience complex problems and which therefore receive services from several treatment units and administrations including the 'most socially marginalized groups' which according to legislation have to receive 'mentor-support' from a municipal employment authority as they are not assessed as being ready for work or education (Albæk et al 2015, LAB 2015). Mentor-support, as it is provided according to the law on cash benefits and the revision of this law in 2014, is described as targeted the 'most socially marginalized people' (Albæk et al 2015). Social marginalization is delimited to receivers of cash benefits whom 'for personal reasons can not participate in activity services' (Albæk et al 2015 [own translation]) and the group might therefore contain homeless people with an addiction (Bach and Jonassen 2015). Thus, it is illustrated how the group is 'carriers' of a number of individual problems such as drug/alcohol abuse, mental illness and is embedded in a number of structural problems which is mentioned as the component in the official understanding of social marginalization (Socialministeriet 2011, 2013, 2014).

Following this understanding, the social work to socially marginalized people will be delimited to the work provided by social mentors to persons, which the municipal administrators deem socially marginalized.

Through participant observation of socially marginalized peoples everyday life as well as in the social mentors daily practice, this project will illuminate the problem statement about social marginalization and social work. Thus, this project will both focus on the socially marginalized citizens who receive mentor-support (service) as well as the mentors who provide this support.

Social-mentor-support is provided by a number of actors in Denmark but since this project is focusing on the social work as it is practiced and developed by and in the Danish welfare state, this project is focussing on the municipal effort. The project will revolve around the social work that is provided according to the Law on Unemployment Measures as well as the daily organization of the social work in a municipal unemployment authority. There will be a focus on the provision of the social mentor-support and the citizens' daily life but also as it is developed on assessment-meetings, staff-meetings, in connection with policy-development and thus in how policies are interpreted, articulated and practiced in daily life when social mentor-support is provided and organized.

Scientific contribution: This PhD-project is part of the research project "How Do Welfare Systems Manage Citizens with Complex Problems" which investigates how the different types of policies in the drug/alcohol treatment system, the psychiatric system and unemployment system is articulated and

Appendix C

implemented in order to support citizens with complex problems (socially marginalized people) as well as how the bases and logics of these policies might overlap or clash when the specific service is practised.

The PhD-project will contribute with an understanding of how the executive wing of a municipal unemployment authority practices the specific social work and how this work is situated in the broader political intersection of social-, health- and unemployment oriented services to citizens with complex problems (here designated as socially marginalized people). Thus, the PhD-project will illuminate how mentor-support which is provided to unemployed socially marginalized people is practiced locally.

Thus, the project contributes with a newer Danish anthropology on social marignalization and social work, which can develop a deeper empirical and analytical understanding of what social marginalization and the actual social work, which is provided and how it gains influence in socially marginalized peoples everyday life.

Biography:
Albæk, Karsten et al. 2015 Evaluering af mentorordningen. København:SFI

Bach, Henning og Anders Bruun Jonassen 2015 Mentorstøtte hjælper udsatte in: Information! 28. marts 2015

Benjaminsen, Lars 2011 Hjemløshed i Danmark 2011. National kortlægning. SFI

Bourdieu, Pierre 2000 [1997] Pascallian Meditations. Polity Press.

Bourgois, Philippe and Jeff Schonenberg (2009) Righteous Dopefiend. California: University Press.

Bømler, Tina Ussing 2000 Når samfundet udstøder. Nordisk Forlag og Gyldendal

Desjarlais, Robert 1997 Shelter Blues. Sanity and Selfhood among the Homeless. University of Pensylvania Press

Desjarlais, Robert og Jason Throop 2011 Phenomenological Approaches in Anthropology in: The Annual Review of Antrhopology. Downloaded 28.09.14 from www.annualreviews.org

Ebsen, Frank og Lars Uggerhøj 2014 Når forskning trænger sig på. København: Udenfor nummer nr. 28, 2014.

Farrell, Ronald og Victoria Swiggert 1988 [1975] Social!deviance. Wardsworth Inc.

Freilich, Morris 1991The Anthropology of Deviance in: Freilich et al. (ed.) Deviance: Anthropological Perspectives. Bergin & Garvey

Järvinen, Margaretha 1993 De nye hjemløse. Kvinder, fattigdom og vold. SocPol.

LAB 2015 Lov om aktiv beskæftigelsesindsats d.15. April 2015 on: https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/r0710.aspx?id=164698

Ortner, Sherry 2006 Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject. Duke University Press

Pedersen, Max 1997 Socialpornografi in: Politiken 10.05.1997

Pedersen, Max 2004 Socialpornografi og mediealfonser in: Politiken 23.06.2004. Socialministeriet 2011: Social Policy in Denmark. Socialministeriet

Socialministeriet 2014: Evidens er bare sund fornuft. Downloaded 15.03.2015 on: http://sm.dk/ministeriet/minister/indlaeg9artikler9og9kronikker/evidens9er9bare9sund9 fornuft

Appendix C

Socialstyrelsen 2013: Viden til gavn. Politik for udvikling og anvendelse af evidens. Socialstyrelsen

Statsministeriet 2014: National Social Report. Statsministeriet, Regeringen

Throop, Jason og Keith Murphy 2002 Bourdieu and Phenomenology. A Critical Assessment in: Anthropological Theory Vol 2(2); 1859207

Waqcuant, Loïc 2002 Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Public Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography in: American Journal of Sociology: Vol. 107 Nr. 6. University of Chicago pp. 146891532.

Zahavi, Dan 2003: Fænomenologi. Roskilde: Roskilde Universitetsforlag

Abstract

In this dissertation I explore the social work to socially marginalized people in order to extend our understanding of this practice and this phenomenon. The dissertation is build on seven arguments; four theoretically guided arguments that explore the social work and social marginalization as well as three based on empirical data from fieldwork with social workers and socially marginalised people in two municipal units in Denmark.

Of the four theoretically guided arguments, I explore 1) *the phenomenon of social marginalization* and its changes throughout history, geographical place and ideological usage. I argue that the popular idea of relating social marginalization to near-observable phenomena such as homelessness (lack of housing), mental illness (an illness and display of symptoms) and/or drug/alcohol dependency (the dependency on drugs and alcohol) give a good insight into aspects of social marginalization but I argue that a more abstract conception of social marginalization might be closer to the lived experience of social marginalization and might also serve as a better cross-geographical and a more a-historical concept. Further 2), I describe main qualitative social scientific research into this phenomenon and discuss the contemporary heavy preoccupation and critique of representations of social marginalization in social science and popular media. I argue along with criminologists Winlow and Hall (2014) that this preoccupation with the character of representations of social marginalization have taken too much time and space in the analyses to the detriment of trying to understand this phenomenon in society. 3) In this dissertation, I also explore the *social work practice* from a contemporary European and American theoretical perspective and argue that though diversity exists between the practices across countries substantial similarities are recognisable throughout. I therefore argue that though social work practices indeed are manifested in highly specialised context and that national and regional differences are prevalent, the social work practice also shares some highly significant resemblances which leave ground for more comparative work in qualitative research into social work practices. Finally 4), I argue with anthropologist Bruce O'Neill (2017) against the tendency to overstate human agency on behalf of the experience of human inactivity, unproductivity and non-creativity in analyses based on participant observation.

Based on the analysis of ca. one year of fieldwork in two municipal units that provided services to socially marginalized people in Denmark, I argue 5) that the social work practice is one which can be described as related to the three main practices of: 'goal-work', 'motivating-to-motivation' and 'mere being' (article A). Through the concept of 'mere being' I argue that the social work practice cannot solely be reduced to acts of governmentality (and power) but display other qualities and sentiments as well (article A). Further 6), I observed how the social work practice is highly susceptible to various changes or debates about the need for change, such as changes in law, changes in local political priorities, organizational changes and changes in public sentiments towards social work and social marginalization. I argue that despite these changes or debates about change we might still refer to one common social work practice (article B). Finally 7), I describe how contextual factors such as political, economic and material constraints and forces have a much more entangled impact on social marginalization, and therefore also on the social work practice, which contemporary popular mainstream studies of an interactionist bend seems to provide us with (article C).

Thus, in general I have sought to enable a rethinking or extension of our understanding of the social work practice and the question of power (article a), context (article c) and changeability in social work (article b), and to contribute to the contemporary debates about the role of context (article c), social constructivism (article b) and governmentality (article a) in social work practices towards the phenomenon of social marginalization in particular and the social sciences in general.

Resumé

Denne afhandling omhandler det sociale arbejde for socialt marginaliserede. Afhandling er koncentreret om syv argumenter; fire der relaterer sig til den videnskabelige og samfundsmæssige debat om social marginalisering og socialt arbejde, samt tre der bygger på empirisk data fra feltarbejde blandt socialarbejdere og socialt marginaliserede i København og Århus.

Af de fire teoretisk-funderede diskussioner undersøger jeg 1) hvordan vi kan forstå social marginalisering som fænomen og ændringer i fænomenet og begrebet gennem tid, geografisk sted og forskellige ideologiske betydninger. De nuværende populære kategorier til at identificere social marginalisering såsom hjemløshed (mangel på en bolig), misbrug (afhængighed af stoffer/alkohol), sindslidelse (tilstedeværelse af sygdom, symptomer eller adfærd) giver god indsigt i aspekter af social marginalisering men en mere abstrakt eller generel forståelse af social marginalisering er måske tættere på den levede erfaring og kan måske også tjene som en betegnelse, der bedre giver forståelse af fænomenet på tværs af tid og sted. Inspireret af social forskere og praktikere bekriver jeg social marginalisering som en manglende mulighed eller evne til at deltage i samfundets institutioner bredt forstået. Derudover 2), diskuterer jeg den nuværende optagethed af kritik af repræsentation af social marginalisering i samfundsvidenskab og samfundsmæssige debat generelt. Jeg argumenterer på linie med Winlow og Hall (2014), at denne optagethed af karakteren af repræsentation har pådraget sig for meget opmærksomhed i analyser af social marginalisering i stedet for at fokusere på hvordan vi forstår det som fænomen i samfundet. 3) Derudover beskriver jeg hovedtræk i diskussionerne om det sociale arbejde fra et nutidigt europæisk og amerikansk teoretisk perspektiv. Jeg argumenterer for at selvom det sociale arbejde til socialt marginaliserede udføres i yderst specifikke kontekster og selvom regionale og nationale forskelle er prevalente, eksisterer der substantielle ensheder på tværs, hvilket giver grobund for langt flere komparative undersøgelser i den kvalitative forskning af socialt arbejde. Endelig 4) argumenterer jeg på linie med antropolog Bruce O'Neill imod tendensen til at overtone menneskelig handling (agens) i kvalitativ forskning af social marginalisering (og agens i kvalitativ forskning mere generelt) samt ikke at overse tilstedeværelsen af menneskers inaktivitet, uproduktivitet og ikke-kreativitet i analyser baseret på deltagerobservation.

Ud fra analyser af ca. et års feltarbejde i to kommunale enheder, der leverede service ydelser til socialt marginaliserede i Danmark argumenterer jeg for at 5) socialt arbejde til socialt marginaliserede i en dansk kontekst kan beskrives som særligt relateret til tre praksisser: 'goal-work', 'motivating-to-motivation' og 'mere being' (Artikel A). Via begrebet 'mere being' argumenterer jeg for at det sociale arbejdes praksis ikke blot kan reduceres til governmentality-inspirerede magtformer men også udviser andre kvaliteter og stemninger (Artikel A). Derudover 6), beskriver jeg hvordan det sociale arbejde var genstand for ændringer eller tiltag mod ændringer såsom ændringer i loven, organisationsændringer, lokalpolitiske prioriteringer og generelle samfundsmæssig sympatier og argumenterer for at vi, disse ændringer til trods, stadig kan identificere det sociale arbejde som én praksis (Artikel B). Endelig 7), beskriver jeg hvordan kontekstuelle faktorer såsom politiske, økonomiske og materielle begrænsninger og kræfter har en meget mere indviklet betydning for social

marginalisering, og derfor også indflydelse på udførelsen af det sociale arbejdes, end nuværende populære studier med et interaktionistisk fokus ofte giver indtryk af (Artikel C).

Således har jeg forsøgt at gentænkte eller forlænge vores forståelse af det sociale arbejde i praksis og spørgsmålene om magt (Artikel A), kontekst (Artikel C) og foranderlighed i det sociale arbejde (Artikel B) og således at bidrage til de nutidige samfundsvidenskabelige diskussioner vedrørende kontekst (Artikel C), social konstruktivisme (Artikel B) og governmentality (Artikel A) i socialt arbejde til socialt marginaliserede og i samfundsvidenskaberne generelt.