

Copenhagen Workshop – Contribution from Authorities and NGOs

On the second day of the Copenhagen workshop the partners of the CUHP network were joined by representatives of NGOs working with the homeless in Denmark.

Maryse Marpsat, INED, introduced the network. Joan Smith explains the intention with 'day two' interactions.

The Workpackage then heard of the work undertaken in Denmark by both the official bodies and NGOs working in the field of social exclusion.

Lars Jappe, Ministry of Social Affairs, with responsibility for Marginalised People.

Estimate that 11,000 people affected over a year; 8,000 use shelters during a year plus an additional 3000 (excluding women and children). In 2004 100 million Euros will be invested.

Major policy framework is the 2000 Homeless Plan; the current government also has a political goal of improving conditions for the socially marginalized – homeless, drug addicts, prostitutes, mentally ill. The aim of programme is to achieve a meaningful life for vulnerable people, and respect their wishes.

The result is 75 new alternative care homes, 300 new special homes and housing assistants aimed at maintaining the home.

This is delivered locally, because Denmark is a localised society with 13 regional and 271 local authorities. Both types of council entitled to raise taxes. We provide the framework, the local and regional authorities fill in the framework.

Our legislation is broad and flexible – we issue guidelines but local and regional are responsible for the services and cash assistance (housing, benefits). There is regional responsibility for – reception centres, shelters, boarding houses – but may leave the running to voluntary organisations – and this happens in 50% of cases under contract.

- Recently local and regional governments finances have been frozen because of a tax stop. Therefore action plan for homelessness had to be implemented through special programme funds, and also through favourable financial grants for building and running costs. Bids for over 1 billion Kroner received.

Success of programme: homeless people with alcohol drugs (Late 40s and 50s), constant care and attention programme has delivered 80 places; The plan for 300 supported dwellings for those leaving institutions has delivered 85.

So far. Support and training in life skills to live in a home.

Ministry of Social Affairs is not responsible for housing, therefore in partnership with agency of Enterprise and Housing. Unconventional small housing, where residents can behave differently without causing problems. Agency builds 300 houses and Ministry of Social Affairs puts in the support. The programme is called Free Housing for Free Existence.

User influence: Denmark has a political consensus on consulting users on policies. Ministry of Social Affairs has supported the association of formerly and currently homeless people – local committees in 13 regions and a national. Have a magazine and access to broadcasting.

Hanne FABRICIUS, Municipality of Copenhagen

We have 36 houses in 3 different places but they are like huts in the mountains. We tried to find targeted people who wanted to live in a house. 70% continue to stay for 2-3 years. But it is difficult to find land to build those houses.

In Copenhagen there are 500,000 inhabitants with 18% privately owned dwellings, 30% co-operative housing and 52% rented apartments – of which 20% is cooperative housing societies, and every 3rd available apartment goes to social housing, therefore people are mixed.

Only 300 are available for homeless persons and 1200 for other social groups.

In Denmark, the law distinguishes between 2 groups

- ordinary people without homes – Municipality is responsible
- homeless people, heavier social or mental and/or abuse problems – State pays half the price of the shelters.

So, in Denmark there is a distinction between normal people who are homeless who work, or are able to work and homeless people who are homeless who can't work.

Copenhagen has half the shelters in Denmark and about 2000 persons through the system, 600 beds and the budget is 19 m euros per year. There are also night cafes and social activity, shelters for family (women and children), Social Pensions. About six are owned by the Municipality, but the rest is run by NGOs.

Of those who are in the homeless sector about 65% are Danish, 3% other Western Europe, 32% rest of the World, including Somalia. After one year in the shelter 42% move into social housing, 18% found their own housing. 21% stay in the same shelter.

In Copenhagen, homelessness is not a problem of poverty, because all Danish citizens has the right to 625 Euros a month. The new aims are that homelessness should be temporary and the challenges concerns drug and alcohol abuse, criminality. 15 street workers try to get people into the social system. There are also 12 resettlement/floating support people, smaller and more specialised centres, possibility of helping with debt, and education of the staff in order to change the shelters (built around 1900, for alcoholics, and young street workers).

Alternative housing; 600-1200 social housing apartments through cooperative housing societies and municipality including. There is a lack of cooperative housing.

Hanne Fabricius added some personal considerations. The definition of homelessness must take in account the Life Modes. She distinguishes between 4 different kinds of praxis:

A. Work is the mean of what you do, everyday life and this gives you money for the spare time

B. Work is the aim and the spare time is recreation for being able to work again

C. Both

D. No need of work to make a living, no logical relation between work, spare time. Capitalists living on income, homeless living on social income. Therefore no connection between work and spare time.

The discussion concerned the distinction between "normal homeless" (without housing, a housing issue) and the "homeless homeless" (chronic homeless). This distinction fits the Danish situation and leads to a discussion of how to get the imminent homeless out of homelessness. The municipality and the Ministry of social affairs thought that they aren't responsible for the 'normal homeless' who have to find their own housing.

The discussion included representatives of the National Council for Socially marginalized and excluded and the Church Army who presented their work in two Night Cafes i.e. overnight shelters. There was also representatives of the shelter *Store Dannesbo* (Peder Larsen), run by the Regional County of Fyn. It was reported that in Odense there is no housing shortage; there it takes one month to get rehoused. Whereas in Copenhagen there is a housing shortage and people are staying in the night café. This is a problem of the housing market; if there is housing then homeless people don't stay overnight. Therefore:

- a) problem of providing housing so that people not driven from the Centre of Copenhagen as in London, housing when people split up, housing for people living on one income. (Debate over whether this is a social responsibility)

- b) problem of providing services to prevent the cycle of homelessness
- c) problem of not being able to collect welfare payments from areas that are not your local area. People give up welfare entitlement when they move.

Tobias STAX reported that in Copenhagen the distinction between the “houseless” and the “homeless homeless” category is not a given. There has been an increasing restriction. There has been an increasing demand to document the social problem of a family; not enough to say that social housing is necessary to prevent homeless homeless. Therefore there is a lack of prevention – now people have to get closer to the shelter before you are assigned to housing. We seem to have three types of homeless:

“Houseless”, “Homeless homeless” and those “assigned to Special housing”.

Robert OLSEN, manager of the Shelter *Mændenes Hjem*, run by an NGO, reported on changes in structure, a diverse system offering different services for different people. Not institutions but sheltered accommodation helping homeless move onwards, to reintegrate. There are new clients from other countries and more multi-diagnostic needs. The new approach is to work on change. But the coming problem is the severe change in drug culture and the drug scene.

Peder LARSEN reported that in the shelter *Store Dannesbo in Odense*, run by the Regional County of Fyn, the typical homeless person is a 40 year old man who has become homeless because of the break-up of his marriage, lives on social security without a stable job and without no contact with family, and who may have drugs and alcohol problems.

The specific targets for this institution. On this small green island, the ‘garden of Denmark’, personal development targets is an action plan – realistic life values. Working in market garden and in the house; encouraged to use the public health service rather than the informal system.

However, a growing number of residents fall into two categories

- a) youth, over 18 years, alcohol users. Never had to take any responsibility for their own lives
- b) middle aged narcotic users, terminal patients need long term. Similar legislation but nowhere else to go; traditional nursing homes cannot manage these people – either their needs or social behaviour.

Further discussion on the special programmes available for migrants from other countries but not for migrants for regions of Denmark outside Copenhagen.

In the afternoon the discussion widened to be between the Danish agency representatives and the research teams of CUHP.

- a) Hungarian team asked about the issue of benchmarking e.g. i. the level of problems you might have to have in order to get a service, ii. benchmark the differences in getting accommodation between Copenhagen and the regions
- b) UK team asks - What is the background that has created youth homelessness – family disruption?
- c) UK team asks -What is the connection between two systems; is two systems difficult to bring together? Common to both Danish and UK situations is the distinction between normal homeless and homeless homeless. Family homeless versus street homeless: drug, alcohol mental health versus those without it.
- d) French team reports - It is one thing to classify the situations in which they see themselves, but it is another thing to classify the people as if they were stuck in it for ever. Classification is stigmatising; the number of people in categories may depend on the available stock of housing.

In France the category of “homeless homeless” is not used – the categories in the shelters are the consequence of the way the system functions. An emergency shelter worsens the mental conditions, it cuts social links. Is this the same in Denmark as in France.

e) What of the ‘hidden homeless’ in Denmark?

f) French team state that in other countries structural effects are very strong; labour market, housing market (gentrification), biographic effects e.g. Divorce, migration policy (illegal migrants) and effect of social welfare – minimum income and restrictions in access to this and retirement pensions. How does this affect Denmark? The category of ‘homeless homeless’ (chosen not to work, do drugs, alcohol) is stigmatising and not relevant. A part of the homeless populations now are immigrants, battered women (precarious jobs), young people also precarious jobs. Law against exclusion in France led to the creation of a new network between different institutions – new type of clients are not just drug abusers, alcoholics, biggest part of shelter population are not these. New type of client is the working poor.

If someone is coming to search for a house, what are the criteria to consider them as “houseless homeless”, or “homeless homeless”?

Is it the existence of a minimum income sufficient to stop poverty?

g) The Italian team asks about the increase of immigrants.

Even some NGOs have resistance to accepting the new type of targets because they are different profiles of people. Notion of multi-diagnosed individuals: to what extent there is a real change compared with the basis of real theory.

h) According to the Spanish team, we are moving from an old to a new context: from homogeneous populations to heterogeneous; from inactive to active interventions; from single targets to multiple targets; from one culture to multiple ethnicities; and an emphasis on listening to the voice of homeless people. How do you handle this? In Spain – task force for mental health and inclusion. Led to a new outreach service for mental health homeless people. There is an interesting comparison between the homeless homeless in Denmark, Spain and Italy. In Spain they have to work hard to get enough to live.

i) The Dutch team asks what is the effect of the decentralisation of the homeless process from the national to the local level – advantages is that at the local level, better idea of what programme fits, but risks also in that tendency that local institutions have a tendency to exclude homeless that come from other parts of the country.

Free houses for free citizens. In Netherlands we call it sub-standard living for homeless; it might be a step up in the housing career, or it could create ghettos with inferior housing and it could lead to another trap.

Netherlands team reports that the opinion of the client of his own situation versus opinion of the official is important; client and professional have to work together, to come closer together because motivation is important but if there are two opinions it doesn’t work.

Netherlands team asks – How do you cope with the people at risk of homelessness, on threshold of losing their home.

j) Danish researchers report: We don’t know much about anyone not using shelters. Who is at the night café, who is squatting, or about the Greenland women.

How are people sorted into categories, what are the practices when people are sorted into categories?

Research questions from the NGOs

- Lars JAPPE. We need to clarify thinking between Houseless and Homeless: lack of housing is not homeless.

- Hanna FABRICIUS. If you want to understand the definitions you must understand the welfare system of the county. Tax system is 50% in Denmark, and that goes to

the social system. The houseless are being taken care of in different kind of systems, therefore we concentrate on taking care of the homeless homeless.

- Battered women are not defined as homeless, and we won't accept them and we are discussing taking the man out of the flat rather than taking the woman out of the flat.

- The comparison of capital cities could be interesting to estimate the borderline between the houseless and the homeless homeless. How many problems do you need to be homeless?

- Anne Mette NYFOS (Church army). Money is constant although the target groups entering the shelter have become more complex. 10 years ago you couldn't enter a shelter if you were drug users – today they are being targeted. The immigrants are being neglected. It would be interesting to see how this total sum of money floats towards different groups every few years.

- Not just revolving door clients but revolving door type of clients.

- Kurt PEDERSEN (Salvation Army). If it is mental problems that causes homelessness, the experience showed: a closing of bigger institutions and mentally ill persons placed into society didn't function, therefore trying to build small houses.

- Hanna FABRICIUS. Who gets social housing apartments? They have only a special amount of money – profiles for different groups, is it somewhere they can take a heavy problem person or a lighter problem person.

- Vibeke Tornhøj CHRISTENSEN (SFI). Sometimes there is a negative social heritage - you need to understand much better, what are the correlations or the capital that you end up with if you end up being homeless.

- Lene LUND (The Mission among the Homeless). How can we develop preventive methods? Providing knowledge of how to deal with them.

- Arne JACOBSEN (representative of 'the national association of shelters' to FEANTSA). Who is defining the problems? Homeless themselves must have a voice in this forum.

- Holger WIUFF (Work Ennobles). Need to work with the homeless, to pull out their resources; we have to understand the social work done with the homeless to draw forth the competence of the homeless themselves.