Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Denmark
stratification versus differentiaton
Madsen, Aase Mygind

Published in:
Social welfare social exclusion A life course frame

Publication date:
2007

Citation for published version (APA):
Perspectives on social exclusion and inclusion
Stratification versus differentiation

Aase Mygind Madsen

The concepts social exclusion and social inclusion have many meanings and are used in many types of reflections, analyses and discourses as well as in day to day social practice. This chapter is about social exclusion as stratification and as differentiation using Denmark as its focus.

Although Denmark has been led by a liberal-conservative coalition government since 2001, traces of many years of Social Democratic rule is visible in the sense that the country is still a highly equal society with a large public social sector, providing services and income transfers at a relatively high level to a considerable number of its population. Primarily as a result of Social Democratic policies, comparatively few people are today excluded on economic grounds. Using Littlewood et al’s (chapter one in this volume) terminology, this can be categorised as actions based in a Monopoly Paradigm. The underclass was seen by the leading Social Democratic Party as excluded from mainstream society and thus efforts were aimed at its inclusion, as well as on changing structures in society to be more equally inclusive. This conceptualisation of exclusion is in line with the monopoly paradigm according to which economic inequality (or stratification) is the key factor in understanding social exclusion.

By contrast the current liberal-conservative government does not consider material or economic issues when categorising the socially excluded in Denmark. In a publication by the Ministry of Social Welfare (2003) excluded people in Denmark are labelled as alcoholics, homeless, mentally retarded, drug addicts, prostitutes and criminals. In other words they are characterised according to non-material indicators stressing aspects of difference. Is this a perception of those excluded rooted in one of the other
paradigms in Littlewood et al’s chapter: the Durkheimian functionalist or the liberal perspective of social exclusion. I believe it makes sense to argue that although the Liberal party is dominant in the government the mentioned groups are primarily selected according to a Durkheimian functional perspective. The consequences of suggested solutions to the problems of social exclusion, hence, are not redistribution, but to eliminate the stigma accounting for social exclusion: to have the majority society accept the otherness of these groups or to change the behaviour of ‘the excluded’. It might not be so simple, but it appears that stratification (especially on economic grounds) is the key word in a Monopoly or Marxist perspective, whereas differentiation is the key word in a functionalist or solidarity perspective – and that it makes sense to analyse the different representations of social exclusion in these perspectives. But first an effort to apply more body to the differentiation and the stratification perspectives, respectively.

Historically, the material dimensions have been interpreted and acted upon in a stratification perspective whereas the non material dimensions primarily have been discussed in a differentiation perspective.

It is easiest to develop what is understood by the stratification perspective. It makes immediate sense to see Fordist /pre-Fordist, working or under class poverty as a relational case of people and groups of people placed at the bottom of society. As the problem of poverty, in such a perspective, is seen as originating from exploitative relations with economically and socially more powerful groups above in a hierarchy, inclusive policies thus concentrate on changing unequal structures in society. One could argue that the main social problem in a stratification perspective is the bottom position of the weaker groups and the top position of the powerful groups and changing that, whereas it might not make much of a difference whether one is outside the boundaries of the community that binds the unequally structured society together – or somewhere near the bottom.

Non-material exclusion, on the other hand, concerns the phenomena of stigmatised otherness as well as lack of participation in mainstream society. In either case we speak of differentiation rather than stratification. One could perhaps argue that social exclusion as lack of participation is more related to a communitarian kind of functionalism and stigmatised otherness of either a Mertonian kind of functionalism, an Etzionian communitarianism or even a liberal perspective.
Since they are analytically separate ideas, a stratification perspective can be illustrated as a problem of vertically arranged entities in a hierarchically structured community, whereas in a differentiation perspective, the problem of being outside the community is perceived as a problem in itself. It is thus not a matter of being pushed further down a ladder alone. A basic illustration of the difference can be seen in figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Exclusion in a Stratification Perspective (inspiration: Marxism)

Figure 2: Exclusion in a Differentiation Perspective (My inspiration is found in the functionalism and communitarism as lined out by Émilé Durkheim and Niklas Luhman)
The stratification perspective in social exclusion with focus on material dimensions

Phrasing absolute and relative poverty is central to the phenomena ‘exclusion’ in a stratification perspective. In Denmark a stratification perspective dominated the discourse on poverty and social exclusion until the late 1980s. Lack of employment opportunities and low salaries accounted for the political problem of social exclusion, primarily seen as a matter of working life exclusion. Accordingly policies were concentrated on changing structures of inequality. Hence Danish debates in this period concentrated on whether poverty/inequality should be established objectively or subjectively; seen relationally (as a problem of unequal distribution) or attributed as a matter of ranking income and ownership of assets. Obviously in a stratification perspective achieved positions are offered more attention than ascribed exclusion.

The differentiation perspective in social exclusion with focus on non-material dimensions

I find it more difficult to establish what a differentiation perspective comprises. Somewhat simplified it represents a view of the excluded as individuals either placing themselves outside the society by their behaviour or being placed outside the society because of a disability. Functional and communitarian perspectives differ in terms of what it is excluded people are excluded from. The functional approach tends to see cases of social exclusion as dysfunctional and recommends policies that simply get the excluded back into the normal societal machinery. The communitarian approach, on the other hand, would typically be more concerned with the excluded people’s lack of sound social ties. The bonds of the majority are praised, irrespective of whether it is built on hierarchical and patriarchal dominance. In a differentiation perspective it can probably be questioned whether exclusion can be considered a social problem or rather a problem in relation to social order. (see Littlewoods argument in chapter two). If exclusion from working life primarily is to be found in a stratification perspective, a differentiation perspective primarily covers excluded segments characterised by difference or ‘otherness’. Those excluded on grounds other than material might either permanently or at a certain point of time and in a certain context be excluded from and stigmatised by the majority society. Although the focus for this group is on difference, they
might face problems like lack of participation options, lack of recognition and perhaps active discrimination like those who are excluded for material reasons.

A combination of the differentiation and stratification perspective

So far I have argued that Social Democratic policies in Denmark especially in the 1970s can be interpreted as reactions to social exclusion seen primarily as stratification, while the current Liberal-Conservative government’s policies are based on a definition of social exclusion which is based more on a non-material differentiation perspective.

However, even when the focus is on differentiation, i.e. groups of people that are visibly different from the majority population, there is an element of stratification to it, in the sense that members of the group might be seen by others as well as by themselves as inferior or subordinate to members of the majority society.

In a recent book, Jørgen Elm Larsen (2004), for decades engaged in the debate on poverty and exclusion in Denmark, made a survey on social exclusion in the last 25 years. He chose a definition of ‘social exclusion’ which as far as I can see not only combines a material - nonmaterial approach, but also a stratification and a differentiation perspective:

An individual is socially excluded if he/she can be characterized by three, four or all five of the following conditions: relative economic poverty; few or none social relations; little or no participation in professional or political activities; little or no participation in leisure time activities and/or bad health conditions. (Elm Larsen, 2004, p. 17)

In order to get a comprehensive picture of social exclusion in Denmark at the turn of the 21st century, I think, it makes good sense to combine the governments narrow non-material definition of social exclusion with Elm Larsen’ multidimensional definition, which also includes material issues.

The Socially Excluded in Denmark at the turn of the 21st century

In contemporary discussions the material/non-material division of social exclusion is often exposed as an understanding that the Nordic welfare regimes by providing universal social rights have more or less solved the problem of material exclusion, i.e. economic poverty. However, the prob-
lem of engaging and motivating groups of people that are not participating and are not recognised by the majority of the society seems unsolved since these groups do not only carry stigmatised identities, but are also overrepresented among those in material poverty. Interestingly, a solution at a societal level to the problem of poverty has often been embraced in inclusive rhetoric, most significantly in Sweden, where the notion of a ‘Folkhem’ (people’s home) demonstrates the idea that there was space for all in the Social Democratic society. The means to reach a ‘Folkhem’ characterised by social equality was labour market and social policies securing income maintenance in cases of a personal crisis. This meant participation by most groups in society, but particularly the middle classes. Further, those welfare policies aimed at securing good lives for the many, also by constructing measures meant to make it possible for instance for disabled groups and representatives of cultural otherness to be recognised and to participate. This was mostly fulfilled at a system level and generally characterised by a top-down perspective.

As mentioned above Jørgen Elm Larsen identifies the participation aspect in his social exclusion category. To make it a multidimensional concept he combines it with a poverty and health indicator. The poverty indicator is ‘relative economic poverty’. The ‘relative poverty’ concept was made internationally known by Peter Townsend. To Elm Larsen the concept ‘deprivation’ is crucial and distinguishes ‘relative poverty’ from the broader concept ‘relative economic poverty’ by which Elm Larsen understands a kind of ‘relative poverty’, more or less equal to having a low income, but where people do not suffer from severe ‘deprivation’. In other words more people are relatively economic poor than relatively poor.

This definition of social exclusion differs significantly from that of the Ministry of Social Affair. Without defining any criteria, the Ministry simply mentions that the vulnerable groups in Denmark are 14,000 drug addicts; 25-50,000 alcoholics, 11,000 homeless; 22,000 mentally retarded and 5-7000 prostitutes (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2003, p. 5). In the following I call this a ‘narrow definition of social exclusion’ and Elm Larsen’s multidimensional social exclusion category a ‘broad definition of social exclusion’. Peter Townsend’s ‘relative poverty’ concept is a third category and Elm Larsen’s ‘relative economic poverty’ concept a forth. Finally I have added the concept ‘absolute poverty’ to have a full spectrum of interpretations of social exclusion, ranging from a concept without reference to economy to one where the material dimension is absolute and
total. This is shown in figure 3 and is meant to be an analytical tool to illustrate that the question of how many socially excluded people found in Denmark heavily depends on which perspective you use and therefore how you define social exclusion.

Figure 3: Understanding of Social Exclusion/Poverty in Danish Discourses – arranged on a ‘Non Material’ to ‘Material’ Continuum.

If the same categories are arranged according to how they appear numerically in the Danish welfare society, instead of according to the logic ‘non material – material’, another order occurs. In figure 4 I have illustrated this. Few will argue that absolute poverty exists in Denmark; hence in the numerical order ‘absolute poverty’ is number 1 covering 0% of the population. Socially excluded according to the most narrow definition with no affiliation to material issues is number 2 covering 1,2% of the population (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2003). According to Elm Larsen (2004) 2,3% of the population are estimated to be socially excluded using the broader definition, 8% to be relatively poor and 13% relatively economic poor. Although figures do not necessarily illustrate the severity of social problems in a given context, it can be argued that the prevalence of the problem does reflect important features of the Danish society.
In the following I aim at describing the groups found in these categories in Denmark.

The absolute poor (category one)

At the right side of the continuum in figure 3 the material criteria dominate. There is a large amount of literature discussing the distinction between absolute and relative poverty. The phrase ‘absolute poor’ designates an attempt to find and keep constant a minimum level of existence/physical survival expressed in economic terms. In some discussions absolute poverty is further divided into a) extreme deprivation and b) minimum level of existence poverty (Elm Larsen, 2004, pp. 28-31).

Currently extreme deprivation is found in cases of starvation or disruptions of local communities – mostly due to wars or natural disasters. Despite that its occurrence tends to be temporary, the duration may be extended across a long period of time in many places in the world.

Minimum level of existence poverty, on the other hand, tends to be of a more permanent character. It is linked both to a certain society’s level of development and a nation’s social policy. As it draws a line for what is most basically needed to survive physically, it is argued that even in cases of so-called ‘absolute poverty’ there is an element of relativity as it is open for interpretation of what is needed in a given society at a given point of time. The most relevant usage of ‘absolute poverty’ is differences in nation’s construction of official poverty lines. However, it is clear that the definitions comprise different interpretations of poverty; hence having an element of relativity even in the concept ‘absolute poverty’ is unavoidable.

The most vigorous defender of the concept, Amartya Sen, agrees with this when defining poverty as a condition, ‘where one does not have basic...
opportunities for material wellbeing’ (Ejernæs, Morten et al. 2004, p. 166). Erik Jørgen Hansen, who has conducted several comprehensive analyses of trends in poverty and inequality in Denmark takes this definition as an argument for abolishing the analytical distinction between absolute and relative poverty (ibid, pp. 166-67).

In Denmark as in the rest of Western Europe large portions of the rural and urban working class suffered from survival threatening absolute minimum level of existence poverty at least up to the First World War. At the present, as shown in figure 4, none in Denmark, at least officially, experience absolute poverty.

**Socially excluded or socially vulnerable (narrow definition) (category two)**

As mentioned before the official figure for the socially excluded in Denmark is 1.2% of the population. It reveals a political perception of the excluding mechanisms providing an official version of social exclusion that nobody in Denmark is defined as excluded simply because they are materially poor. This is clear in publications by the Ministry of Social Welfare (2003) as well as in the mandatory plan to the European Commission on how to combat social exclusion. Alcoholics, homeless, mentally retarded, drug addicts, prostitutes and criminals but no others are considered socially excluded. Some of these groups’ members are born with their handicap; i.e. in sociological terms their social problem is ascribed. Others might have experienced a process of marginalisation due to hardships in life, including long periods of unemployment. Some of them might originally have been hit by lifecycle exclusion, e.g. learning difficulties in school due to non-diagnosed dyslexia leading to reduced chances of further education or employment, and today primarily defined as something else.

It is obvious that changing mixtures of developmental, cultural and political explanations generate differing definitions of social exclusion on non material grounds. The attributes of the outsiders might be ascribed. Whether they are excluded or not in a given society, however, depends on social processes and social forces. Since according to the logic in this chapter category two is the only category that is purely non-material, it is here I would place groups of people whose position as outsiders has existed in all societies – now and before – as such people placed here are the epitome of what most people think of as outsiders.
Just as Eduardo Said argues that westerners in Occidentalism mirror themselves in a concept of ‘the other’ as Muslims in Orientalism, every society needs a group of outsiders that in one way or the other is different to the majority in a non-material sense and comparably inferior. Preben Brandt unfolds this argument in the Danish case (Brandt, 1999). It is interesting that such a relation, from the majority’s viewpoint, is presented as a case of difference (differentiation), whereas the group concerned struggle to have it presented as a case of suppression/oppression. This is at times the case with the Muslim perception of the West, but is perhaps even clearer in the case of India’s so-called untouchables, where the universality of interpretations is contested by opposing groups. Often in the West considered the epitome of outsiders: the untouchables (outcasts) of India, to an indigenous Brahmanical optic is considered part of a reciprocal system of unity, i.e. a community not seen as hierarchical (Mygind Madsen, 1996). The untouchables’ own movement, on the contrary, sees the group as oppressed and positioned at the bottom of a rigid suppressing hierarchy. Although I cannot think of a Danish case where difference in perception of an ‘excluded group’ in category two have been agitated as sharply as in the case of untouchables in India, I do believe, however, that it is a rather common phenomena that members of category two as well as members of category three have a discourse about themselves which is different from the dominant one - refugees and migrants from a minority ethnic group could perhaps be a Danish case to illustrate that the groups’ picture of itself is different from the ways they are seen by the majority.

The socially excluded (broad definition) (category three)

Unlike the narrow definition of non-material social exclusion, other definitions of social exclusion combine material and in particular participatory criteria. As mentioned above this is what Jørgen Elm Larsen does in his study of poverty and social exclusion in Denmark during the last 25 years (Elm Larsen, 2004).

Elm Larsen estimates that when three of the five conditions are filled 2.3% of the Danish population (approx. 126 500 persons) is in this category. He argues that not all of the relatively poor in Denmark are socially excluded in terms of social relations, health, professional and political activities and leisure time activities, only particularly vulnerable groups are both relatively poor and excluded from participation in the above mentioned social relations. The groups covered by the narrow definition also
appear in this category. Among those added there is an over represented group of single mothers as well as unemployed ethnic groups on social assistance (Ibid, pp. 12, 18-11).

Among the groups in Denmark year 2000 that, according to this definition, are not considered socially excluded are low paid workers as such – formally at the bottom in Erik Jørgen Hansen’s social group 5. Nor are older people with low earnings included. As a matter of fact, the group of elderly has between 1976 - 2000 experienced relatively more progress in terms of inclusion than any other group in the Danish society. It is only groups with combined exclusion criteria that are placed in category three, e.g. unskilled low paid workers with health problems and older people in bad health living solely on the old age pension.

The relatively poor (category four)

As mentioned above the concept relative poverty has long been used in writings on poverty and social exclusion. The concept originates from the British sociologist Peter Townsend, whose definition is:

Individuals, families and groups in the population lives in relative poverty when they lack resources to obtain the food, participate in the activities and enjoy the living conditions and pleasures that are normal or at least acknowledged in the societies, they belong to. Their resources are so far beyond the average for individuals and families that they are excluded from ordinary life patterns, habits and activities. (cited in Elm Larsen, 2004, p. 29)

This definition appears to be very close to Jørgen Elm Larsen’s broad definition of social exclusion (category three); however as Elm Larsen sees it, considerably more people populate the relative poor category (category four) than his five dimensional social exclusion category. As he estimates it 8% of the Danish population (approx. 440 000) are relatively poor as compared to the 2.3% in the broad definition category. The 8% are relatively poor since they, due to low income, suffer from a series of deprivations such as not being able to pay bills, see a dentist, purchase medicine or daily necessities such as food. Elm Larsen calculates low income as a combined index of annual income and purchasing capacity except overhead expenses. In a Danish context it is primarily single breadwinner households with children and retirees with old age pension as sole source of income who are categorised as relatively poor.
The relatively economic poor (category five)

Finally, the broadest definition of social exclusion as argued and used by Elm Larsen is purely economic. 13% (approx. 715 000 people) are calculated as relatively economic poor in Denmark in year 2000, in the sense simply that they lived on a low income (ibid, pp. 10-22). The 5% that has been added compared to the 8% in the relative poor category suffer less material deprivation than people in the fourth category. They primarily belong to the group of unskilled workers, Erik Jørgen Hansen formerly categorised as belonging to Social Group 5. Their living standard is better than for those in category four, but their participation in many activities is problematic due to low income.

Social inclusion or integration
Confusing concepts

If confusion characterises definitions and usage of the concept exclusion, it is nothing compared to the confusion that prevails regarding the usage in Denmark of the concepts inclusion and integration.

Most Danish literature on solutions to exclusion uses the concepts assimilation, integration and/or inclusion.

First of all, there is a lack of consensus about the meaning of these concepts. As figure 5 illustrates, Jørgen Elm Larsen understands the same by the concept ‘inclusion’ as Charlotte Hamburger understand by the concept ‘integration’ and what Charlotte Hamburger calls ‘assimilation’ is called ‘integration’ by Jørgen Elm Larsen. There is, however, consensus between the two, in the sense that they have the same ideas about what ‘the good’ and ‘the bad’ solution to social exclusion is. ’Good’ is when change is not forced and when at least some differences to the mainstream are allowed to remain as they are.
Figure 5: Illustration of differences in understandings of concepts regarding solutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of intervention to solve the problem of social exclusion:</th>
<th>Not forced / Differences to mainstream allowed</th>
<th>Forced / Differences to mainstream not allowed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept used by:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jørgen Elm Larsen (2004)</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Hamburger (1989)</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Assimilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Emerek (2003)</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Assimilation = Inclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Worse than the terminological confusion, however, is that, by simply discussing integration and inclusion in terms of whether changes are forced and whether certain characteristics are allowed to be maintained, the perspective reveals itself to be limited to one of difference, primarily relevant for the most narrow definition of who the excluded are, i.e. group no. 2 in Figure 4.

What should be added if the discussion on solutions to exclusion should include both a material/nonmaterial dimension and a stratification/differentiation perspective as argued in the first part of this chapter? Certainly more focus on the material side of the exclusion and on matters of stratification or subordination. In most contemporary social work and social pedagogic literature in Denmark the material side of the problem is almost absent, which is astonishing in the light of the country’s historical endeavours in terms of including the materially excluded. A reason could be that work with deviant groups takes place at an individual level by professional groups like social workers as cases of service provision, whereas inclusion/integration of the other groups necessarily (as the Danish system is constructed) takes place through inclusive policies at the macro level.

What would benefit the discussion further would be to include a discussion on the extent to which change/inclusion is expected to come from the behaviour of the excluded or the the included and its dominant institutions.

In order to broaden the scope for conceptualising the problem side, as well as suggesting some devices for solution, I have structured the follow-
ing discussion on inclusion/integration according to the five categories of social exclusion as discussed above. However, I have combined category one, four and five into one category labelled ‘excluded on material grounds’ and category two and three above into another category labelled ‘excluded on other grounds than material’. As regards category one and two, the process of inclusion have obviously taken place within a stratification perspective. As regards category three, four and five, I will argue that a stratification as well as a differentiation perspective have been applied.

Integration/inclusion of the different excluded groups in Denmark - how successful?

Including those who are excluded on material grounds

There are no doubts that Denmark in congruence with its welfare model and more specifically through its labour market and social policy has been and still is most successful in terms of including those who primarily due to unemployment, instable or low income have been categorised as categories one, four and five (see figure 4) into a fairly equally structured society. For that reason figures for exclusion on material grounds are comparatively low compared to the rest of the world.

How was this achieved?

As earlier mentioned generous public transfers to any citizen who happened to fall through market born material safety nets were in place up to the 1980s. In recent times, as Littlewood et al argues in chapter 2, Post Fordist inspired nations have chosen either a ‘capital oriented flexibility model’ or a ‘negotiated flexibility model’. Denmark of today falls into the ‘negotiated flexibility model’ category just as its activation policy out of two options falls into a human capital rather than a ‘work first’ category (Torfing, 2004, p. 41). In either one of the two dominant paths of modern welfare policies different outcomes in terms of solving the material aspects of social exclusion are produced and continue to be reproduced.

The common paths between nations which follow a flexibility model and nations that have followed a human capital oriented activation policy is far from accidental. It has historical roots and to a considerable extent can be deduced from the type of welfare regime the country represents and the ideologies it is based upon. To phrase it differently, Denmark, or its
parties in power such as the current liberal/conservative led government - represents a Scandinavian welfare regime that for decades has been committed to the project of including the working class into mainstream society and built its ideology and political strategy on breaking hierarchies within this society, i.e. the stratification conception of social exclusion.

As Littlewood et al illuminate in table 1, nations (chapter 2) that follow a flexibility model are likely both to prevent large wage inequalities within the working class and those outside the corporate triangle – at least more than if the sole focus is on a differentiation perspective on social exclusion.

Including those who are excluded on non material grounds

During the last 20 years, it has been popular to argue that Denmark has been less successful when it comes to including or integrating those who populate categories two and three, i.e. those who are socially excluded in terms of 'otherness'; lack of participation and lack of recognition by the majority society. Some would even argue that this follows logically from a welfare regime that primarily has been concerned with material aspects of exclusion.

Most probably this is not a fair judgement. Firstly, the universal materially oriented welfare state was shaped from the bottom, through participatory actions of the 'lower classes'. Secondly the Danish welfare state has been exemplary in encouraging the work of voluntary groups and has over the last 20 years deliberately encouraged the participation of users in public decision making and a variety of civil society intervention. Thirdly, there is no logical opposition between provision of material collective safety nets and participation.

More than anyone else in the public debate in Denmark Jørgen Goul Andersen (2003) has argued that in terms of empowering people in a broader perspective, i.e. on a large scale giving them the opportunities to participate, no nations have been more successful than the Scandinavian. At a micro level this was confirmed in his findings among members of Social Group 5 of the former official classification (unskilled workers with low income). Denmark is unique in the sense that these people to a surprising extent participate in politics and leisure time activities. Goul Andersen relates his explanation to the all embracing, inclusive educational system.
If policies towards the groups that Jørgen Elm Larsen (and the government in its Plan of Action) considers socially excluded in the narrow sense (category two) are studied, many of those who are found in the "homeless" category, also have a diagnosis as either drug addicts, alcoholics and/or mentally ill. However not all drug addicts are homeless – in the sense homelessness is officially defined as living in shelters. If the measures of help to these different groups are scrutinised, it is difficult to say whether the main aim is to include them into a majority community based on equality of opportunities or to simply preserve their position as outsiders.

In the group of socially excluded prostituted comprises in terms of several indicators a category which can be identified as different to the other groups. Its existence reflects a typical double standard in the dominant society's image of women and sexuality. Prostitution is allowed but at the same time society pities the women and offers them help to live more comfortably as prostitutes or to leave the business.

In category three where one also finds single mothers and unemployed on social assistance, including ethnic minorities on start allowances – material problems, isolation, lack of recognition and participation are mixed, and so are the solutions offered by a still mainly public system. Regarding single mothers the Danish welfare state, which is often characterised as being positively female biased, obviously offers better opportunities for a reasonable material life (incl. education opportunities) and participation than in most other countries (Hantraiis, 2000). Hence, policies towards single mothers must be characterised as inclusive in terms of providing opportunities to participate in the community on fairly equal terms with other household types.

The latter two groups in this category, ethnic minorities and Danes on social assistance, face more severe problems. Since they do not belong to the lowest category in terms of exclusion they are not covered by the government’s ‘Plan of Action’ aimed at vulnerable groups. These policies are the most assimilatory in terms of forced inclusion/integration without allowing for differences in identity markers. The policies towards this group involves more pressure or forced change, as their social assistance might be taken away if they do not accept an offered job or activation.

It is an important reason behind the problems of the people in category two and three that loneliness, lack of recognition and lack of social relations are problems the society has shown difficulties in tackling. Those in
category two have been pointed out as groups that need special attention. Hence, more generous interventions have flowed to them, perhaps at the expense of those in category three, especially groups on social assistance and in particular those among them belonging to an ethnic minority.

Ethnic minorities are often relatively well equipped with social ties to their own social groups but not to Danes in the majority community. To homeless people so called ‘værestede’ have been established as places where people can have needs or social ties met without pressures to change habits and no requirements on becoming like everybody else. Often volunteers work here, but the institutions are always supported financially by the public.

In conclusion, what characterises activities of inclusion/integration/assimilation of the socially excluded in category two and three and into what kind of community? Perhaps with prostitutes as an exception due to the double standards, but maybe even for them, there appears to be an attempt to help by using a variety of income transfers, by providing education offering skills so, if possible, they can transcend the border to mainstream society or by providing places/sites where they can be ‘in peace’ with or without the dominant society’s recognition.

Efforts to tackle the structures behind the social problem are seldom confronted. This is less easy with those who are born with a disability but when problems are caused by socialisation, society could make an effort to tackle the problem in that way.

Perhaps one might argue that the current government tries to solve the structural causes of the immigrant problem by restricting entry into the country, and what the government sees as the structural problem behind unemployment by putting pressure on the unemployed to get a job. It appears to help in the sense that more people are gaining employment, however, very likely by including them into a community (majority Denmark), which is less equally structured than it was before.

International comparison and future prospects

What does it mean to social exclusion and integration that Denmark currently is (perhaps) passing a transitional stage from a Social Democratic welfare model to a more liberal type of welfare regime?

It is to be envisaged that several developments but particularly the loosening of the tight publicly provided security net for the weakest sec-
tion of the population will increase the number and types of excluded persons and make cases of material exclusion more permanent.

Since the government through its European Union membership has committed itself to work out and every five years rethink a strategy to combat social exclusion, interpreted as assistance to those in category two, problems are likely to grow in the groups just above, i.e. those in category three including those whose problems are primarily material. For instance members of category two are left in peace from pressures to work for the allowances they receive, as they are typically placed in The Occupational Ministry’s newly invented Match group 5 (a new classification of the population according to assessments of their work capacity).

If some of the excluded manage to become included there are tendencies towards it being in a community which becomes more unequal, i.e. with acceptance of larger wage differentials than earlier in Danish social history. Compared with other countries, Denmark still has a high score in terms of equality, but the policies of recent years have initiated a polarisation, not least because of a very favourable policy towards house owners and more restrictive policies especially towards members of ethnic minorities receiving social assistance. This is creating new cleavages in the population, which even the once so strong Social Democratic Party, is not prepared to face.

However, internationally, Denmark is still a nation with few excluded on material grounds and where policies of including those who are different (perhaps except for the ethnic minorities) is more progressive than elsewhere. As there is strong path dependency even in the case of changing political management, it will probably take some time to change the hitherto followed policy of inclusion.