

W O R K I N G P A P E R

***Women and Homelessness***  
***National Report for FEANTSA 1999***  
***Denmark***

***Inger Koch-Nielsen***  
***Anders Munk***  
***Mette Raun***  
***Tobias Børner Stax***

***Social Policy and Marginalisation***  
***Working Paper 10:2000***



***The Danish National Institute of Social Research***

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## **The Study**

This report has been produced for the Observatory on Homelessness, managed by FEANTSA: European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless. The Observatory is supported financially by the Commission of the European Union.

The topic of this report – women and social exclusion – was decided upon by the Observatory as a common European theme for 1999. The report is based on the guidelines set up by the Observatory in the annual meeting 1999.

Together with a national report from each of the other 14 EU-member countries the report makes up the foundation for a transnational report to be published during 2001 at Polity Press.

The Danish report has been compiled and analyzed by Anders Munk, Inger Koch-Nielsen, Mette Raun, Tobias Børner Stax, all employed at The Danish National Institute of Social Research at the time of writing.

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## Chapter 1:

### Introduction: Purpose, Objectives and Method

This annual report for the FEANTSA network on homelessness and social exclusion for 1999 focuses upon women and social exclusion.

The topic could not be more to the point if one wanted to capture the current Danish debate on social exclusion. This is not to say that there is a current attention upon the women living as socially excluded in Denmark - rather the case would be the opposite. There is in government a perception that homeless people are male to the degree that this is a characteristic that must be highlighted and thus to a degree where those women who are living as socially excluded are neglected. By focusing on women we hope to re-inscribe them into the discourse on homelessness and thereby to present the women living as socially excluded as *existing*. We shall as well touch upon the understanding of women and social exclusion that we find to exist in major parts of the research carried out in the field. We shall argue that just as it might be problematic to exclude the women from the group of excluded, it is also problematic to include all kinds of women under the heading of socially excluded. The latter we find to be a frequently applied strategy in attempts to provide an understanding that would allow room for socially excluded women. Such practice might again limit the possibilities for formulating policies that relates to the various situations of the excluded women.

The report takes its outset in the *Brief for Research: 1999*, formulated by the FEANTSA organization. Here it is written that:

“[t]he purpose of this research is to explore, within the European context, the nature of the problem of homelessness as it pertains to and is experienced by women.” (Edgar, et al. 1999: 2)

The reasons for focusing the annual reports on homelessness and women are:

“First,...a general concern that the number of homeless women may be increasing in absolute and/or relative terms in all EU countries as a result of demographic, social and economic changes” (Edgar, et al. 1999: 2)

“Secondly, it is widely recognized in many EU countries, that housing and social welfare provision for homeless women is either inadequate (...) or inappropriate.” (Edgar, et al. 1999: 2)

“Thirdly, there is a growing recognition of an important gender dimension to the problem of homelessness. In particular it is increasingly accepted that there is a lack of understanding among policy makers and others regarding the nature of the women’s homelessness experiences” (Edgar, et al. 1999: 3)

The *Brief for Research* also points to three issues that should, as far as possible, be addressed in this years report to FEANTSA:

“1. Awareness:

what is known about the scale and nature of the problem of homelessness among women

what is known of the present composition and the changing composition of homeless women

what are the prevailing attitudes - especially in government - towards women in relation to the need and the right to housing

2. Provision:

what provision is there for women - its scale and nature

what services do women use / get access to

### 3. Experience:

what are women's experiences of homelessness

what are their experiences of homeless services" (Edgar, et al. 1999: 3-4)

We have chosen to focus only upon parts of the suggested issues: We shall touch upon the aspect of awareness - where we shall provide a picture of what is known and of how the issue is perceived - and we shall touch upon the aspect of provision - where we will focus on some selected measures, but not attempt to excavate what types of measures exist neither the quantity available of different measures. We shall not at all touch upon the aspect of experiences. Not that this is not of interest – absolutely not – but it is beyond the possibilities in this years report to FEANTSA.

In *Brief for Research* an analytical framework for the report is also suggested: "We would suggest ... that an analytical approach which addressed the structural, institutional and personal or behavioural aspects of homelessness among women would provide a robust structure for the analysis." We have had this in mind, but only in mind. We have not found that the approach suggested in the *Brief for Research* provided us with a guideline for what *not to include*. Therefor we have drawn limits for our analytical approach ourselves. We shall for example leave almost all consideration of the personal or behavioural aspects out of the report. And we have chosen to include - at least - one additional issue in the national report: a reflection upon dogmas within the research of social exclusion and women. As touched upon above we have throughout much of the literature on the issue, as well as in the *Brief for research*, encountered what we find to be unsubstantiated claims about women and social exclusion. We shall argue that the repeating of existing dogmas not only does not make the dogmas true, but also - and worse - might harm the search for an understanding of those women who are living as socially excluded, as well as those in danger of becoming socially excluded.

We are thus not all in line with the *Brief for Research*, but we hope to touch upon most of the issue at one point or another.

What we intend to do in the report is (in order of appearance) thus:

- To review and discuss the existing literature on the issue of women and social exclusion pertaining to Denmark. Through this review we hope to present the current understandings of women and social exclusion and we intent to provide a frame in which the rest of the report can be comprehended. (Chapter 2)
- To outline some of the statistical information available on Denmark understood as influencing the group of women being socially excluded or threatened by social exclusion. And further to discuss the validity of the understood correlation. (Chapter 3)
- To outline the political-juridical development in selected areas considered of relevance for understanding women's social exclusion or threat of social exclusion. And further to discuss the validity of the understood correlation. (also in Chapter 3)
- To present the experiences of the staff at three institutions for socially excluded in Denmark. (Chapter 4)

## 1.1 A Brief Presentation of Methods

Before we turn to the reviewing of existing literature we will however briefly present the methods that we have used and briefly outline a few central concepts and paragraphs that hopefully will make the understanding of the discussion easier.

The report is based on our reading, interpretation, representation, and discussion of what we have found to be relevant existing literature and legislation as well as upon interviews with people employed at three different institutions.

We have interviewed the staff at *Sundholm*, *Garvergården* and (*Grevinde*) *Dannerhuset*. These institutions are chosen because of their differences: *Sundholm* we find to be an example of an institution that we in the report call a 'backstopper': an institution where visitation criteria are almost absent. Here socially excluded people (men and women) with all kinds of problems are accepted: people using illegal substances, people considered to be mentally ill, people with a significant intake of alcohol, etc. At *Sundholm* they are said to have room for the rest - 'those that does not fit in anywhere else'. This was the understanding we had of *Sundholm* prior to our working with this report and that is why we included the institution. *Garvergården* was chosen because it should be an institution with room for families and for single parents with children. Finally we have chosen to include a center for battered women and here we chose *Dannerhuset*.

By choosing different institutions we hope to outline some of the differences that exist between measures in Denmark.

The choice of these three institutions is somewhat arbitrary – we could have chosen others that would fulfil our criteria of being different.

Furthermore we could have chosen other types of measures. Hereby we are saying that this presentation is not exhaustive. There do exist other types of measures in Denmark.

All the institutions are located in Copenhagen. This is due to practical limitations.

The interviews we conducted at *Sundholm* and *Garvergården* was group interviews. At *Sundholm* we talked to three people at one time: one from each of the three main sections at the institution. At *Gravergården* we talked to most of people who were present at the time of the interview. Here four people participated in the interview. At *Dannerhuset* we talked to one person - the person responsible for the daily functioning. The interviews all lasted between 1 1/2 and 2 hours. We would characterize the interviews as partly structured since we had our mind set on a few topics we wanted to touch upon but there was room for 'free' conversation and for following up on issues the staff felt were of relevance.

The processing of the interviews consisted in constructing the main points from the interviews and interpreting the arguments keeping the topics outlined in the *Brief of Research* in mind. We would describe this process as highly structured and fairly "closed" – we had our mind set on some issues. Thus a new less structured interpretation of the interviews - where one would be more attentive towards, e.g. representing the understandings of social exclusion as it is put forward by the staff - could bring forth other aspects than what is highlighted here.

Finally it is important to underline that we only have talked to the *staff* at the institutions and not the *women* themselves. This is again due to lack of resources.



## 1.2 A few Central Concepts and Paragraphs

Very brief we shall provide conceptual clarification that hopefully will make the reading of the report easier. Some of the concepts will undergo changes through the report but we hope here to provide an initial understanding that might then be changed later on.

### *Homeless, socially excluded, socially marginalized*

In this report the three concepts are used almost interchangeably. We prefer ourselves to avoid the term homelessness. First, we find that it creates the initial impression that we are dealing with a housing issue, or an issue of having or not having a home. This might be the case for some of the people that we reflect upon in the report – but is not the case for all of them. Secondly, homeless and homelessness does not as easily lead to reflections over the relationship between the excluded and other parts of society as we would like. The term thereby fosters an impression of the ‘homeless’ as an evident and in it self understandable entity. We instead prefer the terms socially excluded or socially marginalized as these two terms directs the thinking towards the relationship between the excluded and the excluder. We are still having discussions on how the terms excluded and marginalized are standing in a relational to each other. Preliminary we are working with (at least) two understandings – that shall only very briefly touch upon here: On the one hand the two terms can be understood as expressing a degree of severity.<sup>1</sup> In this case the term socially excluded implies a situation that is either included under socially marginalized as the most marginal – the margin of the marginalized - or alternatively, the socially excluded indicates a position that follows after the socially marginalized in regard to severity.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand the two terms can be understood as more distinct from each other. Here we preliminary take social exclusion and socially excluded to be terms that *exposes* a dichotomous relationship between the normal and the deviant. In this sense we try to use the term socially excluded or social exclusion as terms that might expose what Derrida (e.g. 1976) calls the logocentric practice - the practice of dichotomous construction of differences which install the one side with a privilege in relation to the other. In this understanding the relation between the two poles becomes less important to expose in its concrete empirical manifestations, than as each others hidden and conceptual – and thus political – prerequisites. The term socially marginalized does as well indicate a relationship between the normal and the deviant but the focus here is less on the construction / upholding / re-construction of differences than upon empirical presentation of the manifestations of differences.

It should be noticed that we do use the term ‘homeless’ once in while through the report. We primarily use it during the reviews, as it is the term that the two central pieces of research on women and social exclusion use. In these situations we explicitly reflect upon how they use the concept.

*Two central sections* in the social legislation shall as well be presented here. That is *section 105* in The Social Assistance Act – the social legislation that existed until it was replaced in 1998 by three new bills. Of the three new bills the legislation on Social Service is of most importance and in this bill we draw attention to *section 94*. These two sections – 105 and 94 –

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<sup>1</sup> This construction of a continuum from the normal to the deviant, excluded, marginalized can be found in much reserach in Denmark (e.g. Brandt, 1992; Børner, 1997; Järvinen, 1993; Kristensen, 1994; Stax, 2000B).

<sup>2</sup> As we would not like to imply an understanding of the paths to either exclusion or marginalization we are not writing that one is first marginalized then excluded.

are those that gives the regional county administration an obligation for providing shelters and also refuges for battered women.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.3 Summary

The issue of awareness

- ◆ An awareness of women and social exclusion is existing, but at different levels in different fields and in different shapes. Most important is probably to point out – and hopefully change – that at a political level there seems to be an unawareness of women living a rough life on the edge of our society. Here we have found indications that the world of the excluded – understood narrowly – is a man's world *without* women. It has been shown (Stax, 2000A) that there is a significant overweight of men, but that the women living there are really excluded and that it is important not to overlook these people.
- ◆ What is acknowledged – but which might need to be revitalized in the debate on women's situation in Denmark – is that violence in the family is the most significant cause for someone to seek shelter at a refuge for battered women.

#### The provisions:

- ◆ On a general level there exist measures that provide a safety net for people – not just excluded or women, but everybody – in regard to paying rent, giving birth, having your kids look after while working, becoming old... These measures are part of the general provisions under the welfare state and they are not targeted, but they still constitute the most important set of measures when understanding how the road towards social exclusion is attempted blocked.
- ◆ The measures – welfare benefit, child benefit, old age pension, sick pension, etc. – are not dependent upon a previous connection to the labor market. They are carried by each and every one as individuals – also people with welfare pency having never been on the labor market.
- ◆ It is primarily as a consequence of these measures that we dare write that there only is a limited number of old people living as socially excluded, that there are very few single mothers (or fathers) living as socially excluded.
- ◆ The measures are mostly connected to the individual not the family, which lowers barriers against getting a divorce from a violent spouse where the women is not excluded from receiving benefits while waiting for the divorce to be carried through.
- ◆ Some measures, however, are connected to the household income. That is the case for benefits paid out in accordance to the social legislation and thus the measures that are primarily aimed for the segment of society with lowest income.

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<sup>3</sup> For a further discussion on the social legislation see Stax & Kæmpe, 1998.

## Chapter 2:

### Reviews of Existing Literature Reflecting on Women and Social Exclusion in Denmark

We shall begin by reviewing what we have found to be literature dealing with the issue of women and homelessness in Denmark. Through this reviewing we hope to outline both what is currently understood to be the situation for women being socially excluded in Denmark as well as outline how the phenomenon of women and social exclusion is understood. After having presented the current understanding we shall be better prepared for discussing the claims made in regard to women and social exclusion, both in the Danish literature and in the FEANTSA: brief for research, as well as identifying the practical implications of the understanding of the issue.

There are, to our knowledge, two pieces of research conducted during the '90 that focuses upon socially excluded women. These are on the one hand Margaretha Järvinen's *De nye hjemløse: Kvinder, fattigdom og vold* [The new Homeless: Women, Poverty, and Violence] for 1993 and on the other hand Catharina Juul Kristensen's *Nye fattige - unge hjemløse kvinder i København* [New Poor - Young Homeless Women in Copenhagen] from 1994.

#### 2.1 Margaretha Järvinen: *De nye hjemløse: Kvinder, fattigdom og vold* [The New Homeless: Women, Poverty, and Violence]

Järvinens book is to our knowledge the first to touch upon the relationship between social exclusion and women in later times in Denmark. Her book consists of four parts. The first part of the book discusses the development in the understanding of socially excluded in Denmark at various times, the second part zooms in on women - both through time, but primarily during the '90s. The third part discusses the understanding of the roles of various institutions in the light of normalization, re-socialization, and the view of some users. The fourth part re-tells eight concrete stories of women having been socially excluded. We will focus only upon the two first parts. Not that the two last sections are not interesting but we have not been able to include the perspectives of the users in this report. We shall however include a few reflections upon the understanding of normalization and re-socialization.

Methodologically Järvinen's book is primarily based upon interviews with 40 socially excluded women and interviews with 46 people employed at the institutions for homeless. But in her book she also discusses various quantitative information available and the political context in which this information is provided.

To avoid terminological confusion it should be noticed that Järvinen herself uses the term homeless for the group of women she has interviewed. We have above argued against the use of this concept: It creates the initial impression that we are dealing with a housing issue, or an issue of having or not having a home, it does not necessitate the reflection on the relationship between the homeless and other parts of society, and it thereby constructs an impression of the 'homeless' as an evident and by it self clarifiable entity. We thus prefer the terms socially excluded or socially marginalized. There are however no substantial differences between Järvinen's use of the term homeless and our preferences for the two other terms. She is well aware of the relationship between the excluded and the excluder, the process of categoriza-

tions, and the centrality of the choice of terminology (see also Järvinen, 1992). But she prefers to use the term homelessness anyway.

### 2.1.1 The Theoretical Context and the Understanding of Homelessness

Järvinen points out that the explanation of homelessness has changed over time: At times the focus has been upon structural causes, at times explanation has tended towards functional understandings, sometimes the focus has been upon cultural or sub-cultural concepts. The explanations that she finds have been most frequently referred to are those taking off in medicine and/or psychology. Here the problem of homelessness is considered caused by insecure and chaotic upbringing and adaptional problems (p. 15). This approach can be found in the work of Brandt (1992)<sup>4</sup> who finds that the childhood of the people using institutions for socially excluded in Copenhagen between 1988 and 1989 for most of these (76 percent) are characterized by many disturbing experiences - e.g. various parental figures, bad economy, lack of emotional contact - and he finds a whole row of mental problems - behavioral disturbances, symptoms on mental illness, early substance abuse - which he understands as factors derived from the chaotic upbringing. Only in four percent of the cases Brandt does not find some disturbing factors that can be ascribed to the childhood.<sup>5</sup>

Järvinen does not use an approach similar to that of Brandt. She is “inspired by the discursive research tradition ... This means that [she] in general will analyze homelessness as a social construction.” (p. 15) Later she specifies how she understands this perspective as focusing her research (see also Järvinen & Bertilson, 1998). Inspired by Foucault (1972) she approaches homelessness by searching for points of diffractions, principles of exclusions, categories, and functions: With a focus upon points of diffractions she intends to highlight how various explanations have taken over as the dominant understanding in a given times and space. By focusing upon principles of exclusions she intends to include reflections upon those understandings which at any given moment have not been invested with explanatory power in regard to homelessness. By focusing upon the process of categorizations she intends to outline how the praxis of ordering phenomena is not evident - as they might at first seem - but are contingent.<sup>6</sup> And by focusing upon the functions of homelessness she intends to connect the above three points to a political dimension, showing that a discursive understanding - with a concrete categorization - is political, not given (p. 28). By now it should be clear why we do not find a substantive difference between our term of socially excluded and Järvinen’s use of the term homeless.

Through the four focusing points she identifies four dimensions that has been present in the Danish understanding of homelessness:

There is a continual *interplay between structurally and individually based explanations* (p. 28). As outlined above there has been a tendency over the last decades to orient the focus towards individually based explanations. We have already mentioned Brandt’s report from 1992, but Stax (2000A), as well uses such approach. A large part of his report is based on

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<sup>4</sup>Brandt’s analysis is based on 960 people who used institutions for homeless in Copenhagen municipality in 1988-89. They were between 18 and 35 years of age at the time they used the institution and they had to be there for at least five days in a row. With 129 of the 960 he conducted interviews through which he obtained information about the living conditions prior to the use of an institution and through which he evaluated their mental condition, their use of substances, and the like.

<sup>5</sup>See especially chapter 6 in Brandt, 1992.

<sup>6</sup>Meaning that they are derived from the past, but that the current formation could have been different. They are thus not existing independently, but neither are they determined and shaped by history or causality.

aggregated statistical information pertaining to about 1.000 people who used institutions for socially excluded ten years ago. In addition there are a range of articles that deals with the characteristics of users of specific institutions or socially excluded in specific areas. Most of these as well - often implicitly - take as their understanding of social exclusion an individually based starting point (Gleerup, 1987; Foged, et al., 1991; Munk-Jørgensen, et al., 1992; Eskelinen, et al., 1994; Koch-Nielsen & Stax, 1999). It is more difficult to find projects that focus on a structural explanation.

There is an often present *distinction between the new homeless and the traditional homeless* (p. 29). A recent examples on an explicit categorization that uses this distinction can be found in Koch-Nielsen & Stax (1999). Here a typology of homelessness is constructed and one of the type of people presented is 'the traditional homeless'. He is part of a group of people who are "relatively well functioning middle aged men staying at reception centers for several years, but who could or might be moving out either to a private flat or probably to a sheltered flat connected to the center." (Koch-Nielsen & Stax, 1999: 434)

This picture of the people that used to be - people who at present is remembered as not so severely excluded, or not in such great need for care, they could easier take care of themselves - is then contrasted to the new socially excluded: a group with severe difficulties, in need of extensive care, etc. (See also Børner, 1997A; Jensen, 1995; and Stax 2000B for reflections upon or use of the distinction). We shall return to the other side of the dichotomy - the *new socially excluded* - below.

There is at all times a *categorization into deserving and undeserving homeless* - or into unprovoked versus self inflicted homelessness (p. 30). At various times the distinction between deserving and undeserving has been drawn at different points. We are aware of no actual analysis of the development of this distinction over time, and it would not be possible here to go through the development of e.g. the social legislation to try to identify an understanding of deserving versus undeserving excluded, or arguments for what measures that are to be used in regard to what categorized problems. What we have found indications of is, that there are more people who find that those abusing substances (drugs and alcohol) to a larger degree are primarily responsible than are for example mentally ill (Koch-Nielsen, 1996; Stax & Kæmpe, 1999). At time there appear articles in newspapers that indicates that the drug abusers creates problems for other inhabitants at the shelters (Berlingske Tidende, 1996).

There is often a categorization into *degrees of severity of the homelessness* (p. 31). This categorization can be found in most of the literature we have encountered: In articles from the academic world: Brandt, 1992; Jensen, 1995; Jensen, 1997; Koch-Nielsen & Stax, 1999; Stax, 2000A; - and also in Järvinen's own book; in the self perception of institutions - see for example the interviews that we present below, or the interviews that Järvinen conduct with various people working at the institutions; and in the political debate on the issue. Stax present an argument for what he finds to be the current understanding of homelessness (2000B). He argues that there are two dimensions that are often used in the political categorization of homelessness. One dimension constructs a hierarchy of severity based on the place one is expected to be staying. This continuum varies between staying on the street and living in a flat or house that one owns - somewhat similar to the home-to-homeless-continuum presented by Watson (1984). Depending upon the aim in the concrete political discussion the delimitation of the excluded is then drawn somewhere between those living at shelters and those living under insecure tenure.<sup>7</sup> In addition to these understandings there is a distinction between homeless with and without dependent children. Until recently the legislation stated an obligation to provide housing for those who were a family only. This was changed as late as 1995 where single people were as well to be accommodated could they not handle this themselves. We have

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<sup>7</sup>The second dimension that Stax finds is present in the Danish understanding of homelessness runs along the idea of a typology such as that found in Koch-Nielsen & Stax, 1999 or the one outlined by Watson (1984).

other where reflected upon this legislative change (Børner & Koch-Nielsen, 1996; Stax & Kæmpe, 1999) and it is clear that there are still differences in the situation where a unit with dependent children stands without a place to stay and the situation where a single person is in the same situation. The first case is considered significantly worse.

Through these four dimensions Järvinen presents a reading of the various measures enacted, policies produced, and rhetoric heard.

After having presented the theoretical approach, and used this for narrating the development up till the 80's and 90's which is the period she focuses upon in most of her book, she turns to a discussion of rhetoric and statistics that she finds to be present at the time of writing. She identifies three theses that this understanding takes for granted:

- Homelessness is an abnormal situation which is unwanted and therefor a situation that ought to be - and can be - normalized.
- Homelessness as a social problem is directly related to the size of the phenomenon.
- And therefor - thirdly - the understanding of homelessness can only legitimize itself through references to quantitative information.

She then runs through various quantitative estimations of the homeless population. Especially she looks at the development in regard to three often posed statements:

**First: There is a general increase in the number of homeless.** Here she points out that no statistical information that is suitable for comparison is available. For such a purpose the development in the population counted has undergone too great changes. She furthermore states that “the development from an absolute to a relative concept of homelessness (...) has made the terminology so airy that it is unsuitable for quantitative estimations.” (p.42) “But that none the less such quantitative estimations are continually carried out.” (p. 42) It has been interesting to notice how the former minister of social affairs at one point stated that there existed around 6.000-8.000 homeless people in Denmark. We have not had any success trying to track down the source for this estimation - not through inquiring at the staff in the ministry, nor by reading work of our colleagues. However, this figure is now the one referred to in news and in political discussions. The figure is even presented in a ministerial guideline on the interpretation and fulfilment of the about two years old social legislation on the area: The bill on social service.<sup>8</sup> Thus through a continual referring to a number - that no one can explain from where came - an official statement on the number of homeless people in Denmark is created. There are however opposing simulacra regarding the number of homeless in Denmark. An overview of all the different figures can be found in Børner, 1997B<sup>9</sup> - or to get the latest update one can look through the larger Danish newspapers articles on the issue over the last couple of month.

**Second: The homeless become younger and younger.** Here Järvinen uses the statistics available at local institutions to show that this is not the case. And she sarcastically states that if the population had actually been younger and younger every time this was stated by people working with the issue, the homeless of today had to be consisting of only kids (p.47). In an analysis of the available information from Statistics Denmark on the age of people using the institutions for homeless it is shown that from 1980 up til 1995 some changes do occur: there is throughout the period a decline in the number of users older than 60 years of age. There is also an increase in the number of users younger than 20 years of age. But this development begins with almost none in 1981 then increases until it peaks in 1989. Thereafter the number below the age of 20 is almost halved over a couple of years and has stayed at that level up til 1995. The number of people using the institutions between 40 and 59 years of age is almost constant between 1981 and 1995. The last group of people - those between 40 and 59 years of

<sup>8</sup>For a presentation of the new legislation see Stax & Kæmpe, 1999.

<sup>9</sup>An english summary exists in Børner, 1997B.

age increases from 1981 and up to 1992, then this group of people declines in number (Børner, 1997B). If we look to the latest available information on the age distribution presented by Statistics Denmark - which concern the users of the institutions during one week in January 1998 - we find that the number of people under 20 years of age have declined further - it was in 1998 one third of the 1995 level. At institutions other than centers for battered women - a type of institution that we shall return to below - people under 20 years of age are practically not found. The oldest group of users has continued to decrease, whereas both the number of people between 20 and 39 years of age and the number of people between 40 and 59 years have increased up till 1998 (Statistics Denmark, 1999A). But the idea of the users becoming younger and younger might not be as present today as it was previously the case. In our interview at *Sundholm* we hear that the number of young women is declining.

Third: *There is an increase in the number of mentally disturbed people at the institutions for homeless.* Also here she finds that this understanding is hard to support. And she seems to imply that the understood development has more to do with those conducting studies than with the users of institutions for homeless (p. 51ff). This issue can be understood in relation to her criticizing the domination of an understanding of social exclusion based in a medical/psychological discourse which we have touched upon above.

### 2.1.2 Women and Homelessness

The second section in *De nye hjemløse* zooms in on women and homelessness. Järvinen begins by a historical presentation of women living on the margin of the Danish society. By this historical outline she manages to illustrate that women being socially excluded are not - as it is otherwise stated - a new problem (e.g. Kristensen, 1994, see below). Through reviewing the annual reports from various old institutions for socially excluded primarily in Copenhagen Järvinen paints a picture of a development among homeless women: She shows that the rate of women in the institutions between 1824-1870 was about 20-30 percent of the users. During the beginning of the 1900 the rate of women declined to less than 10 percent. In 1933 she finds that 4 percent of the users of *Ladegaarden* (what later became *Sundholm*) were women, and she finds that other institutions experience the same tendencies.

However, at the same time Järvinen finds indications of changes in whom are categorized as homeless women - or as women that are to be allowed into the institutions for socially excluded. In the annual report from 1903 from the only institution that is aimed at women in the beginning of the century she reads that the aim is "not to support those who has sunken so low that they are not interested in working but only those ... who needs brief support before they can take care of themselves again." (Kvindehjemmets årsberetning 1903:4 in Järvinen, 1993:60). From the annual report from 1908 she quotes: "Women about whom one has reason to suspect that they secure an income by begging or by prostitution can be denied a place to sleep and can be expelled from the institution." (Kvindehjemmets årsberetning 1908:3 in Järvinen, 1993:61). Here we find a clear example on the practice of distinguishing between those considered deserving versus those considered to have acted in manners - or being acting in manners - that makes their life on the margin self-inflicted to such a degree that they are less - or non - deserving of support. One interesting lesson from this regards our capabilities of seeing such construction of distinctions in our present time: When reading the annual reports from old days we all agree that such distinction between those deserving and those not deserving illuminates the existence of an understanding that leaves someone in a more difficult position. We can all immediately see that such policy necessitates the providing of alternative places, or necessitates a reformulation. But what about now? Do there exist such distinctions

today? And if so, would we be able to see them? Is it just so that we cannot see them as we are ourselves solidly planted in the discourse that legitimizes the upholding of an eventual distinction between the deserving versus the non-deserving.

By looking at the development of the number of users at the above mentioned institution for women Järvinen finds that there has been a large fluctuation during this century. However, she also finds that the fluctuation is largely carried by single homeless women while the number of women with children has been more constant. Here Järvinen identifies a distinction that we shall reflect upon at various discussions in this report: women living on the margin with and without children. Through the reading of the annual reports from the institution for women Järvinen finds that the women with children “always has been the group of residents prioritized: the category that has been described and photographed in the annual reports. When the institution at various times has cut down on available beds it has typically been the beds for single women [without children]. Taking into account that the institution long has been the only shelter/working home that existed for women one might ask where the homeless women without children went.” (p.64)

We have reflected upon this distinction between the help provided to families moving on the edge of society versus the help provided to single people moving around the same edge above - and it might be the closest we come to identifying a construction of deserving versus undeserving in the present understanding of the socially excluded. The delimitation has been identified in quite a lot of recent research (e.g. Kristensen, 1994; Watson, 1984; Watson & Austerberry, 1986; as well as various commenting by the people working at the institutions for socially excluded), and we have elsewhere discussed the changes that have taken place legally (Børner & Koch-Nielsen, 1996; Stax & Kæmpe, 1999). Whether the distinction is now dissolved is not evident rather would we still expect to find evidence of a practice that turns the single people to institutions to a larger degree than it is the case with families. An understanding we have found in our interviews which we shall return to below.

It is unclear how the number of women fluctuates during the 1900. But in 1979 Järvinen finds about 8 percent of the residents at *Sundholm* to be women. In 1992 she finds the equivalent rate to be 19 percent. The women that are now using the institution are described first as women coming from violent relationships typically between 40 and 50 years of age. Second - and not that many - a group of women above 60 years of age having lived at *Sundholm* for longer time. And thirdly women using euphorants. A large part of this last group has earned an income through prostitution.



### 2.1.2.1 Current Dimensions of Social Exclusion of Women

Järvinen organizes the presentation of what characterizes women and social exclusion into five sections: 1) poverty 2) violence 3) troubled parent-children relationship 4) mental illness and substance abuse 5) problems pertaining to 'foreigners'.<sup>10</sup> The first three issues are found in most works dealing with the issue of women and homelessness that we are aware of (e.g. Kristensen, 1994; Watson, 1984; Watson & Austerberry, 1986). The next issue is found in most studies in Denmark that deals with the group of people being socially excluded (e.g. Brandt, 1992; Jensen, 1995; Koch-Nielsen & Stax, 1999; Stax, 1998; 2000A), but it is not an issue that has a central role in much of the literature from non-Scandinavian countries. The focus reflects the orientation, of social exclusion not being primarily a housing issue, that has been existing in Denmark for the last one or two decades. It is interesting to notice - and we shall reflect upon this later on - that in the works dealing with women and social exclusion the housing issue to a certain degree reenters the stage in the conceptual clarification of homelessness, exclusion, marginalization, etc. The last issue brought forth by Järvinen - 'the foreigners' - is an issue that has only been marginally touched upon in almost all the research conducted on social exclusion - at least in Denmark

On the issue of **poverty** Järvinen takes off in an international discourse on a feminization of poverty (see e.g. Watson, 1984; Watson & Austerberry, 1986 for a connecting of the feminization of poverty to social exclusion / homelessness). Two factors are supposed to be of particular relevance: 1) The weak position in regard to the labor market held by women, and 2) changes in the family structure where single women with children constitutes an extremely vulnerable group of people.

Despite the existence of "the nordic welfare policy with rent subsidy, child support, and other social supportive schemes" (p. 79) Järvinen still finds that single parents are in a difficult situation. Järvinen as well finds that the new poverty might not be as *new* as often claimed. Rather it is newly discovered poverty. We shall later look at how this development can be found in the current Danish society.

On the issue of **violence** Järvinen writes: "In interview after interview on all types of institutions the women tell about the acts of violence that they have been exposed to from their male co-habitant. Should one point to one factor that can explain the increase in women in the statistics on homelessness one should without doubt focus upon the violence in the family." (p. 90)

Järvinen also states that this is an issue that has been in focus over the last couple of years and she points to legal changes that has made separation and divorce due to violence easier and made it easier to obtain legal support and to request the closing of an eventual court proceedings to the public. (p. 91).

However the problem of violence is still a (if not the) most significant one. The support for this Järvinen finds in three factors: "First, the women (still) experience that their problems are not taken seriously by the authorities." (p. 98) "Secondly a part of the interviewed have a general suspicion towards the authorities. They assume that their situation shall aggravate should

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<sup>10</sup>This does not mean that they are not necessarily Danish citizens. That they might very well be. They can also have been born in Denmark and lived here all their life - in which case we would refer to them as 'second generation foreigners'. What seems to be of uttermost importance in limiting this group of people is first the immediate 'Danishness' at first sight - the more they look like what we think we look like the less they are categorised as *the foreign* - and second the less the dare to question our thought of way of living the less they are part of *the foreign*.

they inform their social worker, the police, or the emergency room about their problems... Thirdly the women experience that the provision by the authorities are useless.” (p. 99)

It is interesting here to include a reflection that we encounter in one of the interviews with the staff at an institution for battered women. Here the leader of the institution finds that the acknowledging of violence as constituting a problem in many families is on decline. She thinks that an unfortunate process is currently underway: We have got used to the hearing that violence is a problem, and we have got used to acknowledging that this is so, but with this ‘getting used to’ also came a decline in actual awareness of the problem. She believes that there is sort of a ‘seen that, been there’-attitude towards women who are victims of violence, and thus a decline in actual awareness and actual willingness to do something about the problem - an understanding that ‘we have already taken care of that’. She thus hopes for a rekindling of a debate on women being victims of violence in their homes. One of the things she hopes for from this debate is that the question of domestic violence is divided from questions of more traditional homelessness as pertaining to the most excluded women in our society.

In regard to the **relationship between parents and children** - or more accurately: women and children - Järvinen points to a development towards providing measures that moves between the provision of some kind of treatment and some kind of control. She writes that the aim at the ‘family institutions’ as they are called understands their responsibility - not just to provide shelter, but also to deal with problems in regard to raising children, to the relationship between primarily mother and child, to personal problems, etc. (p. 104)

Järvinen as well touches upon the role of having a child for the women moving on the margin of our society. She writes: “Quite a few of the leaders at institutions emphasize that the role as parent is a stabilizing factor in the life of the women. The caring for children is what hinders the women from becoming as excluded as men.” (p. 115) But, as we shall return to in the discussion of the interviews below, we have also found indications that when the child is removed and when the woman ends up at *Sundholm* the situation is so horrifying for the woman that she soothes her sorrow by constantly being sedated by euphorants.

**The mentally ill and the people using illegal substances** are primarily presented as a group of people who are not welcome - a group of excluded among the excluded. Järvinen writes: “Out of the 22 institutions included in [her] research project the 16 categorically informs that they do not enrol drug users and mentally ill.” (p. 116)

She as well presents us with some of the explanations of why these people are not accepted at a majority of institutions: First the mentally ill and the drug users create discomfort with the other tenants and they make it difficult to uphold the order of the institutions limited resources. Secondly the institutions often point out that they only have limited resources, and that these are too limited to take care of people with mental illness and/or who are using euphorants. This argument Järvinen finds extent to the physical limits of the institutions: “On the one hand it is the opinion that it is not possible to enrol people who uses illegal substances or mentally ill at institutions that are based upon a large collectivity - with shared kitchen, living room, and shower - on the other hand it is the opinion at institutions with separate flats for the tenants that the people using illegal substances and the mentally ill cannot handle to live behind locked doors.” (p. 117)

The consequence of the exclusion of people using drugs and of the mentally ill is that these people have to use the ‘backstopping’ institutions - or the emergency shelters - which are also

the institutions with fewest resources - in regard to staff, finances per tenants, etc. For the women this problem is enlarged as the larger 'backstopping' institutions - like *Sundholm* and *Hillerødgade* - are said to be rather discomfoting places to be, which we take to mean that they are significantly dominated by male tenants.

The last of the five themes that Järvinen touches upon is the group that in the Danish debate is mostly referred to as '**the foreigners**'.

Järvinen identifies three group of tenants falling into this category: Women who have come to Denmark through reunification of families; Women from another country moving to Denmark when marrying a Danish citizen and other immigrants/refugees living in Denmark. (p. 129)

Up till present the foreigners are seen as less socially burdened that it is the case with other tenants at the institutions. They are presented as using the institutions due to lacking a dwelling only. But this is presented as a problem: If it is only lack of a dwelling that is the cause for using the institutions they are often not seen as the right ones to have staying. They are not fitting into the idea of also treating or normalizing the people living there. Furthermore this practice of applying for a place at a shelter due to only housing problems might indicate that there are some discomfoting practices in the provision of dwellings. In more of Järvinen's interviews with staff she is told that the foreigners are discriminated by the housing associations (p. 134). This is confirmed through the interview at *Garvergården* and in Stax (2000A). Through interviews with people who lived at shelters or centers for battered women ten years ago he finds indications that some people are discriminated in the assignment of dwellings. This understanding is however disconfirmed in our interviews at *Sundholm*.

Järvinen identifies three types of problems that is understood as pertaining to this group of people in particular. First there exists a language barrier in the interaction. This has led some institutions to impose a maximum of foreigners at any given time. Second the staff see a cultural conflict between the different groups which creates tensions at the institutions. Thirdly the foreigners are not seen fitting into the treatment that is used at some institutions. The foreigners are closed and unapproachable. (p. 131-3) This leads to the same consequences as was seen in regard to the people using substances and being mentally ill: they are excluded from some of the institutions and pushed to the 'backstoppers' - the institutions with the fewest resources.

### **2.1.2.2 The Development at the Institutions for Socially Excluded**

One of Järvinen's conclusion on the development at the institutions for socially excluded, and the development in the group of socially excluded people, is that we have seen a tendency towards further exclusion of those most excluded: There has been an increase in the number of institutions with restricted visitation criteria excluding the people suffering from a use of substances and the people suffering from a mental illness. She connects this development with an increasing desire to treat or normalize the people moving on the edge: "If the institutions did only serve the function of providing immediate comfort - i.e. offering places to sleep... - then the 'most difficult' among the homeless should have the same options as everybody else. However, most of the institutions have a significantly more ambitious aim than [just providing immediate comfort]." (p. 125)

She later writes - and here with special emphasis on the foreigners:

"Today the institutions have - somehow hesitantly - opened up for the foreigners. That a relatively homogenous group of tenants functions better than a too heterogeneous one is emphasized by many leaders of the institutions. The principle, that each institutions itself chooses its

users, is unchallenged at the institutions; only under this principle do they find themselves capable of offering an optimal support. The problem is that the interests of the institutions in specializing is not equally distributed over the whole spectrum of homeless - there are always some groups that are located in the periphery.”

## 2.2 Catherina Juul Kristensen: Nye fattige - unge hjemløse kvinder i København [New Poor - Young Homeless Women in Copenhagen]

The second piece of research that we shall draw attention to is written by Catherina Juul Kristensen. The book is published a little later than Järvinen’s presented above. Her title sounds somewhat similar to that of Järvinen. However, Kristensen’s book is different. Kristensen is more in line with Watson (1984) and with Watson & Austerberry (1986) which she is referring to extensively. In her book Kristensen thus places most of the assumptions pertaining to women and socially excluded that we find in the *Brief for research* into a Danish debate. We shall discuss some of these assumptions through our reading of Kristensen here. But it is as well an issue that we shall take up later.

Kristensen’s reasons for writing the book on women and homelessness is what she finds to be the empirical situation: that there at present are many more women, women with children, and young women who are using the institutions for homeless than it has previously been the case (p. 12). She points out that the focusing upon the relationship between homelessness and women is rather new in Denmark. Prior to the 1990 no such focus existed.

Already in the Kristensen’s legitimization of the study we see a distinction between Kristensen and Järvinen. Kristensen refers to two of the theses that Järvinen questions - and that we have argued are more mythical than actual: that is on the one hand that the population using the institutions for socially excluded has become younger, and secondly that there has been a general feminization of the socially excluded population.<sup>11</sup> Additionally we can see Kristensen’s argument as an attempt to legitimize the existence of a social problem - or the academic working with a social problem - through pointing to its quantity, as Järvinen has pointed out is the practice in the Danish discourse on homelessness.

It is interesting that the minister of equal treatment has taken just the different point of view: “It is not coincidental that our shelters for homeless are populated with men. The men are more socially exposed than are women, they [the men] do not have the strong social network to catch them if something goes wrong.” (Andersen, 2000)<sup>12</sup> It is evident that there is a discrepancy between Kristensen’s point of view and Andersen’s statement - and that is not just because of a time gap between the two. We shall later argue that the reason that the two reaches so different understandings are first and foremost a difference in whom they include in their understanding of homelessness/socially excluded. We shall also argue later that they both present examples on the quantitative discourse on legitimization and that their attempt to quantitatively legitimize their political understanding leads them to formulate dogmatic statements regarding the group of people living as socially excluded - dogmatic statements

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<sup>11</sup>This is not to say that there are not more women at the institutions than has been the case at other times. It is to say that there exist no possibilities for making such statement if one would like to base it upon quantitative information of any validity. Furthermore the problem of women living on the edge of our society is not new according to Järvinen. We return to this discussion below when we shall focus upon the concepts used in understanding women and homelessness in Denmark and in the FEANTSA: brief for research.

<sup>12</sup>In an attempt to outline how the work for equal treatment is not just a work towards empowering women, or focusing upon women’s rights, but also a work to empower some group of males in the Danish society, the minister has chosen to focus upon the socially excluded.

that might confuse the terminology and the political discussion on measures needed and measures to be provided.

What Kristensen intends to do in her research<sup>13</sup> is to “present a reasoned explanation of why some young women become homeless and others do not, as well as why some young women show their situation of distress by turning to an institution for homeless or to other public institutions (...) where as others do not.” (p. 37)

Kristensen finds it necessary to provide a broader context into which the understanding of homelessness can be placed. “As only very little of the Scandinavian research on homelessness includes reflections upon the societal context of which the homeless are part (...) it is necessary to look at related research. Especially one field, the new research on poverty in Denmark, can provide a significant starting point for research on homelessness.” (p. 71) Here Kristensen is in line with one of the five dimensions that Järvinen pointed to as relevant for understanding the relationship between social exclusion and gender - or women. Again, this is an issue that we shall look upon later as we present some information on the women’s relation to the labor market and an eventually changed family structure.

### 2.2.1 The Concept of Homelessness

The understanding of homelessness as something to be placed in a larger socio-political context influences Kristensen’s construction of the concept that she uses for capturing the people she writes about. First she defines the term: “Homelessness is defined as the situation where a person is completely without a dwelling, lives under conditions unsatisfactory or unsafe for him or her, and/or lives under temporary conditions with insecure future housing prospects.” (p. 22) One point - however somewhat unclear - is to construct what she calls a ‘whole’ understanding of homelessness. We understand her to mean something like ‘an all inclusive understanding’ - an understanding that enables a lot of different people categorized as homeless to be included. (p. 32) She finds that a broad - or whole - definition of homelessness might be more difficult to work with, but it is of particular importance when working with women and homelessness. This is due to major difference that she finds exist between the way men and women show their homelessness due to the following factors: 1) women having less of a contact to the labor market and thereby a larger chance for poverty - or larger rate of poor - 2) the changed family structure, and 3) social cut backs. “For making it possible also to capture the women who are homeless, but who does not use the institutions for homeless or in other ways show their homelessness, the analysis is based on a broad definition of homelessness.”(p. 136)

Especially the concept of hidden homelessness draws Kristensen’s attention to the significance of an analysis of women being socially excluded: “Some women’s homelessness is manifested as hidden homelessness. That means that a large group of women are assumed to live under personally unsatisfactory and unsafe condition and/or in dwellings without security concerning the future.”

In Kristensen’s understanding of homelessness we can trace the understandings presented by Watson (1984), in Watson & Austerberry (1986), and in the FEANTSA: brief for research. It is an understanding that takes off in an position of women on the labor market, on the housing

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<sup>13</sup>Kristensen bases her project on 12 interviews with persons working with homeless people, and she uses six (or eight, that is a little unclear) interviews with young women living as homeless. She do state that the homeless people with whom she talked cannot be considered “fully representative” (p. 42) of the homeless women - an understatement of the troubles when validating the qualitative approach along the lines of quantitative studies.

market - in general in a gendered societal structure that differentiates possibilities, means, aims, capabilities ... along lines of sex - and then understands these fields as being significant in understanding the homelessness. We shall not state the opposite, but we intent to show how this understanding overlooks a group of homeless, socially excluded, marginalized that moves on the very edge of our society. We shall argue that this understanding colonizes the debate on social exclusion and places it in a discourse on normalization that has limited room for understanding the excluded as something else than individuals lacking needed capabilities and thus in need for compensative measures.

### 2.2.2. The Causes of Homelessness

Kristensen presents some reflections on the causes of homelessness. She writes that they are not all alcoholics or mentally ill, and that even though many can tell tales which includes financial troubles, long term unemployment and divorces, this does not go for all of them. She states that these homeless come from all social layers of society, and that some are working and have financial resources (p. 12). Again we have to remember the understanding of homelessness that she is working with: an all inclusive understanding that tries to capture a broad range of living conditions that she thinks can be grouped under a heading of homelessness. This might be why she emphasizes that homeless people are not just alcoholics and mentally ill - in contrast to Järvinen who writes that too many avoid to focus upon mentally ill and people taking various substances. We shall argue that the distinction between these two understandings illustrate why one should be very careful by satisfying the quantitative criteria of relevance through broadening the concept of homelessness. We shall think that this strategy either lowers attention to some of the people living on the edge, or alternatively presents a picture of a rather large group with a need for a broad range of measures, not just with a need for e.g. housing. We shall argue that it might be more beneficial for the formulation of political measures to avoid grouping all the different kinds of people together in name of quantity but in the same time creating an understanding of unity at the cost of diversity.

Kristensen finds that two types of women will capture the different types of homeless: Those with a strong and those with a weak social network. The first of these two groups will exhaust their larger social network before turning to an institution for homeless. These are then the people that fall into the group of hidden homeless.

In general she points to two causing factors: An increasing social and financial deprivation on the one hand and an increase in cultural confusion caused by an increase in the degree of choice for the individual. (What we shall label as problems stemming from the development of modernity.) The latter she finds as being an aspect previously overlooked in the general debate on homelessness. She criticizes for example Järvinen and Watson/Austerberry (1986) for not including the culturally changing world or the developing 'modernity' (p. 35). She writes: "The cultural dimension is an important element... The significant cultural shift and the youngsters' feeling of powerlessness and lacking available choices leads to ... that some of these end up as homeless." (p. 36) In her understanding of the causes of social exclusion and her reflection upon social exclusion as a consequence of modernity Kristensen indicates that she finds explicit and rather direct linkages between the general societal development - or modernization - and the development of homelessness. Thus she writes: "A very large segment of people threatened by exclusion as well as people actually excluded are women and various ... immigrants. The fundamental structural characteristics in a welfare state like the Danish as well as the general cultural modernization enlarges the marginalization of these

groups.” (p. 28) If one remembers the broad understanding of social exclusion that Kristensen works with, this macro-focus upon causes becomes understandable. We then see the red thread in her understanding. But this approach - this has to be remembered - reduces the focus upon, and capabilities for understanding what is ‘too different’ to be conceptualized within the usually applied parameters of social science: e.g contact to labor market and family status. Kristensen devotes a larger part of her writings to presenting the consequences of late modernity or a modernization processes. We shall only devote more limited attention to this issue - primarily of two reasons: first, we find it is very difficult to identify the actual relation between the very general discussion on modernization and social exclusion. Second because we are far from convinced that this approach inform us of significant aspects when it comes to understanding or explaining socially excluded people. In brief the modernization thesis is the claim that there has been an erosion of the institutions (such as the nation, the family, religion and tradition) that formerly created stability and security in the welfare state.<sup>14</sup> The erosion can – according to Kristensen - be identified in the declining importance in the nuclear family, in the declining importance of class relations, and in the declining authority in parent-child relationship. The consequences<sup>15</sup> of these developments is a significant cultural shift, that manifests itself in expanded freedom but also in further limitations: “a feeling of both being able to shape and decide the course of one own life, and a confusion about the more general meaning with this life.” (p. 43) How one manages this freedom and limitation basically depends upon the degree of security during childhood (p. 43).

This modernization thesis becomes a gender issue due to:

- Ideological structures present in the social organization of society, e.g. the nuclear family with its internal distribution of power. Kristensen states that women are trapped in a *triangle of support* that exists between the market, the state and the social network (including the family) (p. 44). The ideological understanding of household among legislators and administrators consists of a man, a woman, and kids. Furthermore this understanding of an ideal typical household works with one and a half income. “Housing costs and sizes of dwellings are based on such ideal typical models. And this is a problem as women generally are more dependent on both another person with a higher income (a man), on the state (for social support), and on a social network for material survival, than are men.” (p. 45) With references to Watson and Austerberry, Kristensen states that women go through a life course with an initial dependency upon their father, then a dependency upon a husband, and/or a dependency upon the state. We shall later return to this discussion. Here we will however point out that the construction of a father-husband-state equivalency is central in presenting the continued or increased female dependency. Furthermore such constructed equivalent might not be as evident as presented in e.g Kristensen or Watson & Austerberry (1986).
- Labor market relations where Kristensen points to five places where a looser and/or more difficult connection for females that for males can be found: Generally women’s salary is lower than men’s, women have to a significantly larger degree than men only part time jobs, women are typically fewer and worse organized in trade unions than is men, and women are often less educated than men.
- Women having a larger dependency upon the state as a compensatory agent, and Kristensen points out that this will leave women more vulnerable in case of cut backs in governmental spending.

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<sup>14</sup>It is interesting to notice the similarity between the arguments of the early sociologist, like F. Tönnies (1957) and E. Durkheim (1997), regard the consequences of a transition between what used to be - and used to provide security and unquestioned identity - and a present that is in search for a new social order.

<sup>15</sup>The actual status of the cultural dimension is somewhat unclear. Is it a cause, an effect or something else we are dealing with?

In the increasing cultural liberation or cultural confusion that Kristensen finds to be important in understanding homelessness, there is however a general development away from the presented picture of dependency. She argues that the degree of cultural, financial and juridical freedom has increased. Women have become less dependent upon men and less dependent upon parents. However, this increasing freedom has only been a positive for those who initially possessed a certain amount of social capabilities. This is due to an increased pressure upon the individual as the responsible agent. Kristensen outlines that along with the increased freedom of choice also comes the responsibility for one's own life course and living conditions, and she points out that the abandoning of guidelines for choosing leaves people without foundations in a difficult situation. She writes: “[I]f the individual can form herself she as well has to be responsible for the choices made and for those not made. The individual is then responsible and is subdued by a pressure for achieving and social control.” (49) How the concept of social control is to be understood in her book is somewhat unclear. Kristensen furthermore states that even though we might have moved from women's dependencies upon men, we still do not have equal rights and opportunities. (54)

There are several issues that strike us as somewhat unclear (some already mentioned) when reading Kristensen's discussion on modernity. First the cultural liberation and confusion as a cause for eroded traditional institutions is - if valid at all - also valid for our understanding of sex/gender differences, that is the differences and relations between men and women. This is not to say that we will gain equality between the sexes but just to point out that the alleged liberation of modernity also opens up for new conceptual meanings of sex/gender differences. Secondly the consequences of modernity in regards to limitation and liberation are also very much to the point for men. Often theories on modernity rather deal with the consequences for the *individual* than for men or women (Bellah, 1992; Etzioni, 1994; Giddens, 1990; 1991 & Lash, 1995). The theories operate with what you could call a macro-focus and therefore the level of abstraction is often such that discussions on sex/gender differences are omitted. However if your starting point is that the differences between men and women are pre-ontological your discussion on modernity will have to take this into account.

Kristensen also touches upon a relation between the cultural modernization and a changed role of the family. She states that the institution of marriage as well as children has become what she calls an ‘intimate necessity’, but that the time spent in the family has declined and become stressed, due to the need for both parents being active on the labor market<sup>16</sup>. Kristensen then points out that there are differences between how the consequences of this changed role of the nuclear family affects women and men. She writes: “It is ... primarily the woman who tries to ... create a meaningful life through the family.” (p. 56) and she points to the existence of “a general wish for the young homeless women is to keep the family together.” (p. 116)

Kristensen outlines eleven causes that she places in the childhood and that she finds is explanatory for the women's current situation as homeless. These causes are changing parents, frequent movements and school changes, the placement in foster care, various kinds of abuse, continuing financial troubles, unemployed parents, lacking parental caring, overcrowded dwellings, abuse of substances among parents, premature adulthood, and social and learning difficulties in school. However, a little later she stresses that one should not forget the women who have grown up under secure financial conditions, but who still do not possess the neces-

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<sup>16</sup> This might not be so clearcut since we e.g. also work less.



sary social capabilities for handling the demands by the society. These women she says are culturally confused, and they constitute a group that is often overlooked in the understanding of homelessness (p. 58). We find it interesting to notice that there is an ongoing effort to construct social exclusion as a phenomenon that might target everyone (Kristensen; Brandt, 1992; Andersen,<sup>17</sup> 2000). Social exclusion is attempted presented as democratic in the sense Beck ascribes to some of the modern risk factors that he discusses (Beck, 1992).

Kristensen however, identifies some aspects that are present in the childhood's of the women that she interviews - and thus might be understood as disposing people to social exclusion. These are: divorces, growing up with a lone mother, physically unsatisfactory dwellings, parents who are having dual occupations, household duties from early on in childhood, and lack of care from an adult.

She summarizes the causes of homelessness into three groups: social burdens, financial insufficiency, and cultural confusion. The two first are often found together, the latter is "often not correlated with financial insufficiency." (p. 133)

### 2.2.3 It's a Man's World

An issue that we shall briefly highlight is Kristensen's point about the gendered world at institutions for socially excluded. Kristensen writes: "To live at an institution for homeless is considered a non-choice by women. This can be seen in that women first come to the institutions when staying on the street is the only alternative... The institutions for homeless are not seen as a natural, let alone bearable, possibility. Most women try everything else first." (p. 61) She continues: "The institutions that primarily provide shelter for single people without children are typically more rough and male dominated. Does a woman end up in such institution... she will typically be very marginalized both economically and socially." (p. 61)

Kristensen as well points to an importance of considering the increased dangers for women when living on the streets. She writes: "Assault and rape is part of the daily order on the street." (p. 123) And she continues with references to an interview with P. Brandt: "[I]f the women go down, they go very far down... They do not have one single problem they have got a lot of problems, and they are serious problems." (p. 123) Here Kristensen is in line with our interviews that we return to below.

In a recent book Stax (2000A) presents some information that sustain this picture presented by Kristensen. Stax analyzes the life histories of about 1.000 people after they used an institution for socially excluded in 1988-89 and till present.<sup>18</sup>

We shall not dwell long on this publication here but only draw forth very few of the distinctions that he finds significantly influences the paths of life after a stay at an institution established in accordance with section 105. Two important dimensions that we shall look upon are first the type of institutions used back in 1988-89, second it is gender. The two are closely correlated in the sense that there are hardly any men at the centers for battered women which is one of two types of institutions that Stax has divided the material into - the other being shelters, or institutions for homeless as he calls them.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>The minister of housing, urban development, and equality

<sup>18</sup>The 1.000 people had in common that they used an institution established under the section in the social legislation that provided shelter for homeless and for battered women between the summer of 1988 and the summer of 1989 in the municipality of Copenhagen. They were all between 18 and 35 years of age at the time they stayed at an institution and they stayed there for more than four days in a row. Intentionally the population in the analysis should include everybody that fulfilled these criteria.

<sup>19</sup>In lack of a better term (p. 76).

When we look at the histories of the women we can find confirmation of the thesis that the shelters constitute a man's world. At least it seems clear from Stax that the women who use the shelters are significantly worse off than those using refuges for battered women. The clearest example can be found in the mortality rate where Stax shows that women who have been enrolled at a shelter has a mortality rate that is 25 times as high as the overall mortality rate for Danish women of the same age. The equivalent rate for men who have used shelters is 14 compared to all Danish men of the same age. For women who used refuges for battered women there is a mortality rate four times all the women in Denmark of the same age (p. 185). Stax shows that the women who use shelters are in an especially difficult situation by looking at other factors as well. By focusing on the labor market, on the transfer income received, and on place of formal residence he shows that the group of women who enroll at a shelter show signs of being marginalized which are significantly more negative than the group of women who stayed at refuges for battered women, and - we might add - which are significantly different from what we expect in regard to most Danes.

But Stax also shows that the difficult situation can be found eight years later.<sup>20</sup> Here the women who used shelters in 1988-89 still show rates of deviance higher than the women who used refuges for battered women. This is the case in regard to the formal place of residence where almost all the women who used a refuge for battered women now has a formal address at a place registered as a normal dwelling. When it comes to those women who stayed in shelters we still find 14 percent in institutions or in living quarters that are not registered as a normal dwelling (p. 164-5).<sup>21</sup> This is as well the case in regard to the connection to the labor market and in regard to the transfer income received. On both these issues a larger degree of deviation from where we expect to find the normal Dane, is identified. However, when comparing with the group of men who used shelters the women seem more integrated eight years later.

#### 2.2.4 The Empirical Development

One issue that we shall briefly touch upon is the empirical development that Kristensen bases her book upon.

Kristensen claims that "among the youngest users of institutions for homeless the distribution by sex is now 50/50. If we include the hidden homeless in the consideration the future looks gloomy. Most of the hidden homeless are assumed to be women" (p. 140). She states that the number of female users of women at institutions for homeless has tripled between 1976 and 1989. In 1989 the women supposedly took up 20 percentages of the available beds, and she tells us that the part of users being women, has been steady around these 20 percentages since then. (p. 12) Here Kristensen finds figures that are equivalent to those found by P. Brandt.<sup>22</sup> However neither Kristensen nor Brandt present any sources for their statements on the existence of a development.

A possible corroboration can be found in the figures from Statistics Denmark. These figures are presented in table 1.

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<sup>20</sup>This focus on the situation eight years after the use of a shelter or a center for battered women is the main focus in the book, but here it is of less relevance and we shall not dwell long upon this issue.

<sup>21</sup>This can be the rented room without access to own kitchen and bathroom or it can be an address at a place registered for business.

<sup>22</sup>Who conducts a study on the users of institutions for homeless between 18 and 35 years of age in Copenhagen during 1988-89 (Brandt, 1992).

**Table 1: Development in numbers of beds and users at institutions established under section 105 in the Social Assistance Act or 94 in The Social Service Act (1989-1998 )**

Shelters				Centers for battered women				
	# Inst.	# Beds	# 24h users	Pct. Women	# Inst.	# Beds	# 24h users	% women
1989	67	2549	2452	n.a.				
1990	70	2687	2499	n.a.				
1991	73	2699	2362	n.a.				
1992	76	2588	2425	n.a.				
1993	74	2549	2503	n.a.				
1994	76	2470	2337	n.a.				
1995	61	2138	1949	14	15	297	269	93
1996	62	2020	1868	13	18	310	270	92
1997	65	2018	2043	14	18	305	289	93
1998	66	2043	2120	16	20	334	292	93

The information are based on a yearly survey. During one week in each January the staff at the different institutions are supposed to count the number of people that are enrolled and then report this to Statistics Denmark. Prior to 1994 Statistics Denmark did not distinguish between shelters and centers for battered women, nor did they distinguish between women and men in their published statistical information. We have listed these non-divided figures under the heading of shelters, not because we do not acknowledge the included centers for battered women but because we find indications in the numbers from after 1994 that shelters constitute a majority. Source: Statistics Denmark 1991; 1993; 1996; 1997, 1999A  
n.a. = not available

Unfortunately it is not that long ago (1994) since Statistics Denmark began distinguishing between men and women in their publications. Thus the period that Kristensen and Brandt refer to above is not covered in the table.

What we can see is that at the shelters there has been around 15 percent women since 1995. At the refuges for battered women we find around 93 percent. If we looked at the two institutions together we would find around 25 percent women during the period from 1995 to 1998. In Stax (2000A) we can find information on the number of women and men at the two types of institutions pertaining to 1988-89. His study has 16 percent women at shelters and 93 percent at refuges for battered women (p. 87). Thus here we do not find a different distribution according to sex. If we however looks at the two institutions together Stax has 1/3 women in his population. This difference stems from the age groups using respectively shelters and refuges for battered women. As the users of the latter are younger - and as the population in Stax' research had to be between 18 and 35 years of age - the group of users of the centers for battered women takes up a larger share of the population that it would have been the case had one looked at all users. Also as the people using refuge for battered women are women, this increases their relative share of the population over all.

Kristensen furthermore focuses on the distribution over age among the women using the institutions for homeless people. She states that overall there are 20 per cent women, but also that there are significantly more younger women than older, and that among those between 18 and 25 years of age around 50 per cent are women (p. 12).<sup>23</sup> A little later she states that these younger women as well are being burdened by more severe problems than it was previously the case (p. 15).

<sup>23</sup>It shall be underlined that it is unclear which institutions Kristensen takes about: whether she writes about both shelters and centers for battered women. Her pointing out that it is a world with only few women indicates a focus upon only shelters, but her figures here - as we show - bears only validity if one includes both shelters and centers for battered women.

This makes us wonder why there is no differences between the figures from Statistics Denmark in table 1 and the figures found by Stax (2000A). Recalling that Stax works with a population that at the time of enrolment at an institution under section 105 was between 18 and 35 years of age - and thus represent the younger segment of users - it is odd that there are no differences in the rate of women that he finds, in comparison with Statistics Denmark – who do not look only at the youngest segment - when we look at the two types of institutions - shelters and refuges for battered women - separately. We have looked at the data used by Stax and we have tried to corroborate Kristensen's thesis on the number of women at the institutions among those between 18 and 25 years of age. We have found that just around 20 per cent of the people using shelters between 18 and 25 years of age are women and that - like for other age groups - 93 percent of the people using refuges for battered women are women. Looking at the two types of institutions together we find 45 percent women. Summing up Kristensen is thus correct in emphasizing that the relative share of women among the youngest users has increased when we look at both types of institutions together, but the increase is primarily due to the larger share who stayed at refuges for battered women.

## Chapter 3:

### General characteristics of relevance for socially excluded women pertaining to the Danish welfare state

In this chapter we shall take a closer look at relevant legislation and statistics on some crucial developments. The chapter is centred round the FEANTSA Brief for Research where the arguments for focusing on women and homelessness in this years national reports are the demographic, social and economic changes:

#### Demographic changes

An increase in single female and single parent households and an increase in the older population, the majority of whom are women.

#### Social changes

Changes in the rate of households formation, in marital status, in the age of first marriage and in the rate of divorce.

#### Economic changes

Female participation in the labour force, nature of female employment, relative female earnings, female access to occupational pensions

How the changes influence women and their homelessness is not clearly outlined in the brief. We assume that the underlying hypothesis is that they will bring along a rise in homelessness among women. The underlying assumption seems to be that women without a male supporter are at risk of marginalization from society – and in extreme cases in risk of social exclusion - an assumption that runs parallel to the understanding that we have found in Kristensen and in Watson & Austerberry. We will, however, question this assumption: Why are single mothers, divorced women, or widows in such a bad situation on the housing market that they are threatened by social exclusion?

- ◆ Are they in a more difficult situation when it comes to obtaining a contract on a dwelling as Watson & Austerberry argues might be the case in the UK?
- ◆ Does family law leave them in a position more difficult than other women or than men in general?
- ◆ Are they simply victims of discrimination (we want no single women here)?
- ◆ Are they in an economic position so they cannot afford a reasonable housing standard?
- ◆ Or are explanations on social exclusion not to be found in such macro-variables?

We shall reflect upon these questions in the chapter. First we present central aspects in the Danish Family Law and we present its historical background. Second we present some statistical information on demography, and social and economic indicators.

#### 3.1 The Family

Legal discrimination of women is seldom attributed to the female sex as such. Where we might find discrimination is in regard to family status: being unmarried or married and being a parent or childless. These dimensions are also of relevance for men, but here the married

status had traditionally implied advantages - advantages that have not been carried to the same degree by married women, e.g. in the 1920s where the male breadwinner would as a natural thing be granted a higher fee, than unmarried men and married women.

A possible legal discrimination originates from the (generally accepted) division of labor between man and wife within the family. But also from the division of responsibility between the family and the state is of importance: if the family is attributed the main responsibility for the provision of financial support and care for its members, then women will be more dependent upon their husbands than if the state is considered responsible for providing financial support and care for children, disabled and older people.

### 3.1.1 Legal Aspects

The fundament for Danish policy related to the status of women dates further back than the welfare state of the sixties. Already in the 19th century did the married woman obtain the right to decide over her own income. In the 1920'ies she obtained full right with regard to income and property, inheritance and custody. But guardianship over own children was not granted till 1956. The family law from the 1920`s introduced the idea of a compensation for the division of labour in the family in as far as domestic work was considered to contribute to income and property of the household, just as the contributions from the wage earner outside the family. This was not only ideology - though an important ideology. It was also reflected in the rules about *equal division of property* on death or divorce. Joint property implies that during marriage the individual spouse has the rights and the obligations as a single person to those parts of the property that he or she introduced into or obtained during marriage. But it is when the marriage is dissolved either through divorce or death - that the effect of the joint property is demonstrated, since (after the deductions of debts) it is divided into two equal parts (provided no special agreement has been set up). After the death of a partner the surviving spouse is entitled to 50 per cent of the dead partners half of the joint property. Most important is perhaps the right of the surviving spouse to retain the estate undivided, if the only heirs are common children. If this is not the case accept from the children of the deceased spouse must be obtained. In practice this means that in most cases the widow will be able to keep the house of the marriage.

An important - and at the time highly controversial - act concerned the legal position of children born out of wedlock from 1937. This act laid down that children born out of wedlock had the same rights in relation to their fathers as children born in wedlock. The obligations of the father to pay maintenance had been established long before, and as early as 1888 the state had undertaken an important part of the responsibility for those children by introducing the so-called advanced payment of child maintenance, providing mothers with a guarantee that they can collect maintenance from the local authorities. This regulation is still in existence and reflects the basic ideology, *that the children are not just the responsibility of the parents but also of the state.*

Since 1987 the legislation has more and more been based upon what is called the principle of individuality (as opposed to the principle of household). The principle was laid down in a parliamentary decision this year in the following way:

“Parliament requests the government to:

- ◆ Elaborate a plan on how to implement, gradually but decisively, rules concerning the independence of spouses and equal rights of cohabiting partners (the principle of individual-

ity) in social legislation and all other areas of legislation, in accordance with a report from a Committee set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs on equal treatment of marriage and cohabitation.

- ◆ To ensure a constant automatic checking of the rules in the future legislative work related to the family in order to introduce the principle of individuality, and in those cases where exceptions are made to argue for those.”

The principle however does not apply to social assistance benefits: spouses are reciprocally obliged to support each other and their children. This becomes relevant if assistance is claimed from the local authorities (social assistance benefit). In this connection a woman - or a man for that matter - is not eligible for assistance, if his or her spouse has enough to support them both. But the obligation to support the spouse only obtains for as long as cohabitation lasts - meaning as long as they are staying together, not until a divorce has been granted. This has made it possible for a woman without a paid job to abandon a marriage she no longer wants.

The principle of individuality applies to the right to claim benefits in connection with unemployment and sickness - those benefits are a right for the individual, and linked to the earnings at the labour market.

One could conclude that the principle of individuality is applicable to women with a stable attachment to the labour market - but that those without are dependent either upon a husband or upon the state. This dependence upon the state can however be regarded as a prerequisite for leaving an unwanted relationship/marriage. Here we have a different understanding than Kristensen (1994, based on Watson & Austerberry, 1986). Kristensen presents the state as a third part in the group of persons/institutions that the women are dependent upon. When the state provides public transfer possibilities and employment in the service sector that the women can obtain it is correct that the women becomes dependent upon the state. But we find it somewhat limited to observe this dependency only as a continuation of the 'eternal' dependency that women live under. Such understanding must be based upon an understanding that the jobs created in a public service sector are not as secure or not as satisfying as a 'real job' in the private sector. And such an understanding must take as its basis that the receiving of transfer payment is in all circumstances unfortunate. Alternatively one could argue that it is exactly the provided transfer payments that creates possibilities for independence, and that the jobs created in the public sector are here to stay, in which case they provide at least as secure an income as what might be obtained on the private market.

### 3.1.2 Types of Family Policies.

Borchorst (1998) in a recent comparative analysis of European family policies tries to categorize policies according to their goals. Though her focus is family policy it has some bearing to our subject, as the basic ideas in family policy is reflected in the general welfare policy including housing policy. She sets up six goals for family policy of which the two last mentioned are characteristic for Denmark. The goals might be to:

- 1) **To increase the birth rate** - a population policy that has never had much to say in Denmark.
- 2) **To support marriage as the frame for family-life** - as against non-marital relationships or one parent families. The recognition of the rights of children born

out of marriage as mentioned above, combined with an advanced payment of the father's child allowance is supplemented with a special child benefit to lone mothers is an indication that this aim is not present in the Danish family policy. This goes as well in regard to the policy on the day-care system that gives priority to children of lone mothers. In recent years the Danish policy has not even had any preferences for marital as opposed to non-marital relationship, as the focus in legislation and policy is moving from the legal marriage and towards the child as the constituent for the family. Neither can there be found any legal measures discouraging divorce.

- 3) **To support and promote the male bread-winner family** - a policy of which there has been no support since the beginning of the seventies where the women started to enter the labour market. From a legal point of view the "death" of the male bread-winner family is confirmed through the introduction of the principle of individuality (see above).
- 4) **To support low-income families or those worst off.** Danish family policy has not consisted of targeted measures but has been part of the general re-distributional welfare policy.
- 5) **To support families with specific needs** such as families with handicapped children or lone mother which has also been an ingredient in Danish family policy. This has been reflected in the special child allowance for children living with a lone parent and also the Rent Rebate Scheme.
- 6) **To promote equality between men and women** e.g. by supporting the double-breadwinner family which is typical for the situation in Denmark, where approx. 90 pct. of mothers are in the labour force. Important measures of such a policy is the expansion of child-care, reduction of co-taxation and generous parental leave schemes – also for fathers.

During the last century - starting in the twenties and accelerating from the seventies and onwards family law and family policy has changed focus from the married couple and to the child and the child's parents. Marriage as a legal construction has lost much of its meaning as cohabitation and also homosexual partnerships have come under many of the same rules as apply to married couples in the traditional sense. In relation to most benefits the principle of individuality has beaten the principle of household (e.g. sickness benefit, unemployment benefit), but not when it comes to social assistance. Here the mutual obligation between spouses to support each other that is laid down in family law and repeated in the social legislation means that the entitlement to support is based on the household's income. This shows that the principle of individuality is applied to benefits derived from a person's attachment to the labor force. One could also say that the principle of individuality is beneficial to the strong, while the principle of household is applied in relation to weak families.

In relation to the labor market all women - married as well as unmarried and that goes for single mothers too - are supposed to take up gainful employment, and measures available are focusing on how to bring women – also single mothers – into the labor market.

### 3.2 Demographic Changes

Considering the development in one person households<sup>24</sup> there has been a relative as well as an absolute increase since the 1960s (see table 1). The increase in one person households is mainly accounted for by more young people (also women) living on their own after moving

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<sup>24</sup> Actually one grown up household might be the correct term to use, as there might be children in the one parent household.



away from home (Levevilkår, 1997) and a larger group of elderly people living in their own homes (see table 3).

**Table 1**  
**Development in occupants in the household 1960-1997**

	1960	1970	1980	1991	1997
1 occupant	16.0	23.7	27.9	34.0	35.8

Statistisk Årbog, 1998.

Table 2 shows the development of people living single that is one adult with and without children. There has not been much of a change over the 15 year period in any of the two groups: From 45 to 50 per cent lives as single and 3 to 4 per cent lives as singles with at least one child.

**Table 2**  
**Development in single family types 1980-1986. Per cent**

	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996
Single	45	48	50	50	50
single with children (1 or more)	3	4	4	4	4

Levevilkår, 1997.

Couples that live together without common children, but eventually with children from other marriages or relationships, are accounted as singles or singles with children.

**Table 3**  
**Men and women in selected age groups by family type, 1996. Per cent**

	Men		Women	
	Single	Single with children	Single	Single with children
16 - 24 years	82	0	64	3
25 - 34 years	40	1	19	9
35 - 44 years	26	2	11	12
45 - 54 years	22	1	19	4
55 - 64 years	21	0	29	0
65 years and above	31	0	64	0
Total	36	1	34	5

Levevilkår, 1997.

If we look at the gender differences the single family is especially widespread among young males (table 3) but not infrequent among younger women. The rate of single families is highest among younger people. Then the rate of single families declines until it reaches its lowest point for women between 45 and 55 years of age (19 percent) and men between 55 and 64 years of age (21 percent). Then there is an increase in the number of single families, and this increase is significantly larger for women as they often outlive their male companions. The rate of elderly men living alone is far lower than that of women (31% against 64%).

Due to the demographic changes currently experienced in Denmark we can only expect this group of elderly lone women to grow.

Table 3 also shows that the majority of the single families with children consist of women, i.e. single mothers. In total there are five percent single mothers and one percent single fathers. It should be noticed that single mothers in Denmark are mostly single due to divorce - only a small percentage belong to the group of "never wed mothers".

We can thus expect – a long with the described demographic changes in the FEANTSA: brief for research - an increase in single female and single parent households: populations forecast indicate an increase in the older population - the majority of whom will be women due to men's shorter life expectancy (Befolkningens bevægelser, 1996). We can also see that the majority of single parent household is consisting of single mothers. But we can as well conclude that the rate of single families haven't risen since the beginning of the 1980's.

The next – and in this report more interesting - question then is: do these developments constitute a potential problem in the Danish society regarding social exclusion? Is it the elderly single woman and the single mother we find in the shelters and the refuges for battered women? Or do the elderly and the single mothers pose a potential problem in regard to hidden homelessness?

In regard to the use of institutions for socially excluded our findings does not support the answer yes to the questions. In our interviews with staff at three kinds of shelters (described below) the staff does not consider elderly women to be a significant group of users, nor do they consider single mothers as such. As one informant puts it – *"being a single parent is a bit hard but that's about it"*. And when asked what constitutes the biggest problem for the socially excluded women none of the people interviewed mentioned lack of financial aid from the government. The single mothers in the refuges for battered women *Dannerhuset* have all experienced violence in the marriage or in their relationships. At *Garvergården* some lone mothers are enrolled due to a dissolved marriage or relationship but there is always a range of social problems in addition to the divorce.

In the Danish welfare society today, the fact that you are a single mother is not considered as a problem since the social legislation ensures the right to governmental support such as rent subsidy (see below), child benefit, free kinder garden if considered needed, transfer income e.g. maternity leave. It has to be remembered that the assessment of transfer payments in the last instance is need based – not insurance based.<sup>25</sup>

In relation to whether the elderly women are at risk our interviews suggest that there are very few elderly women at the shelters or at the refuges for battered women. *Sundholm* is the only place where they do have a few elderly women, and they are without exceptions all mentally ill. These findings suggest that the elderly single women are not a large user group. Again this must be understood in relation to the common pensions in Denmark which are not tied up to labor market experience but are universal.

We have now tried to present some of the demographic changes that are worrying in Europe regarding female homelessness, and we have argued that these changes might not apply to the Danish society – or might be significantly compensated through the welfare state. This is however not the same as stating that female homelessness or social exclusion is not an issue

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<sup>25</sup> To avoid misunderstanding: These financial provisions are not providing an economic basis that will enable one to live well. But formally they provide a social security system that enables one to live somewhat secure, and thus to live alone – also as a single mother - without significant financial troubles.

in Denmark. It is rather an argument for understanding social exclusion through some less general causes and more concrete aspects than the general societal development of the housing stock, the transfer schemes, or the family structure. This might be the societal response, categorization, and understanding of violence in the families, the family background, mentally illness, drug or alcohol abuse. We are not here arguing for an understanding in a medical/psychological discourse as we have previously presented this with the help of Järvinen. We are focusing upon the societal understanding and categorization, not trying to present the excluded as lacking certain significant capabilities. We shall present this understanding below.

### **3.3 The Housing Market**

In this section we shall attempt to describe the housing market with special focus on the type of housing that is to the disposal of the municipality. Offering a place to stay is regarded as part of the provision to the socially excluded however also other people are considered.

The total housing stock in Denmark consists of 2.5 millions dwellings for a population of 5.2 millions people, which leads to an average of 2.1 persons in each dwelling. Housing standards in Denmark are high: The dwellings are large (51 m<sup>2</sup> per inhabitant), which is high in comparison to EU average; the dwellings are of high quality, e.g. 92 percent have own bathroom; nearly half of all dwellings were built after 1960, and only about a third were built prior to the Second World War. The high housing standards are reflected in the high amount of income spent on housing. Currently housing expenditure comprises approximately a quarter of the average consumption (Ministry of Housing, 1999a).

In general housing shortage is claimed to be non existing (Ministry of Housing, 1999a), but there is a politically accepted shortage on housing for young and elderly people, and there is a need for alternative housing for the socially marginalized (Ministry of Housing, 1999b)). The last aspect is also well noticed at the institutions where we have conducted our interviews. Here we are told that the municipality currently have almost no dwellings in which socially excluded can move to from the shelters and the refuges for battered women.

The housing stock consist of 55 per cent homeowners and 45 per cent rented housing (Ministry of Housing 1999a). There are several types of rented housing and the two most common are:

- 1) Social housing that comprises 19 per cent of the total housing stock. These are relatively new housing estates with approximately 95 percentages built after 1940. The dwellings are built by public (non-profit) housing associations (a total 700 associations exist in Denmark) and must be approved by the local authority of the district in which they are located. The rent is supposed to reflect the expenditures in the individual estate. The tenants may then receive individual rent support to keep their housing expenditure at a level considered politically appropriate. This provision of a general supportive scheme towards the financing of housing costs has the consequence that fewer people are evicted for economic reasons than it would otherwise be the situation (Ministry of Housing, 1999a).

The majority of social housing is for families, however it is not reserved for specific groups of families. There is for instance, in contrast to most other countries, no income limit for eligibil-

ity to social housing.<sup>26</sup> Households with children are, however, given priority on larger dwellings. Most of social housing is assigned according to a waiting list. In addition to the normal waiting list there are certain groups that can be prioritized in the different housing association. One such group is single parents with children which provides an advantage for single mothers in regard to not ending up as homeless. There is furthermore the possibility for obtaining a social housing unit through the municipality: Until recently the local authorities had the right to use every fourth vacant flat for housing people that they consider in acute need. Now the municipality can make agreements with the housing associations on obtaining the right to assign tenants to a further fraction.<sup>27</sup>

2) The other common type of housing on the rental market is the *privately rented* dwellings. Most of these predate 1940 and they are concentrated in the older neighbourhood of the larger cities. Approximately 60 per cent of this segment of dwellings is in particular need for refurbishment. Though the process of urban renewal is running at a slow pace according to their needs the result of the process is a diminish of the low price dwellings, especially in the larger cities. (Skifter Andersen & Als, 1986; Munk, 1998).

### 3.3.1 The Housing Market and the Marginalized Groups

All though the welfare state secures housing and provides measures of rent support for those considered in need, segregation in the housing market exists. Two types of segregation shall be highlighted:

**Working place segregation**, which is when place of residence and work are spatially located near each other and when the working places are functionally separated. Then there will be a concentration of social classes.

**Housing market segregation**, which is when the spatial location of housing and the price of housing are correlated, which leads to separation of groups along lines of income (e.g. Lindberg, 1981; Munk, 1998).

While working place segregation are less important today, primarily due to better transport, the housing market segregation plays an significant role. Economic segregation of the housing market takes primarily effect through distinctions between areas with owner occupied housing and areas with rental housing:

**In ownership housing** we primarily find couples, high income families, and generally people with a stable connection to the labor market.

**In rented housing** we find a higher concentration of singles with and without children, low income households and people marginalized from the labor market (Skifter Andersen & Als, 1986).

The differences between rented and owner occupied housing is in regard to economy large in Denmark compared to other countries (Haffner, 1991). Furthermore there are considerable differences within the rental market. Especially in many newly built social housing estates the relation between price and quality is not competitive. This means that only those eligible for rent support lives in these housing estates so they end up with a concentration of low-income

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<sup>26</sup>But there is a possibility for the municipality to compare income to rent and thus try to match tenants to housing. This provides a possibility for municipal controlling of tenancy. For a further discussion on the process of assigning and of standing in line for social housing see Børner & Koch-Nielsen, 1996.

<sup>27</sup>See Børner & Koch-Nielsen (1996) for further information on this issue.

household as they are deselected by middle and high income households (Skifter Andersen 1999).

The geographical segregation varies significantly between the 275 municipalities in Denmark. The reason is differences in local composition of the housing and differences in building policy. The main reason for these differences can be found in 1) the high degree of municipal independence in planning and urban development and 2) the independent tax collection of the municipalities. After 1970 the building of housing mainly took place in the suburban and peripheral municipalities of the larger cities. Generally the rental housing makes up 40+ per cent of the housing stock in the suburban areas while only 26 per cent in the smaller cities (< 15.000 inhabitants). The result of the unequal distribution of home ownership and rented housing creates a significant division between rich and poor municipalities, a division which is especially evident in the Copenhagen metropolitan area (Skifter Andersen & Als, 1986).

### **3.3.2 The Regulation of the Housing Market and the Socially Excluded**

While the public subsidized social housing sector in general secures good housing quality for the low-income segments of the population, there are additional and important laws and regulations that enable a higher housing consumption among the people with lowest income than it would otherwise have been the case: especially individual rent support and rent control. The housing act furthermore secures the tenants against eviction and against fast increasing rent. This price control lifts the housing standard and limits the segregation (Munk, 1998).

However, there exists a series of tendencies in the housing market that strengthens the concentration of socially marginalized groups and fertilizes distressed neighbourhoods: e.g. the above mentioned urban renewal of the older housing stock within the cities results in fewer cheap dwellings for the low-income groups who are thus forced into social housing, and the municipalities right to assign dwellings to social clients produces a concentration of the marginalized groups in social housing estates.

### **3.3.3 Distressed Neighbourhoods**

Problems with crime, violence and vandalism and integration of immigrants and refugees have been more evident in certain neighbourhoods within the cities and peripheral housing estates within the last 10 - 15 years. In 1993 the government together with the housing associations and the municipalities started the Urban Commission Program for distressed neighborhoods and housing estates. Different investigations shows that around 500 social housing estates have a majority of unemployed, persons on transfer income, ethnic minorities, and refugees. (Byudvalget 1994, Hummelgaard et al. 1997 og Skifter Andersen 1999).

The concentration of single women with children is as well high in social housing estates, but they are not as a group considered a social problem, nor a group in need for special treatment. There are several reasons for the concentration of single women: First family related events as a divorce may lead to the need for another dwelling (and in some circumstances from owner occupation to a rented dwelling) and in this situation the municipality must provide housing for the single (often her) and the children. The women are not perceived as a problematic group in the housing estates (Vedel-Petersen 1983; Christiansen et al. 1993; Munk, 1999).

### 3.3.4 New Measures for Socially Excluded

Housing organizations have a double role concerning the socially marginalized. On the one side they are obliged to house them. On the other side these groups are unwanted in the estates since the estates do not have the capacity to handle the problem that they bring into the estates. In effect the housing associations only to a limited extent contribute to the solution of these groups housing needs. This is both due to insufficient support from the social authorities and an insufficient number of special housing for the socially excluded within existing estates (Kærn, 1999).

To fertilize a recognition from municipalities and housing associations the Housing Ministry in 1999 launched a program of 30 million DKK (ca. 4 million ECU) over a 3 years period to encourage alternative settlements for socially marginalized groups. The group addressed with this program is socially excluded and mentally ill - people considered in need for an alternative dwelling with company and possibility for social support. There are only few examples of shared housing for mentally ill in the existing housing stock and also in social housing estates. Intentionally the scheme should be usable for a variety of ideas: houseboats, allotment garden settlements, camps- and container settlements - but none have been put into reality yet (Ministry of Housing and Urban Environment 1999c).

### 3.3.5 Regulations Regarding Housing

There are no specific regulations in relation to housing for women – or to married women. Women are legal subjects with no restraints.

The social incidents that will traditionally leave women in a vulnerable position is first of all that of a break up of a marriage due to divorce or death and that of being an unwed mother.

*During marriage* a spouse can not re-let a rented flat or sell a house that belong to the joint property, which will normally be the case, without the consent from the other spouse. *After separation or divorce* the couple has to decide upon who shall keep an eventually rented flat. If they cannot agree upon this a decision will have to be made by the authorities - either the county or the court. It is in these situations of no importance whose name is on the contract. The decision from the authorities will be in favour of the parent who is granted custody (which will tend to favour the woman) and who is expected to be able to pay the expenses (which tend to favour the man - or perhaps to favour a sale). Again we must remind of the main rule that calls for equal division of the joint property. A study of divorces from the beginning of the 80'ies shows that more men than women move out of the home, but that was due to the fact that more women than men had custody of the children. If we compare women with custody with men with custody a much higher proportion of the women had to move out. On the other hand a measuring of the proportion having experienced a worsened housing conditions after the divorce did not reveal any difference: 1/3 of both sexes had experienced worsened conditions (Koch-Nielsen, 1983)

After the death of a spouse the other partner is entitled to continue the rent contract. And where the owned house is concerned, the surviving spouse is - as mentioned above – entitled to half of the estate and has as well a legal right to inherit 1/2 of the remaining estate, meaning that the surviving spouse is entitled to about 3/4 of the estate.<sup>28</sup> The most important rule however is the right of the surviving spouse to retain the estate undivided. This will in most cases enable the widow(er) to keep the home undivided. Furthermore the municipality does not

<sup>28</sup> The share can be cut down a bit if the deceased have explicitly written this in a will.

claim *property taxes* from pensioners - it will remain as a priority in the house to be paid out when the house is sold, which is most often after the death of the surviving spouse.

But there are some cases where women might run into legal barriers, namely if they are living in a *non-married partnership*. In the case of a break-up of such relationship and in the case that they do not have their name on the rent contract, they have no claims upon the flat. However, in the case of the death of the partner they are entitled to continue the contract if they have been cohabiting for at least 2 years. If they have been living in owner occupation owned by the partner, they will have to prove how much they have contributed financially to the estate in a court proceeding. It is possible to foresee such problems through a contract between the partners - but most people do not set up those contracts – and probably even less so women from lower income groups.

### 3.3.6 Housing Benefit and rent Subsidy

One important scheme in regard to securing and keeping housing is housing benefit and rent subsidy. Generally rent subsidy is given to non-pensioners whereas housing benefit is pay out to pensioners of different kind. But there are a few pensioners who receive rent subsidy because this will provide them with a larger financial aid than housing benefit. A household cannot receive both housing benefit and rent subsidy. For receiving rent subsidy one must live in a rented dwelling. This is not the case in regard to housing benefit that is also provided to dwellers in co-operate and privately owned housing. But for both kinds of support goes that the dwelling needs to have an own kitchen and sewer system. This excludes the rented room, dormitories, etc. from support. The important variables when deciding the amount that one can receive in support - if any - are the income of the household and the amount paid in rent.

For receiving rent subsidy the rent must exceed 16 per cent of the household's income for incomes up to 140.800 DKK per year. For the part of the household's income exceeding 140,800 DKK the percentages used on rent must be more than app. 27 per cent. For each child below 23 in the household 25,500 DKK are subtracted from the household's income prior to calculating the amount of rent subsidy and each child is allowed a non-included income on 13,000 DKK. Those who qualify for rent subsidy are then given 3/4 of the difference between the calculated limit for own payment and the actual rent paid, but not exceeding 27, 384 DKK yearly (1997). If there are four or more children below the age of 23 in the household; in that case the maximum amount is raised with 25 per cent (Danmarks Statistik 1998:3).

**Table 4**  
**Average amount, total amount, and number of recipients of rent subsidy and housing benefit on December 1998.**

	# of households	Amount paid in 1,000 DKK	Avg. amount per household in DKK
Rent subsidy in total	169,242	162,803	962
Housing benefit in total	333,876	553,491	1,658
Housing benefit to tenants in total	302,258	525,608	1,739

Danmarks Statistik, 1999B.

For receiving housing benefit the amount used on rent (or equivalent for privately owned dwellings) must exceed 10 per cent of the income up to 140,800, and 20 per cent of income above. The amount received in housing benefit is equivalent to 90 per cent of the rent which qualifies for support. In table 4 we see that 169,242 households received 162,803,000 DKK in rent subsidy during the month of December 1998. This is equivalent to an average rent subsidy per household on 962 DKK in that month. The numbers of those receiving housing benefit during the same time was 333.876. These received 553,491,000 DKK, which is equivalent to an average of 1658 DKK per household. Finally we can see that 471.500 households in rented dwellings received one of the two types of support, and that they obtained an average of 1,460 DKK per household, or 688,411,000 DKK in total. (Danmarks Statistik, 1999:1)

### 3.4 Social Changes

The social changes that are mentioned in the FEANTSA brief are concentrated around household formation and the development in marriage and divorce patterns. We have already touched on the development of household formations so here we will only focus on the decline in marriages and the rise in divorces that Denmark has witnessed.

Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and the 1990's people tended to be older when they first marry and there was a tendency among younger people to live alone compared to 15 years ago (Levevilkår, 1997; Thomsen et al., 1997:30). But this does not mean that the relationship or the family as a way of life is vanishing. Among the 25 to 75 years old living in a relationship is still predominant.

Divorces are still getting more and more common and divorce statistics only account for broken up relationships between married couple. To get a meaningful picture one has to add the number of break ups between people who live together in other ways.

Regarding the number of divorces we can see that app. 3/4 of the marriages contracted in the 1950's and 1960's still existed 20 years ago. This is only true for app. 2/3 of the marriages contracted in 1970. The likelihood for divorce is even bigger if one considers marriages contracted in 1980 or 1985, but there might be a tendency towards a declining number of divorces in regard to marriages contracted in 1990: after 5 years of marriage 14 % are dissolved - a number that has not been as low since 1975 (Befolkningens bevægelser, 1997).

What do these variables tell us? That family patterns have changed, but the changes are not necessarily to be understood as a *decline* in the role of the family as it is often heard from critics of the modern society. It is still predominant to be living in a relationship and for most children to grow up with two parents. Gundelach and Riis have in their research on values in the Danish society found a high endorsement regarding values linked to the family (Gundelach & Riis, 1992). They have described the intimate relations in modern society as consisting of several monogamous relationships – serial monogamy - throughout a persons lifetime. It is still a lasting traditional family that we are striving for and we do still feel moral obligations towards its members, but as a result of divorces (legally or “paperless”) for many people the obligations last only for a period in our lives. Recent empirical studies by Juul (1998) on the solidarity between family members seem to give empirical evidence for this interpretation of the intimate relations in modern Danish society (Arnmark & Raun, 1998).



### 3.5 Economic Changes

Danish women's affiliation to the labour market is characterized by a high activity rate. Compared to other European countries Danish women have the second highest employment rate (European Commission, 1997). The changes that are mentioned under the headline "economic changes" probably had an earlier on start in the Nordic countries than in other European countries, so that the differences and the inequalities are narrowed over the years. (European Commission, 1996). However there still is a lower employment rate than among Danish men (see table 5). Relating the Danish women's activity rate to the question of whether they are dependent – as Kristensen points out (see above) shows that the concept of marriage as 'being married to a man who provide for you and act as the sole breadwinner' is outdated. This is not to say that men and women have equal positions in the labour market but to show that women's provision isn't closely knit together with marriage – the majority of Danish women can provide for themselves and as mentioned earlier the legislation is further facilitating this.

The Danish women have a higher rate of part time employment than men but the development over the last 10 years show that this gap is narrowed considerably (see table 6). But the total number part time employed has fallen and men's share has risen in contrast to women's. The number of women employed part time has fallen every year since 1988. Approximately half the working women are employed in the public sector, especially with social work and health-care. Since the late 1970's seen as a whole more women than men have been unemployed, but the men tend to be out of job for longer periods. But if we however take a look at those most marginalized from the labour market -the long term social assistance recipients –the women are over-represented. When we take a look at Danish women's income we find that women in the same labor market position as men earn less (levevilkår, 1997). However women as a whole have a smaller personal income than men mainly because of their larger share of part time employment and due to unemployment. If we only look at full time employed men and women the differences are smaller and have become smaller since 1988 (Levevilkår, 1997).

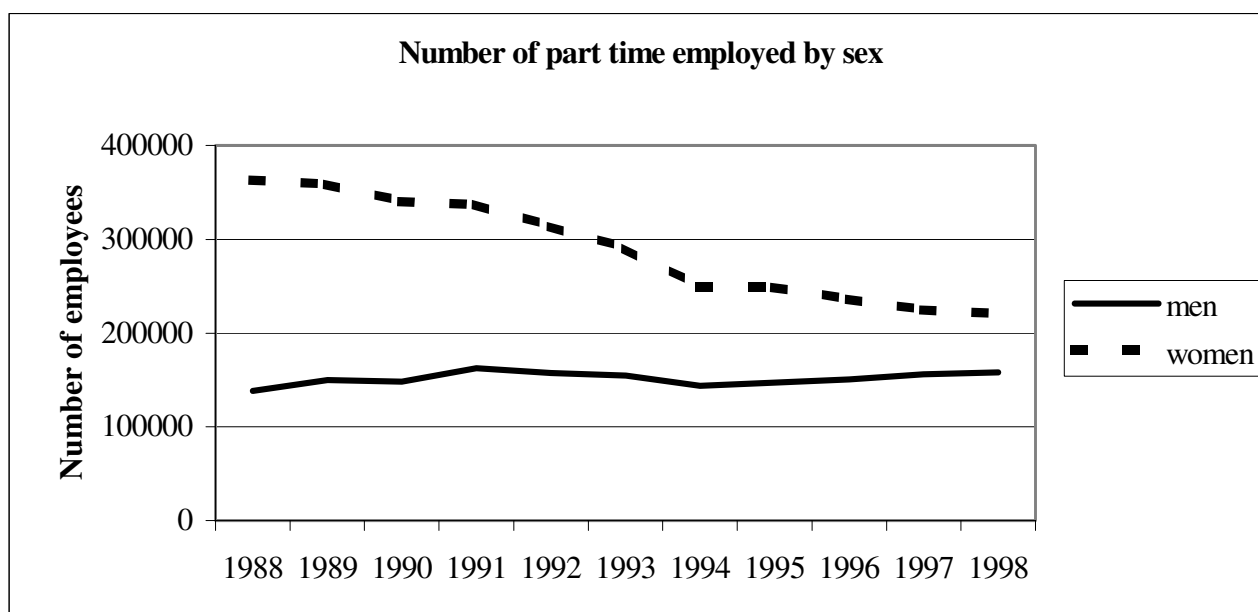
**Table 5**  
**Activity rate, age group 16-66 year old. Per cent**

	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998
Men	79,9	80,3	78,9	77,8	77,4	77,5
Women	85,8	84,6	83,1	82,2	81,7	81,6
	73,8	75,9	74,5	73,2	72,9	73,3

Statistisk tiårsoversigt, 1998

This number also includes the women and men on different kinds of leave (parental, educational etc.)

**Table 6**  
**Men and women's part time employment**



### 3.6 Summing up

This chapter has shown us that the changes outlined in the FEANTSA Brief of Research can be interpreted in different ways depending on the context they take place in. In the Danish situation we have an elaborated welfare state that can be said to counteract the exclusion of women. For most women paid work, contraceptives, abortion, child-care services, welfare benefits have altered the traditional patterns of male dominance. However, though the structural and legal conditions of the welfare state does not facilitate homelessness among women this does not mean that no factors do. One more immediate factor would be violence in the family. We shall comment on this later.

## Chapter 4:

### Interview with Social-Workers Employed at three Institutions

We have interviewed staff at three different institutions that provide shelter for the people that the section 94 in the Bill on Social Services is aimed at. The three institutions consist of one refuge for battered women - *Dannerhuset* – a institution that shelters families – *Garvergården* - and an institution that traditionally is said to take ‘the rest’ (those that does not fit in anywhere else): *Sundholm* (See the discussion of Järvinen for information on Sundholm as a ‘backstopper’ for the socially excluded. The aim with the interview is to get an impression of the women in different institutions and their problems, through the eyes of the people employed at the institutions. In this chapter we shall present the different types of institutions, of the socially excluded women and their problems. We shall as well touch upon the measures that are provided for the women.

#### 4.1 The three Institutions

The three institutions differ from each other, in that they have different operational agreements and different visitation criteria. *Sundholm* is an institution under the regional government run according to the current section 94 in the Bill on Social Service. *Garvergården* is an independent institution with operational agreements under the regional government (Copenhagen). *Dannerhuset* on the other hand is a private institution and they do not have any agreements with the regional government nor was *Dannerhuset* established in accordance with the former Social Assistance Act section 105.<sup>29</sup> Instead *Dannerhuset* is run independently through private funding. This means – according to the interviewed daily leader at the institution – a larger degree of freedom in the organization of the institutions as well as a larger degree of security in times of transition (like the last couple of years where a new social legislation was enacted). But this independence as well means that the leader finds it more difficult to use other measures for socially marginalized people in the municipality and there is always the uncertainty concerning the size of the funding from year to year, for instance a substantial part of the funding derives from inheritance.

The visitation criteria differ as we have already briefly touched upon. We have characterized *Sundholm* as a backstopper institution, *Garvergården* as a family institution and *Dannerhuset* as a refuge for battered women. With respect to women *Sundholm* only accepts single women, that is they have no room for children or facilities that allow couples to stay together. When we initially chose *Sundholm* we had the impression that they would take everybody in that couldn't go anywhere else. However our interviews reveal that there are people who are not found at *Sundholm* anymore but who are left to the streets - still the women at Sundholm are considered lowest in the hierarchy. We will come back to this issue in the current chapter. *Garvergården* has specialized in helping familie among these a substantial part is foreigners with several children, and they also give high priority to single parents. They still have singles staying both men and women but only few women. Their visitation criteria exclude any kind of substance user and mentally ill. *Dannerhuset* is a quite unique refuge for battered women, without operational agreements with regional government. The women who are accepted at the refuge all have been exposed to violence or threats of violence. However, the refuge does

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<sup>29</sup> See Stax & Kæmpe, 1999, for a discussion of the enactment of the new social legislation and the consequences for the provision for socially excluded.

not accept women using euphoricants and/or people considered mentally ill. They can stay until they have a new place to move to or until they maybe move back in with their husband. The women can bring children but male children only until these become 13 years old. This is due to the history of the refuge: The feminist movement has influenced the way the refuge is organized: The decisions are made at gatherings for everybody living or active in the house. The Danish feminist shelter movement started back in the seventies, and the first feminist shelter was *Grevinde Dannerhuset* which was obtained through squatting. The most important changes obtained through the feminist movement related to domestic violence were:

- 1) that a legal separation was not necessary for being entitled to social assistance, but that merely leaving home would qualify for assistance.
- 2) that the attitudes of the public and especially the policy changed, so that domestic violence was no longer regarded as private and partly acceptable.

This shelter has a professional staff, but there is as well an excessive use of volunteers.

Summing up we can consider the limitations upon target groups at the two in relation to *Sundholm*: At *Garvergården* they do not allow people taking illegal substances or people considered mentally ill. At *Dannerhuset* we find the same two limitations combined with the main criteria: that the woman has been exposed to violence or threats of violence. On the other hand the two latter institutions provide room for children, which is not the case at *Sundholm*. As Järvinen has written, when there are children at the institutions it is the understanding that there is no room for people using illegal substances nor people with mental illness (1993:116ff).

Before we turn to describing the problems that the staffs find is present among the women using the different institutions we will comment on the way the staff at *Sundholm* and *Dannerhuset* see the development in degree of excludedness of the women. At *Dannerhuset* they find that the women who seek a refuge are more excluded than they were a few years ago. Domestic violence is not always the main problem: today the women as well struggle with financial problems, problems regarding the well-being of their children, and some seem to have an intake of illegal drugs.<sup>30</sup> The staff believes that “the better socially functioning women” that used to seek refuge at *Dannerhuset* now mainly come during the day to get advice and talk to the staff. These people prefer to find other ways to solve their housing needs.

This development is the opposite of what the staff experiences at *Sundholm*. Here it is believed that the people seeking shelter function better now (socially) compared to just half a year ago. They do not explain this with references to the social excluded in general being better of than previously. Rather they tell that the most socially excluded persons are sorted out at *Sundholm* – that the institution that previously had room for everyone now has imposed limits upon visitation. The reasons for this development they see in the new social legislation. Here it is more explicitly the idea that people shall live not under institutional like conditions but rather live more as they would do in the society outside *Sundholm*: We do to a larger degree find the idea of ‘housing training’. But if this organization of *Sundholm* shall be successful to some degree it is necessary that the institution looks more like the ‘normal’ housing market: it is necessary that there is a basic respect for, e.g. other people’s property and for the organization of time along the lines of the outside society. This means that the people using illegal substances – who are known for not respecting private property – and that the mentally ill – who are known for not accepting the normal society’s organization of time - are less welcome. Thus through the provision of less institutional like housing and through the providing of more opportunities for a life “as close to normality as possible” we might exclude the most

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<sup>30</sup> This last problem is not accepted at *Dannerhuset* and if disclosed will led to eviction.

deviating. Or as this development is summarized in the interview: In the protection of the tenants who comply with the rules the most excluded are excluded. In this report it is interesting to notice that the staff at *Sundholm* chooses not to present this issue along a sexual division.

The perceived development at the two institutions is not necessarily of a contradictory nature however the development needs to be considered in relation to the institutions and their users. The arguments from the staff at the different institutions are in fact in agreement in that they emphasize *the increased pressure on a more limited number of rooms*. The claim that there is a rising pressure on accommodations has not been systematically investigated but still there have been changes which make the arguments plausible. Two of them being changes in visitation practises and the restructuring of the homeless institutions in Copenhagen. Since we have only talked to institutions in Copenhagen the problem here might be regarded more penetrating and concerning than in other parts of the country. Also we have talked to *Sundholm* which definitely has felt the restructuring since they themselves were compelled to close down one ward (sygeafdeling). The rising pressure on accommodation at least in Copenhagen has consequences for the institutions: At *Sundholm* this means that the tenants who are able to adapt to the rules are appreciated and thereby gain ground, while the unfitted tenants get expelled. On the other hand at *Dannerhuset* the staff believe that the most resourceful women find it unbearable to remain at the refuge - since the women (of whom some are extensively burdened with severe problems) live very close together in little collectives. Therefore they reckon that the women with the most resources exhaust their other possibilities.

## 4.2 The Women's Problems

The differences reflected in the visitation criteria also illustrate the width of the problems that the women using the institutions have. The different institutions all have only a segment of the socially excluded women as their primary target group. One of the three institutions – *Sundholm* – provides for those women considered very different – or most excluded. Among the staff at *Sundholm* as well as among the staffs at other institutions it is understood that *Sundholm* is a possible ‘backstopper’ that women turn to.<sup>31</sup> Before seeking shelter at *Sundholm* it is conceived that women try out other alternatives: in the beginning friends and family – as hidden homeless – then one of the refuges for battered women, when one of the other institutions for socially excluded.

### 4.2.1 Sundholm

At *Sundholm* we were told that the number of women adds up to approximately 20% of the tenants. The women are mostly Danish but there are a growing number of "foreigners" mainly from European countries – and especially from Greenland.<sup>32</sup> It is very seldom that the women are from Islamic countries. Many of the women have an intake of illegal substances and quite a few do or has earned their needed income through prostitution, but we are also told about a smaller group of elderly mentally ill women. These elderly women have typically lived at the institution for many years and are reluctant to move to a psychiatric nursing home. There are only a few alcoholics. In recent years the staff has also met people who have worked with prostitution for longer time who are now in their forties and dying from AIDS.

<sup>31</sup> In Copenhagen there are three institutions that seem to have this reputation., and the one is *Sundholm*. One of the two others - *Mændenes Hjem* – does not accept women.

<sup>32</sup> This might not be surprising as Denmark and Greenland has shared monarchy and shared parliament.

When the people employed at Sundholm talk about how they perceive the women's problems they find them to be similar to the men's problems: drugs, mental illness, and a troubled childhood. The women are found to be just as violent as the men. At first in the interview the staff appears reluctant to differentiate between the male and female tenants. However when we go further into various issues we find they characterise the women's trouble as *typical for a woman's life*. Thus they do distinguish between men and women, but they locate the distinction in a general understanding of differences between men and women – not only between socially excluded men and women. The problems that are referred to as "women's problems" are relationships, sexual abuse, relations between mother and child.

The staff tells us that most of the women are in relationships with men also staying at the institution, and even though they would not describe most of these relationships as happy – due to a frequent changing of partner - some are involved on a stable basis. According to the social workers interviewed, an important part of the relationship for the women is obtaining physical protection against the dangers involved in living on the streets. They also believe that the women are looking for someone to support them financially, but frequently it is the woman who scrapes up enough money for both of them. Other issues touched upon by the staff regard the women's relationship to children. Often they have given birth at a very early age and then a majority of the women have had their children taken into custody. Some of the women see their children and manage to keep the agreements made with authorities or foster families. But other women mostly see their own failure as mothers, and this becomes a most troublesome pain – especially when they are not sedated by euphoricants. Another characteristic pointed to by the staff is the women's problem in their relationship to their own mothers. Generally, the women feel neglected and abandoned due to the way they were raised and the staff are afraid that the women shall never get past their childhood traumas. They recall that the women talk about the "unbreakable circle of social heritage", but at the same time - recognising their poor performance as a mother - attaching hopes to the foster family as a way of breaking the unbreakable. Finally, the staff finds that most women perceive of the sexual abuse they experienced in their adolescence - for instance prostitution in their teenage years - as a traumatic problem.

#### 4.2.2 Garvergården

*Garvergården* is an institution that has a contract with the Copenhagen Municipality as does *Sundholm*, but *Garvergården* has different visitations criteria and therefore different kinds of women seeking shelter. The most significant difference between the two is that *Garvergården* has room for children. The staff characterizes the women using the institution as having a wide range of social problems. First and foremost they talk about domestic violence. But also the women might as well – periodically - have an intake of illegal substances. But this is only to a limited extent as such is not accepted, and will lead to eviction. The staff presents their users as very vulnerable: emotionally they have problems caused by a troubled childhood, by violent relationships, by the break up of relationships, and by financial troubles. It is common that the women using the institution are poorly educated, have been out of jobs for long periods of time, and are unable to afford the needed rent for an apartment. Socially the women do not have strong networks and their children may have difficulties at school. This combination of problem seems insurmountable for the women, however in comparison to *Sundholm* it is worth underlining that the women taken as a whole have *not* turned to substance abuse or are mentally ill, and they still have their children with them.

A substantial part of the people sheltered at this institution is foreigners who come as whole families. It is seldom to have an *entire* Danish family staying in the apartments. Usually the Danish families consist of a *single* parent who is breaking up a marriage or a relationship. The problems of foreign families are often connected to behavioural problems resulting from an inability to adjust to the regulations in a Danish housing association, not being aware of the importance of paying the rent on time, etc. Some of these families consist of younger parents whose main problem mainly is to find a place to live. Socially the foreign families function well. As mentioned earlier, these tenants are not seen as the institutions main target group since they not are in need of the treatment that the institution feels they can offer – these families are to well functioning.<sup>33</sup> The few single foreign mothers or women that live at the institution have in most cases left a violent husband. This action of leaving a violent husband has then often resulted in a breaking up of the extended family and thus left the woman all to herself. We shall go further into the problems of the foreign women in the next paragraph.

### 4.2.3 Dannerhuset

The last institution where we conducted interviews is at the refuge for battered women. The problems that the women at this institution are faced with evolve primarily around violence. But as we have touched upon above the women usually have other social problems as well – especially this has been the case through the later years, according to the staff. The majority of the women are foreigners but speak Danish - on average approximately 90 per cent which is a substantial higher number than the national average in those refuges: 35 per cent in 1998 (Behrens & Raal, 1999a).

There are different "types" of foreign women and they come from different parts of the world. There is a group of women who come from Muslim countries and who has arrived through family re-union. The culture clash can be insurmountable for these marriages and domestic violence a part of the problem. Also there have been a few young Muslim women who uses *Dannerhuset* as a hiding place from being forced to engage in pre-arranged marriages or engagements. At the refuge they consider this a serious threat for the women, but they can only stay if they are over 18 years of age. The refuge also see a group of mainly East-European women who are married to Danish men and who's relationship has broken. They have had examples where the women have worked as prostitutes and also examples where the women systematically are thrown out prior to three years of life together with the husband and thereby making sure the women can not gain residence permit. Finally the staff mention female immigrants who has been in Denmark for a year, but who has had no knowledge of the possibilities for leaving a 'slavelike' relationship. Due to a forced contact with 'workfare' programs these people come into contact with others, and this provides them with the knowledge needed for leaving the violent husband<sup>34</sup>.

Another issue that came forward in the interview and which is relevant for all the refuges and family institutions having children staying is that the children according to the staff often are in the need of help in coping with their social-psychological problems. As we shall see in the paragraph about the services provided to the women this is a problem that has been in focus the last couple of years.

<sup>33</sup> This is an understanding among staffs that Järvinen has identified as well (1993: 131).

<sup>34</sup> For more information on ethnic minorities knowledge of refuges, see Behrens & Raal, 1999. Also they touch upon other relevant issues concerning ethnic women and refuges.

#### 4.2.4 Summing up

We find that the visitation criteria differentiate the women: They separate those functioning best socially from those being most deviant – or excluded. The interviews with the staff about their perception of the women and their problems show us how heterogeneous the group of women is – and how different the group is understood at the institutions. Therefore when we talk about 'homeless' women we might talk about a woman who has been the victim of domestic violence and therefor moved out bringing her children along, or we might talk about a woman who is a prostitute in an attempt to get money together to finance her misuse of drugs. As we have already touched upon this poses a problem in an attempt to comprehend the women and their situation.

We shall now turn to lining out which aspects we have found as influential in respect to which kind of institution the socially excluded woman ends up staying at. We have identified the following factors as crucial for the women:

- Children.
- Use of euphoriant.
- Mental illness
- Domestic violence

What is clear from all the interviews is that the most excluded women – the people using **drugs** and the **mentally ill** - have the fewest choices regarding places to stay. The institutions that do shelter these people are bigger and have the fewest resources - in regard to staff, finances per user, etc.<sup>35</sup> The environment they are referred to is rougher and male dominated. In such environment it is difficult to take care of oneself – to be able to defend oneself psychically. In the interviews we were told that the few single women in the institution were those who were so psychically strong that they did not need a man for protection. It was also said that the women carry knives and the like which gives a hint of the life in the institutions. Other women know of this situation and they attempt to find other places to stay, meaning that the institutions like *Sundholm* becomes the last place where one goes in the end.

A very significant element in deciding what measures are available to the women is whether they have **children**. At the institutions where children are staying the visitation criteria are more exclusive, meaning that the institutions where children are allowed seems more appealing to women, but not all the women can stay there. We find that children are the most important dividing line: *Does the woman have children?* And in second line *is the woman's behaviour assessed as acceptable around children?* The highest priority in respect to choices and opportunities available to the women is given to women with children (or men with children).

Finally we will touch upon **domestic violence** as an element that influences which institution the woman ends up living in. The first figures about domestic violence were provided in studies of divorces (e.g. Koch-Nielsen, 1983). Koch-Nielsen finds that 25 pct. of the divorced women claimed that a violent spouse was one cause - among others - for seeking a divorce. During the marriage 1/5 of the women had been subject to severe physical violence (as measured by the Murray-Strauss index). After the divorce still 6 pct. had been subject to assaults from the former spouse. A follow-up study 3 years later showed that most women had managed to get into a non-violent relationship.

In a more recent national survey on violence 1 percent of the women reported to have been

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<sup>35</sup> Here our findings are in line with what Järvinen finds (see above).



victims of violence from the present partner - and 8 percent from a previous partner (Christensen & Koch-Nielsen, 1992).

Women's liberation has made domestic violence come out in the open as a problem pertaining to many women from different social layers. The women's movement has brought along the refuges for battered women where the main visitation criteria is whether the woman has been exposed to violence. However this openness on domestic violence is questioned by the daily administrator at *Dannerhuset* since she feels that attention on the violence that some women are exposed to in their relationships is absent.

### 4.3 The Services Provided to the Women

In the following we shall attempt to outline some of the services provided to the women at the institutions.

The more favourable situation of the women with children compared to single women is also mirrored in the help they receive at the institutions and in the resources of the institutions. The two places that have room for children also have a staff who concentrates on the kids. The issue of kids living with socially marginalized mothers has been in focus for a couple of years. The Ministry of Social Affairs has introduced a program (*KRIB-puljen*) aiming at hiring special staff for assisting the children with their problems<sup>36</sup>. It is estimated that annually around 3000 children stay in a refugee for battered women (Behrens & Raal, 1999b). The purpose of this children-staff is to help the children come to terms with their experiences but also to educate the mothers in how to handle their children and their problems.

As earlier mentioned *Dannerhuset* is the only private institution, and this has influence on their access to the social system, according to the staff. They find that they waste a lot of time just getting in touch with the women's case officer who is responsible for assisting the women with legal advice, housing, psychological and financial aid and the like. A lot of resources are used on talking to the women about their problems and trying to build up self confidence thereby making them able to deal with their problems: call their case officer, a lawyer, fill in papers about child support, etc. The immigrant women are introduced to a network of other foreign women with similar problems. Also the collectives the women live in are supposed to help each other the best they can.<sup>37</sup> However as the staff puts it, it is hard to find the strength to help others when you are yourself in a troubled situation. For many of the women it is a great relief to get away from their violent relationships, but one should not be blind to the potential problem of living close to other women which are also in troubled situations. This might as well place strains on the women. Therefor the idea of making the women handling their own situation admittedly only fits to a certain degree with the limited resources the women of the refuge has

The staff did not give the impression that the resources were as constrained at *Garvergården* as at *Dannerhuset* – especially in regard to access to the services provided by the municipality<sup>38</sup>. They tell of an improved relationship to the case officers including regular meetings. Also *Garvergården* has the opportunity to provide different kinds of aftercare in collaboration with the regional county authorities. However living at the institution is a strain on many of

<sup>36</sup> Only one of the institutions get ministerial funding for their staff working with the children.

<sup>37</sup> *Dannerhuset* is organized into three collectives – one on each floor – with a maximum of six women and six children persons in each. The women share kitchen.

<sup>38</sup> The municipality in Copenhagen also carry the obligations that elsewhere are located with the regional county.

the women since many people with heavy social problems live very close together. The women have their own small rooms / apartments and there are no forced social gathering with the other tenants. The help the institutions offers can be perceived as interference in the women's private spheres, and therefore increase the strain on the women: There is among the women a fear of letting the social worker get too close to her problem - in case the social worker should undertake measures that are not wanted (especially regarding the children).

At *Sundholm* they have a range of other problems to deal with since the tenants here also have substance misuse problems and a substantial part are mentally ill. Part of the provision to the tenants is therefore to refer those who are in need of treatment for substance abuse to the local centre for substance abuse. The treatment itself is not affiliated to *Sundholm* but takes place outside the area, therefore many of the tenants leave their workfare activities for a while to go to the centre to pick up their methadon or LAAM. Workfare activity is also a measure at *Sundholm* since you can join a workfare program where you can earn a 'working-reward' which money wise is close to nothing, but which will fulfil some of the tenants 'workfare' obligation (according to the law on receiving social welfare). The possibilities for joining a 'workfare' program at *Sundholm* are more limited for the women compared to men since the program only includes activities considered more appealing to men: For instance working in a repair shop. It is possible to engage in more typical female activities like sewing and working in the pottery shop, but this is considered creative activities and does not fulfil the obligation in regard to the 'workfare' program, nor does these activities lead to the financial reward. So here is a clear example of what it means to live in a man's world: The structures at the institution are less set up to suit female tenants than male.

The staff see it is their obligation to create an atmosphere at *Sundholm* where the women can find a safe haven where they do not have to hide their addiction, or the fact that they work as prostitutes, and where they can talk about their removed children without meeting condemnation. The social workers believe that especially the women suffer under the exclusion and condemnation of the surrounding society.

### 4.3.1 The Housing Situation

At the institutions the housing situation is considered fairly reasonable at the moment, especially at *Garvergården* they find the situation improved. They estimate the waiting time for an apartment to be shorter now than a year ago. Sometimes they feel that their tenants get an apartment too fast, which is to say that they have not had the time to help the tenants solve or get on with their problems. However, the recent announcement from the housing association that there are 8 available apartments in Copenhagen (January 2000) worries them. This more favourable housing situation as the staff see it, pertains mostly to women with children or families. The reason is that it is more difficult to get a small flat - e.g. a 1 or 2-room apartment that is considered appropriate for a single - than a place to stay for a whole family. At *Sundholm* they estimate that it takes around 6 months before the tenants are offered a place to stay. However often the social workers feel that the provision of an apartment is not the right solution, at least not the only solution. They believe that especially the women get lonely in their apartments. They are excluded from the surrounding society and they are not respected at all. They have to try and hide their addiction, their life as a prostitute etc. The staff argues as it has also been stated from different sides in the current discussion on women and social exclusion that society condemn a female substance abuser or alcoholic more than the equivalent man (*Hus forbi*, marts-maj 2000 (The Danish version of *Street News*)): "A drunk woman reel-

*ing down the street is a more abominable sight than a man – he is just in high spirits" (Interview with staff at Sundholm).*

The housing issue can be different at *Dannerhuset* since the problem here might not be obtaining an apartment but feeling secure there: Often the battered woman is sought out by her violent husband, and restraining orders and the like are of no or only little help due to the time it takes the police to get to the apartment. Sometimes *Dannerhuset* helps the women get their apartment back, but just as often the women need a new place to stay. Some of the housing associations will refer the women to a new apartment but other times this is not possible, and the staff will assist the women in finding a new place. Again it is stated that it is easier to place a woman with children than a single woman.

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