

Abstract for session 4: Internal migration, regional and urban issues
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Local Community, Mobility and Belonging. Identification of and Socio-demographic Characteristics of Neighbourhoods.

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Socio-geographic segregation and the socio-demographic consequences of depopulation of specific rural areas in the outskirts of Denmark has become an issue of increasing importance in public debate and in part of the research community. There are only few systematic studies of the association between community and belonging in neighbourhoods and mobility and socio-demographic changes. However, the changing sense of belonging and mobility pattern among the middle class (Savage et al. 2004) and the missing social mobility among the marginalised people have been studied (e.g., Forrest 2004; Lupton, Power 2005).

The question of depopulation and the causes and consequences hereof is part of the research questions for an ongoing study on 'Local community, mobility and belonging' in Aalborg, from which we report in this paper. In the present study, we further challenge the prevalent sociological analysis of late modern societies which imply that social relations and geographical space have been increasingly separated. We do so by exploring the association between characteristics of the local communities and the inhabitants' sense of belonging.

The contemporary municipality of Aalborg, which is the third largest municipality in Denmark, comprises many various types of communities and neighbourhoods – from the partly segregated neighbourhoods in the City, through the surrounding villages' more mixed populations to the depopulated small towns in the periphery of the municipality, which is situated in the North western part of Denmark, in Jutland.

As characteristics of the areas we include information on mobility (moving in-and out of the area), formations and dissolutions of families, being either marriages or co-resident couples and sociodemographic characteristics of the individuals involved. The pivot for the study is that there is a lack of knowledge about whether and why local communities differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, how they are influenced by the inhabitants' mobility and finally, how they are influenced by the inhabitants' sense of belonging, which in turn may be influenced the general socio-demographic situation and migration among the population in the locality (Jørgensen et al., 2010).

Data and Methods

The study applies a two-step-method. Firstly, neighbourhoods in Aalborg are identified by use of GIS-data (Schultz-Nielsen & Damm 2008) whereafter characteristics of the population throughout a period of 25 years (individual level data from national population-based registers) are used to calculate aggregate measures of the neighbourhoods' stability regarding population composition, family structures and migration patterns. The linkage between the GIS information and the individuals is possible due to the existence of unique identifiers of both the dwellings, the households living in a specific dwelling and the individuals comprising a household.

These combined data facilitate a longitudinal analysis of the migration pattern (inside, as well as out of and into the municipality) of various groups of individuals and socio-

demographic characteristics of groups, characterized by either high or low frequency of mobility as defined here. Further, the municipality as a whole will be described by the number and location of neighbourhoods with specific characteristics, e.g., proportion of the population moving (domestic migration) of the areas. The combination of the characteristics of the neighbourhoods and the various groups will be used to determine criteria for the selection of respondents to the next step: The qualitative part. In this second part of the study, in-depth qualitative interviews focusing on the inhabitants' sense of belonging are conducted with individuals in selected communities, based on the knowledge of the characteristics of the neighbourhoods.

Findings

In this paper we present the first findings from the study, and discuss the suitability of the data for identification of neighbourhoods in a meaningful way. We will focus on the sociodemographic characteristics of and variation among the neighbourhoods in Aalborg municipality as documented by the combined GIS-information and individual register data, the selection of neighbourhoods for and preliminary results from the qualitative part of the study.

Literature:

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