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Community involvement in mixed-income transformation in Copenhagen, Denmark

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ABSTRACT

Mixed-income transformation is a widely used strategy that aims to redevelop marginalized housing estates into socially mixed neighborhoods. However, studies suggest that such transformations, which are typically imposed from above and designed to attract higher-income newcomers, often fail to cater to existing communities' needs and aspirations. Drawing on a case study from Copenhagen, Denmark, this paper explores the role of community involvement in state-led mixed-income transformations. Relative to other countries, the Danish nonprofit housing sector has a high degree of local autonomy and resident self-governance through its acclaimed tenant democracy system. We aim to explore the implications that institutionalized tenant representation may have for community involvement. We find that despite strong tenant institutions, residents are often positioned in a reactive and obstructive role with limited creative input and limited influence on transformation processes. Furthermore, the tenant democracy system itself risks suppressing other forms of participation and thus reproducing divisions between residents in the private and nonprofit housing sectors.

Introduction

Mixed-income transformation, in which marginalized public housing estates are redeveloped into socially mixed communities, has become a widely applied strategy to address spatial concentration of socioeconomic vulnerability and disadvantage (Bridge et al., 2012; Deboulet & Abram, 2017; Joseph et al., 2007; Vale, 2019). The underlying rationale is that concentrated disadvantage has adverse effects on urban livability, social cohesion and safety, thus negatively affecting the life opportunities for residents (Arthurson et al., 2015b; R. J. Chaskin & Joseph, 2015). An extensive literature is devoted to studying these neighborhood effects (Galster, 2019). However, this paper takes another perspective on neighborhood social mix by focusing on the practice of planning and implementing mixed-income transformations. The concept of social mix itself is contested but is frequently used to describe planning efforts that aim to mix socioeconomic groups within a defined urban space—often by combining different types of housing and tenures (Alves, 2019, p. 4; Arthurson, 2010; Arthurson et al., 2015b). The idea is that by developing socially mixed neighborhoods, negative neighborhood effects can be replaced by positive effects for low-income residents (Joseph et al., 2007).

Mixed-income projects are complex and precarious endeavors that must serve a multitude of different objectives at the same time. These include, for example, attracting and retaining high- and middle-income residents, attracting private investments, improving livability, removing neighborhood stigma, improving life chances for low-income residents, and improving social cohesion and interaction across different socioeconomic groups (Arthurson et al.,

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2015b; R. J. Chaskin & Joseph, 2015). In practice, results are mixed. In some cases, mixed-income transformations have been successful in improving neighborhood image, driving investment, promoting livability, and boosting resident satisfaction (Bond et al., 2011; Sautkina et al., 2012). Even so, mixed-income transformations have also been shown to create gentrification and disempower vulnerable, low-income populations while failing to provide neighborhood cohesion across tenure divides (Joseph et al., 2007). Rather than benefitting from transformations, low-income residents may face new forms of marginalization including physical or cultural displacement, exclusion, and loss of both community and sense of belonging (Arthurson et al., 2015a; August, 2014; Bridge et al., 2012; R. J. Chaskin & Joseph, 2015; Hyra, 2015).

These challenges call attention to the multiple ways in which mixed-income transformations are implemented in practice. Many studies focus on urban design principles and physical planning (Brophy & Smith, 1997; Day, 2003; Levin et al., 2014; Ramzanpour & Nourtaghani, 2019; Roberts, 2007; Talen & Lee, 2018). We argue, however, that more attention to the promotion of community voice and influence is warranted. Community involvement is a prerequisite for uncovering and resolving conflicts nested in urban planning and for designing urban planning that delivers better living conditions for all (Agger & Löfgren, 2008; Davidson, 2019). Thus, while studies suggest that community involvement in mixed-income transformations is often neglected, downplayed, or circumvented, bolstering community involvement may enhance chances of delivering more equitable social outcomes (Carpenter, 2019; R. J. Chaskin & Joseph, 2013; R. Chaskin et al., 2012; Darcy & Rogers, 2014; Deboulet & Abram, 2017).

Nelson and Lewis (2021) suggest that strong resident organizations may promote resident representation and provide avenues for community influence on mixed-income transformation. Nonetheless, these authors also call for further research on how organizations enable residents to sustain involvement over time and how community influence is challenged by diverse material interests among residents representing different tenures and socioeconomic positions. We address these questions through a study of mixed-income transformation in the Danish Non-Profit Housing (NPH) sector (the equivalent to social or public housing; Scanlon & Vestergaard, 2007). In 2022, the Danish parliament introduced a mandatory mixed-income policy calling for the transformation of selected NPH estates into mixed-income neighborhoods (Risager, 2022b). The Danish NPH sector offers an interesting context for studying community involvement in these transformation processes since tenant representation and influence are highly institutionalized. The sector is decentralized, relatively autonomous from the state, and governed through associational tenant democracy, meaning that housing associations are owned collectively by tenants who also manage the NPH assets with limited outside interference (Bengtsson & Jensen, 2020; Hansen & Langergaard, 2017). However, the tenant democracy system does not include private sector renters and homeowners, which may challenge the collaboration between residents across tenures.

In the context of these opportunities and challenges, we explore community involvement in mixed-income transformation. We aim to contribute to the literature on social mix by exploring the factors that enable and impede community involvement in the planning and implementation of state-led mixed-income transformation. We examine community involvement in a context of highly institutionalized tenant democracy and NPH sector autonomy. Our aim is to explore what consequences this context has for involving residents. We start by summarizing the existing social mix literature by focusing on community involvement in mixed-income transformations and introducing a theoretical framework on the competing facilitators and barriers to community involvement. We then introduce the Danish NPH sector and recent mixed-income legislation before presenting an in-depth case study of a mixed-income project in Copenhagen, Denmark. We conclude by discussing the tensions between community involvement in the context of institutionalized tenant governance and the barriers to community involvement identified in the theoretical model before summarizing our findings and providing recommendations.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Over the past few decades, urban development in many countries has increasingly emphasized on community involvement, following a general shift from *government* to *governance* in planning (R. Chaskin et al., 2012, p. 867). This emphasis has gradually included transformations of marginalized neighborhoods (contrary to early so-called slum clearance which took place largely without resident consultation; Busch, 2016; Vale, 2019). In addition to mitigating community opposition that could hinder, complicate, or prolong transformation processes, proponents of community involvement stress its ability to yield insights about local communities' problems, needs, and aspirations thus supplementing top-down planning practices in order to produce more viable planning solutions (R. Chaskin et al., 2012; Engberg & Larsen, 2010; Norton et al., 2018). Community involvement is thus increasingly seen as an integral part of socially sustainable urban development and good planning practice (Davidson, 2019; Kjeldsen & Stender, 2022). Furthermore, community involvement is believed to contribute to strengthening residents' capabilities and communities' institutional capacity (Agger & Jensen, 2015; R. Chaskin et al., 2012).

However, community involvement in planning is complex and difficult. While some theorists remain optimistic about its deliberative democratic potential, critics have argued that in practice participatory planning will often reproduce social inequalities as powerful actors find ways to exclude weaker adversaries from influencing plans and projects (Agger & Larsen, 2009; Innes & Booher, 2003). The risk of reproducing social inequalities is particularly relevant when it comes to mixed-income transformations which are designed to mix lower- and higher-income groups and often draw on market mechanisms to do so (August, 2016; Busch, 2016; R. Chaskin et al., 2012; Deboulet & Abram, 2017). Thus, mixed-income transformations are often under pressure to cater both to the interests of low-income tenants, higher-income newcomers, private investors and developers, and state and government actors (R. J. Chaskin & Joseph, 2013; Fraser et al., 2013). Our theoretical framework is built around three major challenges to community involvement in mixed-income transformation.

The first major barrier to community involvement is that powerful stakeholders—while supporting community involvement in theory—are in practice reluctant to dedicate the necessary time and resources to incorporate community input. Drawing on Australian, French, and UK studies, respectively, Arthurson (2003), Deboulet and Abram (2017), and Nelson and Lewis (2021) identify a range of barriers to reconciling the strategic and commercial goals of mixed-income transformation with the social goals of community participation. At the operational level, private property developers tend to prioritize efficiency over democracy in decision-making, and financial schedules and timelines often do not allow adequate time for community involvement. Thus, consultation is often limited to small-scale issues during the planning phases, while residents are left out when obstacles arise during implementation (Arthurson, 2003; Deboulet & Abram, 2017). On a more substantial level, community preferences may not necessarily align with the strategic planning objectives imposed by high-level private or public stakeholders. For instance, community preferences may lead to less profitable planning solutions, thus causing private developers and investors to try to limit or steer community influence. The level of densification may be one such example. Other examples could include the location of private and nonprofit units, or the types of amenities and whom they cater to (R. J. Chaskin & Joseph, 2015; Darcy & Rogers, 2014). As professional stakeholders are the ones shaping the institutional structures of community involvement, they tend to be less inclusive and responsive to resident perspectives that deviate from top-down project plans and objectives. On the contrary, powerful stakeholders may pilot participation toward pre-established solutions (Darcy & Rogers, 2014; Ferilli et al., 2016; Keating, 2000; Westin et al., 2021). Furthermore, rather than gathering insights from the residents, professional stakeholders often primarily use community involvement activities to disseminate information to residents. This is often done with an emphasis on teaching low-income tenants about rules and expectations for appropriate behavior (R. Chaskin et al., 2012).

The second major barrier is that community involvement carries a risk of engagement fatigue and disillusionment. Transformation processes are typically protracted and highly complex, making it

difficult for residents to sustain involvement over a long period of time. Nelson and Lewis (2021) suggest that strong, independent resident organizations are capable of sustaining involvement if they have the resources to keep up mobilization and to solicit external support, and Arthurson (2003) suggests that a public agency with decision-making power should undergird community involvement. Yet, even with external support, residents are laypeople with limited time and resources. Engagement fatigue may set in if there is too much involvement in complex and detailed planning issues or if people feel that their contribution does not make a difference. This can be seen, for example, if residents see little impact when they participate (Norton et al., 2018).

A third barrier to community involvement is that mixed-income transformations by design bring diverse resident subgroups together that may hold divergent interests and whose platforms for involvement may be divided and compartmentalized according to group affiliation (R. Chaskin et al., 2012). Hyra (2015), for example, demonstrates how high-income newcomers regarded design and planning solutions employed in a Washington, DC, mixed-income project as attractive while they alienated low-income existing tenants. Furthermore, while community involvement rests on the implicit assumption that residents will always wish to exert influence, some resident groups are better organized, better equipped, and more committed, while others may prefer to leave control to experts and authorities (Ferilli et al., 2016; Kyung, 2018). If practitioners are not attentive to maximizing inclusion and balancing input from different resident groups, involvement may inadvertently exacerbate social inequalities (Arthurson, 2003; August, 2016; Deboulet & Abram, 2017; Nelson & Lewis, 2021; Thurber & Fraser, 2016).

To summarize, the existing literature allows us to sharpen our focus on both the drivers of and impediments to community involvement in mixed-income transformation planning and implementation. First, the literature suggests that the effectiveness of involvement processes will depend on the willingness of powerful stakeholders to allocate time and resources as well as share power. Second, the literature suggests that special attention should be devoted to how resident engagement is supported and facilitated over the course of protracted and complex transformation processes, including how conflicts of interests between residents and professional stakeholders are resolved in a context of high stakes and high power-asymmetry. Third, the literature draws attention to the management of conflict between different resident groups with different resources and interests as well as the tailoring of participatory formats to accommodate and include different types of residents and to promote equity in participation. Figure 1 captures these barriers to involvement. In the next section, we examine the other key components of our theoretical framework and the possible facilitators of community involvement.
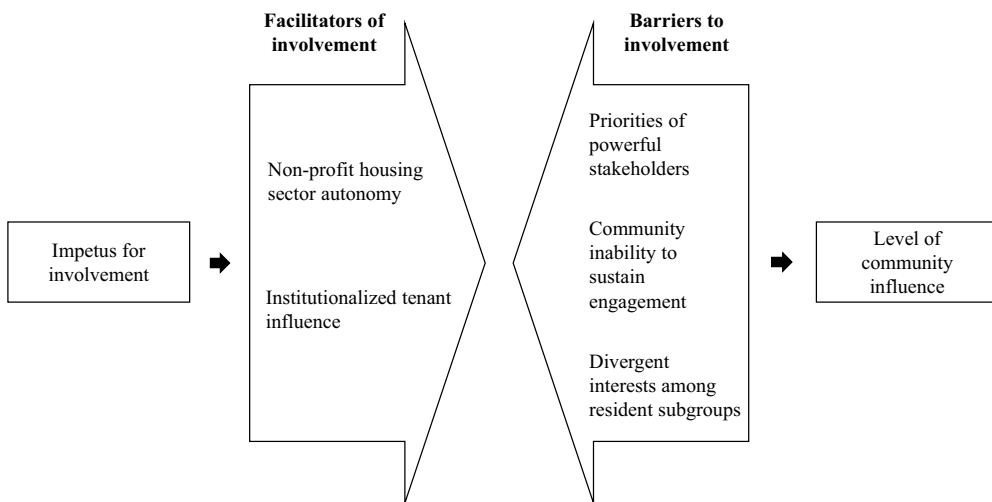

Figure 1. Theoretical framework.

Mixed-income transformation in the Danish NPH sector

Using Kemeny's (1995) terminology, the Danish nonprofit housing model is often described as a unitary housing regime. It is characterized by universal access to subsidized housing and serves a broad section of the population (approximately 17%, making it among the largest in Europe) though it de facto mainly houses people with lower incomes (Bengtsson & Jensen, 2020; Nielsen et al., 2023; Scanlon & Vestergaard, 2007). Social housing provision is nested within the NPH model as municipalities may use up to 25% of vacant dwellings for social housing assistance while providing subsidies on behalf of tenants who cannot afford the rent. In recent years, however, the government as well as municipalities and housing associations have introduced new rental policies that impede access to some housing estates for marginalized resident groups such as the unemployed. These policies are designed to steer the resident composition in order to avoid concentrated disadvantage in specific estates (Nielsen et al., 2023).

Like the Dutch unitary housing regime (but unlike, for example, the Swedish one), the Danish model is based on independent nonprofit housing associations. In this model, these associations are collectively owned and governed by the tenants, making them institutionally independent from the state although they receive subsidies and are subject to state regulation (Bengtsson & Jensen, 2020). Rents are cost-based covering mortgage and operations, but the sector's revolving funds model means that after mortgages are paid off, surplus rent is reinvested across the sector through a nonprofit entity, the National Building Fund (Noring et al., 2022; Scanlon & Vestergaard, 2007). Thus, even though the sector is highly regulated, it remains to a large extent independent from the state. As we indicate in our theoretical framework, this high degree of autonomy in the NPH sector might be a facilitator of greater community involvement as NPH associations may be more committed to serving tenants' interests rather than serving external political or commercial agendas.

Another potential facilitator of community involvement is the Danish tenant democracy system which means that NPH associations are governed by the tenants via elected association boards as well as local estate boards and general assemblies for each estate (Hansen & Langergaard, 2017; Pawson et al., 2012). The association boards (on which the majority of seats is reserved for tenants) are responsible for the management and long-term viability of NPH assets as well as daily operations including leasing, budgeting, and maintenance. As NPH associations collectively own their properties, association boards are also authorized to sell off these assets, while construction of new properties requires municipal approval and co-financing. Local estate boards exclusively consist of tenants who are elected at general assemblies where all tenants have the right to run and vote. Estate boards are responsible for developing each estate in accordance with the tenants' preferences, including service provision and budgeting decisions that affect the specific estate. Even though other countries like the Netherlands, Belgium, and the UK also have systems of tenant representation, no other social housing system has such a high level of collective ownership and resident control (Pawson et al., 2012). It is possible that institutionalized practices of tenant democracy may facilitate community involvement within mixed-income transformation. However, many tenants do not necessarily participate in tenant democracy nor feel genuinely represented. For some, tenancy is not perceived to come with attached democratic responsibility but as a commodity equivalent to leasing on the private rental market (Hansen & Langergaard, 2017).

The parallel society act

Self-governance structures may be one of the reasons why the Danish NPH sector has been shielded from state-driven mixed-income schemes until recently (Noring et al., 2022; Risager, 2022a). Thus, previous attempts at privatization have been thwarted partly by opposition from NPH associations and partly by challenges to privatizing assets owned by NPH associations as they are already formally private (Bengtsson & Jensen, 2020). This absence of mixed-income transformation policies ended with

the introduction of the so-called Parallel Society Act (PSA) in 2018. The PSA was launched after several years of debate about immigration policies in Denmark. Thus, when introducing the PSA in his 2018 New Years' speech, former Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen stated that certain NPH estates had become "holes in the map of Denmark" where "generation after generation live in parallel societies" (Regeringen, 2018c; for in-depth accounts, see Bech-Danielsen, 2022; Risager, 2022b).

The PSA slated 15 NPH estates for transformation based on socioeconomic indicators such as tenants' income, unemployment and crime rates, as well as the share of non-Western immigrants and descendants (Kjeldsen & Stender, 2022). The rationale was that the mono-tenure housing stock and modernist layout were among the underlying problems in what was termed "ghetto estates" and that a transformation, including a mix of housing types and tenures, would help integrate the estates into mainstream society (among other things) by attracting a more socioeconomically mixed resident base (Regeringen, 2018b). This new state policy approach has been criticized as racist and xenophobic, blaming immigrants for the isolated conditions of the estates (Risager, 2022b).

According to the PSA, NPH associations and municipalities are required to issue transformation plans that will reduce the share of *non-profit family housing* units from an average of 94% of the total housing stock in the targeted geographic area to a maximum of 40% before 2030. This reduction is to be achieved through demolitions, private new-built housing, sales, and/or conversions into youth or senior housing (Kjeldsen & Stender, 2022; Risager, 2022a). While decisions about rehabilitation and redevelopment were previously a NPH sector prerogative, city councils—and ultimately the governmental Housing and Planning Authority—are now authorized to implement transformation without NPH associations' approval, if necessary (Regeringen, 2018a). Thus, the PSA constitutes an unprecedented interference of the state in the NPH sector (Risager, 2022a).

Mixed-income transformation in Tingbjerg, Copenhagen

We study a mixed-income transformation project in Tingbjerg, an NPH estate located on the outskirts of Copenhagen, Denmark. The estate was designed by acclaimed architects and landscapers Steen Eiler Rasmussen and C. Th. Sørensen and was built between 1957–1972. It houses 6,500 tenants and consists of 2,400 NPH units, which are mainly three-story yellow brick blocks arranged along a grid of small streets and spacious green courtyards. Ninety-six percent of the total housing stock in Tingbjerg consists of nonprofit family housing units. Tingbjerg is secluded from the surrounding cityscape by protected landscapes, a large sports facility, and an expressway.

When Tingbjerg was targeted by the PSA in 2018, plans to redevelop the estate had already been well underway. Specifically, NPH associations and the city of Copenhagen took the initial steps toward a redevelopment plan in 2013, and later NPH associations formed a partnership with a private developer (SAB/KAB et al., 2015, 2018). Initial plans drew on extensive community involvement. Based in a showroom on the estate's main street, NPH planners consulted more than 300 residents, hosted a number of public meetings, and consulted with association boards and estate boards via an informal *dialogue forum*. This process resulted in a transformation plan issued in 2018 and subsequently revised to comply with PSA requirements. The dialogue forum and the showroom were later halted as planners perceived the need for involvement as being saturated for the time being. The site plan (Figure 2) shows planned newly-built buildings which are spatially integrated with existing NPH blocks around shared green spaces. Figure 3 shows examples of the densification as well as community involvement activities.

Data and research methods

This study combines participant observation, document reviews, and qualitative interviews with practitioners and residents. We conducted participant observation in February–June 2021 and January–June 2022 (totaling 67 days of participant observations) which included participating in stakeholders' daily activities and meetings as well as engaging in informal conversations and ad-hoc interviews. Furthermore, observations included eight different types of community
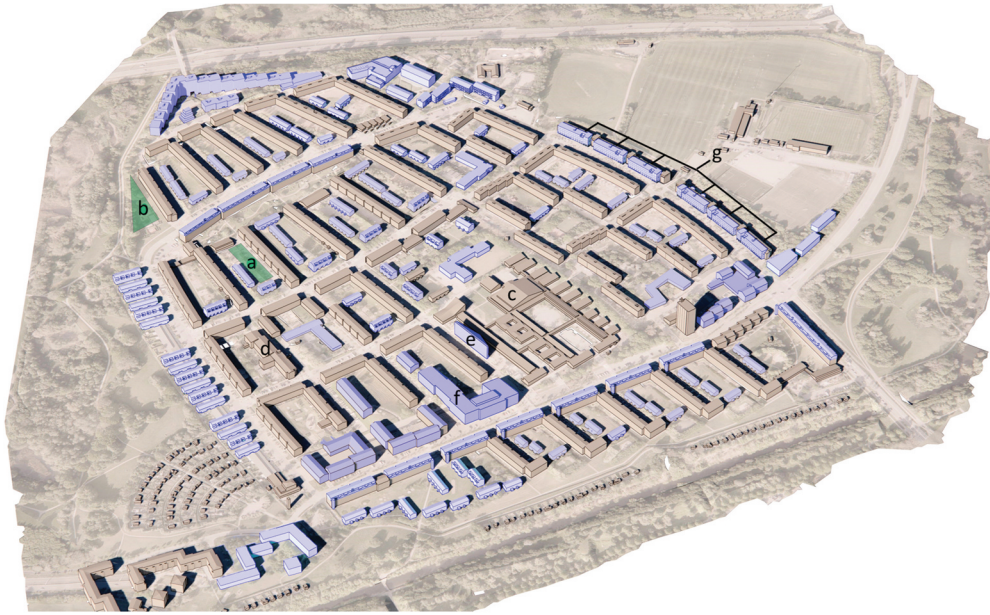
Figure 2. The site plan illustrates the planned post-transformation estate layout. Brown units are existing NPH units. Purple units are private rental and home-owner units and amenities to be built before 2030. Map also shows amenities including existing urban gardens (a and b), school (c), existing and planned nursing homes (d and f), a new cultural center (e), and student housing (g). source: SLA/Vandkunsten, 2023. Legend added by the authors.

involvement activities, ranging from large-scale community hearings to smaller events such as courtyard meetings and community gardening days. We supplemented participant observations with reviews of planning documents including transformation plans, strategies, district plans, and internal work documents supplied by the stakeholders. We conducted interviews with stakeholders involved in the transformation process in 2020, 2021, and 2022. Due to staff turnover and shifting stakeholder involvement, repeated interviews with a predefined panel of interviewees were not feasible. Instead, we selected a group of interviewees representing all major organizations each year of the study. We solicited other perspectives from additional interviewees. In total, we conducted 24 interviews with core stakeholders and six interviews with additional stakeholders. We identified interviewees through our participant observations on the estate as well as through planning documents. Table 1 summarizes the stakeholder interviews. Among the interviewees, developers, NPH association top management, and managers of the planning team all had substantial decision-making power, while the remaining interviewees had limited power to influence transformation planning and implementation. The NPH planning and community work teams were based in offices on the estate and in daily contact with residents. Contacts between city and developer representatives and residents were less frequent and mostly limited to various types of formal meetings.

We conducted 19 interviews with Tingbjerg residents between June-August 2022. We recruited resident interviewees via a combination of stakeholder contacts and knocking on doors. The sample is not statistically representative of Tingbjerg's population. Instead, we stratified our sample of interviewees to represent a wide mix of different types of residents. Our aim was to include a wide variety of different resident perspectives (Robinson, 2014). We selected parameters of stratification that represented factors likely to affect residents' experience of community involvement, including housing type, household composition, gender, ethnicity, and prior community involvement. Table 2 summarizes the distribution of resident interviewees for each parameter. To protect interviewee anonymity, the table does not provide a cross-tabulation of variables.

Figure 3. Top left: Model of (redeveloped) tingbjerg on display in showroom, 2019. Top right: non-profit housing block (left) adjacent to new-build private rental block (right) under construction, 2022. Middle: workshop with local youth, 2021. Bottom: new-build row houses (occupied-by-owner). NPH apartments behind the trees, 2021. (all photos by the authors).

We conducted both resident and stakeholder interviews as semi-structured interviews following an interview guide. We obtained written consent from all interviewees and informed interviewees orally and in writing about the research project and their right to revoke consent at any time. We managed all data in compliance with the Danish Data Protection Agency regulations. We transcribed all interviews, which ranged from 30 to 60 minutes, and coded transcripts using NVivo11. We coded stakeholder and resident interviews separately, while using field notes and documents to supplement interview data. For both coding processes, we applied a two-step iterative approach starting with a deductive phase where we coded data based on themes in the literature, and an inductive phase where we refined codes and created subcodes based on themes developed from the data itself (Locke et al., 2022). Locke et al. (2022) identify

Table 1. Stakeholder interviews as distributed across stakeholder organizations for each year of the study.

	Organization	Role	Number of interviews		
			2020	2021	2022
Core stakeholders	NPH planners	Manager and staff, Urban Development Team (UDT)	1	4	3
	NPH community work program	Project manager and community workers	1	3	2
	City	Staff, Mayors Office, Housing Division	2	–	2
	Private developers	Project managers and consultants	1	3	2
Additional stakeholders	NPH associations	Top management	–	–	2
	City	Staff, Planning Division	1	–	–
	External advisor	Landscape architect	1	–	–
	NGO	Project manager	–	1	–
	Cultural Center	Community consultant	–	1	–

Table 2. Resident sample selected characteristics.

Housing typology		Household composition		Gender		Ethnicity		Community involvement	
NPH renters	15	Young singles/ couples	4	Male	9	Danish background	10	Tenant democrats	3
Private sector renters	2	Families with children	9	Female	10	Minority background	9	Active in e.g., community associations	5
Homeowners	2	Elderly singles/ couples	6	–	–	–	–	Not active	11
Total	19	Total	19	Total	19	Total	19	Total	19

three moments in coding practice: Creating codes, organizing to code, and merging patterns. First, we read all transcripts, which helped determine how concepts from the literature could be operationalized into coding themes. Next, we organized data in themes, which were again analyzed to revise themes, recode data, and arrive at empirically grounded subcodes. Finally, we established connections across codes and subcodes. For professional stakeholder interviews, coding themes included the goals and objectives behind community involvement, perceived challenges, implementation of activities, and the role of tenant democracy in involvement processes. For residents, the themes included their perception of the existing qualities of the estate, their attitudes toward the transformation, their experience with community involvement, and their attitude toward community involvement.

The single-case study approach and the modest sample size limit the generalizability of our findings. Furthermore, we focused on transformation processes that were still in progress at the time of study and thus did not allow us to make inferences based on transformation outcomes. However, we chose a process-tracing single case-study approach because it allowed us to gain deeper insights into the community involvement processes as they played out during mixed-income implementation (Blatter & Haverland, 2014).

Findings

In this section, we discuss the empirical findings of our study. We divided the findings into five sections. First, we describe stakeholders' objectives and ambitions for community involvement. Second, we discuss the challenges and prioritization issues that we experienced. Third, we describe the actual implementation of community involvement activities. Fourth, we discuss how residents and professional stakeholders assessed activities, and finally, we describe their reactions to the assessment. We include the perspectives solicited from each of the main groups of stakeholders: the NPH associations' top management, NPH association planners, private developers, city representatives, community workers, and residents.

Stakeholders' objectives and ambitions for community involvement

When the transformation plan for Tingbjerg was about to be implemented in 2020, NPH associations hired an Urban Development Team (UDT) consisting of planners and landscape architects, headed by a Chief of Urban Development. Their task was to oversee the implementation of the transformation, provide information to the residents, and carry out community involvement. According to the NPH associations' top management, the involvement of local residents had two objectives: (1) to keep residents informed about the process and (2) to accommodate resident needs and aspirations when these were compatible with existing transformation plans. However, management did not always perceive the latter to be feasible. As one manager said: "Sometimes interests are just irreconcilable" (NPH top manager, 2022). The intention, then, was not to give local residents decision-making power over the transformation process as NPH top management had reserved such power for the association boards. In turn, NPH top management saw the association boards' oversight and authority to approve major planning decisions and land sales as a form of community participation.

In accordance with the NPH top managements' position not to give local residents too much influence on transformation plans, the UDT found that involvement should focus on issues that were not predefined by these plans. In particular, the UDT was interested in using resident involvement to design courtyards and public spaces and, in turn, increase the usage of these spaces, which the UDT perceived to be underutilized. Furthermore, the UDT believed that involvement should motivate residents to take ownership of the neighborhood, take better care of things, and clean up after themselves.

City representatives and private developers also saw community involvement as important. For city representatives, community involvement was partially framed as a way to comply with political pressure to involve residents and adhere to ideals of good planning practice while curtailing resident opposition. To private developers, community involvement was partially seen as a means to improve usability and partially as a way to demonstrate legitimacy to potential future business partners. As one developer said, "When we are done in Tingbjerg, we are dependent on doing projects with other housing associations elsewhere" (private developer, 2022).

Challenges and impediments to community involvement

Despite commitment to community involvement, actual involvement activities were hampered and delayed by resource scarcity coupled with an increasing workload within the UDT. In addition to community involvement, UDT consultants were also asked to assist with construction project management, which proved to be more complex and time-consuming than expected. UDT practitioners perceived construction project management as more urgent than community involvement and the consequences (including risks of delaying construction processes) more dire if not handled immediately. Thus, community involvement was continuously deprioritized. As one practitioner put it:

> We have been running so fast, and there's always something new coming up that we need to attend to. I don't think there has been much time for community involvement or to think it all through, really. … There have been other things that were more important at this stage. (UDT staff, 2021)

Another consequence was that the UDT grew reluctant to involve residents when involvement risked impeding fast and steady progress such as when enabling participation or accommodating resident input would require additional time and resources. For example, local youth were invited to help decorate building site fences based on the assumption that this would promote a sense of ownership while also providing job opportunities. Yet, mobilizing and instructing the youth proved more time-consuming than expected, as noted by a UDT manager: "If we had hired someone to do the fences, they would have been ready by now" (UDT manager, 2021).

Implementation of community involvement activities

Despite resource scarcity, the UDT carried out a number of community involvement activities in collaboration with city representatives and private developers, including online and in-person consultation procedures, workshops, and courtyard meetings. Attendance and types of participants varied depending on whether involvement activities were practical (for example, when residents assisted in establishing a new community garden), close to home (like courtyard meetings), incorporated into social events (such as communal eating), utilized online formats, or were designed as traditional public hearings. While practical and social events tended to attract a more diverse audience (including participants with limited Danish language skills), more formal events, such as meetings and hearings, tended mainly to attract the most active and committed residents the majority of whom were elderly, white Danes.

One example of an involvement activity was a public consultation about the upcoming district plan, which NPH associations and the City of Copenhagen hosted in the spring of 2021. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the consultation was virtual. Participants were able to pose questions using an online chat-function (participants posted more than 50 questions) and to submit written consultation responses (which 52 residents and other stakeholders did). The consultation was followed by four courtyard meetings where UDT planners set up shop for a few hours in the courtyards that would be the first affected by densification. About 20–30 residents attended each courtyard meeting.

The main criticism raised by residents in consultation responses and at courtyard meetings related to the loss of green spaces (including the loss of community gardens) due to densification, the density of housing, and the sense that redevelopment was catering to high-income newcomers rather than the existing community. While planners listened to residents' grievances, they were not committed to addressing them, and consultation responses did not prompt changes in the transformation plans. However, housing associations did take steps to allot spaces for new community gardens to replace the existing ones.

Practitioners also applied workshops as a community involvement method. For example, the UDT and community workers hosted a workshop for local youth in September 2021, which focused on developing dream scenarios for the future of Tingbjerg. About 20 children and adolescents attended and created a series of posters and other artifacts. Another example was a workshop in May 2022 at which the UDT and NPH associations invited residents to suggest projects for a newly formed Neighborhood Association—an organization unique to Tingbjerg, which was intended to provide a platform for collaboration between NPH associations, NPH tenant representatives, and private landowners. Again, around 20 residents participated, along with an equal number of professional stakeholders. While workshops generated various forms of input, the UDT and NPH association did not systematically follow up on it. Thus, involvement activities did not impact transformation planning and implementation.

To summarize, community involvement mainly took place in the form of one-off events where practitioners were not held accountable for following up on resident input, and thus follow-up was limited in practice. There was no continuous involvement such as representation of local residents in transformation working groups or advisory groups.

Residents' and professional stakeholders' assessment of community involvement

Residents were generally disappointed and frustrated by involvement processes. They described involvement as *pro-forma* and tokenistic with all major decisions already locked in and no room for residents to exert real influence. Residents mainly saw involvement activities as venues for one-way dissemination of information from professional stakeholders rather than channels for resident input. Some saw NPH associations, developers, and the city as a troika determined to push their own planning agenda without consideration for the interests of residents:

> I don't think they have been interested in involving the residents at all. Because if you ask me, this is a project that partially has to break up the resident composition out here. And therefore, they have probably not felt [that] there was a basis for involving residents in the planning. … (NPH tenant, male)

Local community workers were also critical of what was perceived as a dominant top-down approach to community involvement and a lack of responsiveness and inclusion. Community workers perceived the lack of follow-up on the input solicited from residents to be a critical problem in the involvement process. Furthermore, community workers felt excluded from the planning and execution of involvement activities. They believed that if they had been more involved, they could have contributed to tailoring involvement formats that would be attractive to a wider segment of the residents.

At one involvement event, participants complained that their input was too often ignored and that residents were generally unable to impact the transformation. A UDT manager answered that this lack of impact was partially due to the fact that residents' suggestions needed approval by estate boards to be implemented:

> I do understand that you want to see the impact of your participation. But the boring fact is *Who has the jurisdiction*? If you want significant changes, it's the estate board that makes the decisions. (UDT manager, 2022)

Thus, the UDT framed tenants' democracy as partially culpable for impeding effective community influence. With most public spaces owned by NPH associations, ideas to change the design or use of public space required estate board approval. The UDT perceived this requirement as an impediment to delivering short-term visible results that could demonstrate to residents that community involvement was real and meaningful.

In contrast to residents and community workers, NPH association top management and the UDT were generally satisfied with involvement processes though they were disappointed that so few residents seized the opportunity to participate. They partially ascribed the low turnout at community involvement events to residents not being able to be invested and forming opinions about the transformation because of the large scale, protracted process, and inherent complexity. UDT management brushed off criticism raised by residents as minor dissatisfaction, which should not overshadow the fact that most residents were content with the transformation.

Private developers expressed similar sentiments: that low turnout should be interpreted as an indication that "things aren't too bad" (private developer, 2021). They also asserted that transformation plans were probably too abstract for residents to understand, and that it was too difficult to mobilize residents around issues at the neighborhood scale that did not directly relate to their own unit or block. Developers were also frustrated by the lack of engagement. After a public meeting, a private developer representative noted:

> We have spent a long time preparing this meeting and then only three residents show[ed] up. Is that because people already have enough information? Is it because they're tired of what's going on? … Is it because they are not interested in urban development? What is it? (Private developer, 2022)

In summary, residents and community workers were disappointed with involvement activities and felt excluded from influence. On the other hand, NPH managers, planners, and private developers were mainly frustrated with resident passiveness and disengagement despite what they perceived as well-executed resident involvement activities.

Reactions to involvement processes

The fact that local estate boards did not have formal influence on the transformation did not stop them from voicing their opinions. One of the estate boards remained particularly vocal and critical of the process. Yet, since they could not directly influence the transformation process, opposition was mainly directed toward other related topics on which the board did, in fact, have influence. One example was an outdoor gym that the UDT had obtained funding for but which the estate board refused to allow. Another example was a *way finder project* devised by a private developer with the purpose of

showcasing the qualities of the neighborhood and attracting outsiders. To some tenants, this was seen as an insult:

> When I heard about that way finder project, I just lost it! It's one thing that they're steamrolling us and just want to make money. But now they also want us to be monkeys in a cage. There's supposed to be signs and what-have-you about things in Tingbjerg and it's all targeting newcomers and people from outside. We have 6,000 residents here; we're not monkeys in a cage! (NPH resident, female)

As a consequence of estate board opposition, the developers chose to abolish the way finder project, as they were not interested in stirring a conflict with tenants. More critically, the estate board also threatened to leave the Neighborhood Association—something practitioners perceived as a threat to the efforts to create a united Tingbjerg without divisions between NPH tenants and private sector residents.

Other reactions to the perceived lack of influence came from private sector residents. Private sector newcomers had all been through a vetting process involving written applications describing their ideas on how to contribute to the neighborhood. The idea was that cherry-picking socially invested newcomers would help promote social integration and mixing. In reality, it proved difficult to implement newcomers' ideas for neighborhood improvements since most public spaces were exclusively owned and governed by the NPH sector. This frustrated newcomers who did not necessarily feel that their preferences aligned with tenant boards' approach to transformation. A private sector newcomer said:

> The estate boards out here, every time there are some extra funds, they just vote for a rent reduction instead of putting the money into something cool. I appreciate that they want to keep the rent low, I just think it's so backwards. But I guess they just don't have the same ideas as I do. I want a vibrant neighborhood; they just want the status quo. (Private sector resident, female)

While the vetting process gave newcomers the impression that they would be able to influence transformation, in reality they felt curtailed by NPH dominance over public space. This imbalance was aggravated by differences in interests, tastes, and preferences between new-comers and NPH tenants. The Neighborhood Association had been conceived in response to this challenge namely as a platform for joint governance over public spaces across NPH and private sector divides as well as a joint provider of neighborhood services, upkeep, and facility management. At the time of study, however, it was still too early to assess the impact of the Neighborhood Association.

To deescalate the conflict with residents, NPH management and UDT planners restarted the dialogue with the estate boards in late 2022. As one NPH manager conceded, "If we could turn back time, we would have kept the dialogue going with the estate boards. That was a clear mistake." The UDT decided to reestablish the *dialogue forum* as a platform for involving association and estate boards and to reopen the showroom as a platform for informal resident consultation. This did not, however, imply integrating tenant representation in transformation governance nor in other ways relinquishing authority. Instead, UDT management framed the dialogue as an instrument to appease tenants and estate boards and keep them well-informed.

Discussion

We now return to our theoretical framework to discuss the tensions and challenges inherent in institutionalized tenant governance in a mixed-income transformation including (1) power-dynamics between residents, housing associations, private developers, and authorities; (2) residents' difficulties sustaining involvement through protracted and complex transformation processes; and (3) the potentially conflicting interests of a socially mixed resident population in emerging mixed-income communities.

First, the social mix literature finds that difficulties reconciling commercial and social goals in mixed-income transformations will often lead powerful stakeholders to limit or shape involvement to align with strategic and commercial agendas (Darcy & Rogers, 2014; Ferilli et al., 2016). Out study adds additional nuance to this assertion. The findings indicate that strong institutions and traditions for tenant representation (such as is the case in the Danish NPH sector) make it difficult for powerful stakeholders not to frame community involvement as integral to transformation processes. Even when the PSA was introduced in 2018 (which in principle mandated municipalities and housing associations to circumvent community involvement), the Tingbjerg case shows that community involvement continued primarily with association boards and (to a lesser extent) with local residents. One reason may be that because institutionalized tenant representation ensures tenants' influence on the everyday workings of the housing associations, conflicts may spill over from transformation processes to other issues. The estate boards' somewhat effective opposition against the Neighborhood Association and the way finder project illustrates this. Powerful stakeholders may thus accept giving some concessions to avoid these types of insurrections. Another reason may be that the stronger the adherence to ideals of participatory planning in the planning system, the more likely that powerful stakeholders are compelled to demonstrate compliance with these ideals. Private developers' preoccupation with upholding legitimacy by demonstrating good intentions and receptiveness to community input illustrate this point. While the tenant democracy system is a specific Danish model for tenant governance, other models for the advancement of tenant representation may yield similar positive effects.

However, this study also suggests that the concessions given to residents on account of their ability to oppose planning decisions are limited. Professional stakeholders were thus fundamentally unwilling to relinquish control or give residents substantial influence. Local tenants were not formally represented on steering committees, working groups, or advisory boards, for example. On the contrary, involvement activities were primarily one-off events with limited follow-up and no stakeholder accountability (Jackson, 2020). Furthermore, community involvement was easily downplayed or bypassed if it challenged strategic objectives (when staff resources had to be prioritized between project management and community involvement, for example). When this was the case, planners chose to prioritize financial constraints over social goals (Arthurson, 2003). When community involvement did take place, risk- and complexity-aversion translated into exclusive and confined formats that only appealed to a smaller segment of the residents and which were easy for professional stakeholders to control (Agger & Larsen, 2009; Darcy & Rogers, 2014).

The second challenge to community involvement is the difficulty communities have sustaining engagement over protracted and complex transformation processes. Nelson and Lewis (2021) suggest that strong resident organizations may provide the necessary infrastructure to overcome this challenge. This study supports this idea in so far as estate boards provided a platform for continuously voicing tenant interests. While tenants would in theory be able to organize in other ways, the institutionalization of tenant representation lowered the transaction costs of mobilizing residents and seeking influence (Darcy & Rogers, 2014; Thurber & Fraser, 2016). However, this system did not secure estate board members a place in the planning process. While they still sought to gain influence, being placed in an outsider position meant that tenants tended to be confined to a reactive and obstructive role which offered little creative, constructive, or co-design potential (Darcy & Rogers, 2014; Thurber & Fraser, 2016). Thus, we suggest that institutionalized tenant representation is not sufficient to enable meaningful and effective community involvement, as tenants must also rely on professional stakeholders to frame inclusive governance structures around urban transformations that provide a constructive space for tenant influence (Agger & Löfgren, 2008). One key shortcoming is that mixed-income transformation schemes rarely operationalize what community involvement entails and even more rarely hold stakeholders accountable for complying with participatory planning objectives (Jackson, 2020). Invoking a clearer framework for assessing and ensuring democratic participation in planning, as suggested by Agger and Löfgren (2008), could be one way forward.

Finally, we explored the challenges of community involvement given the potentially conflicting interests of a socially-mixed resident population in emerging mixed-income communities. On the one

hand, this study suggests that institutionalized NPH tenant representation bolsters low-income tenant influence vis-à-vis higher-income newcomers. As mixed-income strategies fundamentally change the demographics of former marginalized housing estates, the social mix literature demonstrates that these transformations are often riddled with tensions between different groups such as homeowners and social renters who often have conflicts of interest rooted in class, culture, lifestyle, etc (Arthurson et al., 2015a; R. J. Chaskin & Joseph, 2013; Tersteeg & Pinkster, 2016; Thurber et al., 2018). These tensions spill over into community involvement processes where they often play out in favor of high-income homeowners and private-sector renters at the expense of social tenants (Bridge et al., 2012; R. J. Chaskin & Joseph, 2015). Institutionalizing NPH tenant representation ensures that low-income groups have some control over neighborhood development, which may in turn to some extent curtail cultural displacement and alienation (Hyra, 2015).

On the other hand, tenant democracy tends to favor highly committed and capable tenants who can navigate the discursive and social codes of democratic participation (Agger & Larsen, 2009). As Hansen and Langergaard (2017) demonstrate, many residents do not participate in tenant democracy nor feel represented. Some long-standing tenants interviewed for this study were unaware that they were living in an NPH unit or that there was a system of democratic representation in place. Particularly residents with limited Danish language skills and limited prior experience with associational democracy may find it difficult to participate. This arguably calls for other types of participatory formats if community involvement includes a wider section of residents' experiences and perspectives (Carnegie & Norris, 2015; Larsen & Frandsen, 2022). The study finds that professional stakeholders were sometimes critical of the unwillingness of elected tenant representatives to share power and influence with other residents through participatory processes. Thus, combining systems of associational democracy with more direct forms of participation may require that elected representatives are on board and have trust in the way participatory processes are designed and implemented.

This study also confirms the challenges that systems of tenant representation face when neighborhoods transition from mono- to mixed-tenure. Systems of representation typically follow tenure divides, which in turn may exacerbate social divisions. A number of studies propose that establishing governance structures that bridge tenure-divides should enable cross-tenure decision-making (R. J. Chaskin & Joseph, 2015; R. Chaskin et al., 2012; Thurber et al., 2018). In Tingbjerg, the Neighborhood Association was intended to provide such a framework for joint decision-making. Though the Neighborhood Association had not been functional for long at the time of our study, the findings suggest that such an entity is dependent on the respective resident organizations' willingness to share power with their counterparts across tenure. Developing a shared decision-making infrastructure in collaboration with the affected groups of residents may prove a more productive way forward for this type of construct compared to the top-down approach applied in Tingbjerg, which ended up spurring opposition toward the Neighborhood Association among NPH estate board members.

Conclusion

In this study, we examined facilitators and barriers to community involvement in mixed-income transformation planning and implementation in a context of institutionalized tenant representation and Non-Profit Housing (NPH) sector autonomy. We explored the consequences of this context by examining the implications this context had for the power balance between residents, housing associations, developers, and authorities; for the ability of residents to sustain involvement over time; and for the inclusion of diverse resident perspectives in participatory processes.

We found that institutions and traditions favoring associational tenant democracy may have strengthened powerful stakeholders' commitment to community involvement. However, stakeholders often had private agendas for community involvement that did not focus on maximizing resident influence but rather focused on nudging residents to take ownership of the transformation, curtailing opposition, and

increasing legitimacy. Furthermore, practitioners organized community involvement in such a way that powerful stakeholders did not relinquish control over the transformation process and were not accountable for complying with community input.

Tenant representatives were able to use institutional tenant representation as a platform to sustain involvement over a longer period of time. However, the level and type of influence were reliant on professional stakeholders who acted as gatekeepers to the planning and implementation process, which in the Danish case were mainly the NPH associations and their planning teams. We found that if tenants are not allowed representation in the planning process, they tend to be pinned down in a reactive and obstructive position, which only warrants marginal influence and offers little potential for constructively affecting the transformation process. In this study, influence was exclusive and limited to a small section of highly committed and experienced tenants. Thus, we suggest that the potential for community involvement to effectively shape mixed-income transformation outcomes hinges on the extent to which practitioners are willing to share power, facilitate diverse participation, and incorporate resident input in the planning process. Framing a stronger commitment to a community-centered approach in project goals and accountability measures may be one way to withstand the forces that will otherwise tend to suppress or sideline community involvement efforts.

We also found that the system of associational tenant democracy posed new challenges to community involvement. First, the system favored highly committed residents who were capable of navigating systems of democratic participation, while less organized or capable residents were left out. Second, the system of tenant representation followed tenure divides. Thus, private sector newcomers' options to participate in transformation were effectively curtailed by NPH dominance, which in turn inadvertently reproduced divisions and tensions between residents representing different sectors and tenures. Thus, developing more inclusive forms of participation as well as governance structures that bridge tenure-divides is needed. Developing more inclusive participation and cross-tenure governance structures requires not only powerful professional stakeholders but also established systems of tenant representation to relinquish power. Therefore, we suggest that alternative participative formats and inclusive decision-making structures may be more viable if developed in collaboration with existing resident organizations. Finally, we call for further research into different modes of direct and representative community involvement and the coupling and balancing of different participatory methods in order to promote more effective and inclusive community involvement in mixed-income transformations.

Disclosure statement

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