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# Displacing the other to unite the nation: The parallel society legislation in Denmark

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## Abstract

In 2018, the then right-wing government in Denmark led by Lars Løkke Rasmussen and supported by the extreme right-wing party Danish People's Party presented new legislation to end 'parallel societies' in Denmark by toughening the criminal law, enforcing Danish knowledge and nursery school assistance to toddlers, and, more importantly for this article, a series of urban interventions in 'ghetto areas' considered as such mainly when the proportion of immigrants and descendants from non-Western countries exceeded 50 per cent. Until recently research has focused on either the discursive elements of the 'ghetto politics' in Denmark or the urban interventions from an architectural or urban planning point of view. However, newfangled research deal with the entwined economic elements. In this article, I compare the different developmental plans proposed in the affected areas because of the legislation, with an aim to reach further and point at the inherent elements of urban b/ordering, that is, measures taken to attain social order and gain legitimacy by demarcating categories of people to incorporate some and exclude others through urban space. Indeed, through this comparison, I conclude that the ghetto legislation is a compelling example of the urban b/ordering inherent to the politics and dynamics of current liberal capitalist social democracies. It is a social experiment that remodels the geography of Denmark in terms that recall the eugenic and hygienic social and urban policies of the 19th century and form part of a worrying pattern that may have consequences that go beyond the stated ones.

## Keywords

Urban bordering, urban planning, nation-building, ghettos, parallel society legislation

## Introduction

In 2018, in his annual New Year's speech, the then Prime Minister of Denmark Lars Løkke Rasmussen warned that ghettos could 'reach out their tentacles onto the streets' by spreading violence, and that because of ghettos, 'cracks have appeared on the map of Denmark' (Rasmussen, 2018). Consequently, later that year he and seven other ministers (including the Ministers of Foreigners and Integration; Employment; Children and Social Affairs; Economy and Internal Affairs; Justice; Education; and Transport, Building and Housing), presented the package *Towards a Denmark without Parallel societies. No ghettoes in 2030* (henceforth, the Ghetto Package or simply GP).

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In the plan and during the presentation –which quite symbolically took place in Mjølnerparken, one of the most famous 'ghettos' in Copenhagen (although scientifically the use of label ghetto to describe these areas in Denmark has been contested, Schultz Larsen, 2011) – the predominant focus was correspondingly on the ethnicity of the residents, population growth from 'non-Western countries' and value differences between 'Danes' and immigrants with a 'non-Western background'. According to the presentation and the plan, the problems in the residential areas confirmed the necessity for a continued 'strict immigration policy'.

Now this has not come out of the blue. The problematization of neighbourhoods with concentration of ethnic minorities have taken hold in the Danish media debate since the early 2000s, legitimizing official rhetoric around 'ghettos' (Frandsen and Hansen, 2020), and continuous attempts had been made since then to tackle the problems in some of these areas through urban and social reforms, gradually linking the handling of the ghetto to the handling of migration and cultural diversity at large.

Until now much literature has focused on the narrative that had been built up during the last decades regarding the failed attempts of the government to integrate what was represented as problematic immigrant ghettos (see Frandsen and Hansen, 2020; Jensen and Söderberg, 2022; Olsen and Larsen, 2022; Seemann, 2021; Simonsen, 2016), and only more recently, authors have engaged with the economic and political interest in privatizing and extending the ongoing processes of gentrification to the corporative housing sector and the entwinement with the previous aspects (see Risager, 2022a, 2022b).

While clearly both dimensions are relevant, and largely inspired by the discourses and policies of social mix applied to problematic areas in other Western European countries such as France, the UK, and the Netherlands (Arthurson, 2012; Lees et al., 2012). This article will focus on the urban development plans proposed for the areas considered hard ghettoes, thereby linking an analysis of the urban interventions plans specifically to the already existing literature and knowledge regarding what we might call *the politics of the nation* (the first) and *the political economy of the ghetto law* (the second), to make further progress in our knowledge and reflect upon *the social effects* that urban intervention plans might have.

In general, the article uses the *crimmigration* literature (see Bosworth et al., 2018; Stumpf, 2006 Franko, 2020) as a starting point. The concept of crimmigration reflects how contemporary criminal law and criminal justice are increasingly being used to police the boundaries of legal or illegal practices in society, as well as how jurisprudence in a growingly globalized world is used to demarcate the line between wanted citizens and unwanted non-citizens forcefully, and to reinforce racialized, classed, and gendered hierarchies around citizenship and belonging (Armenta, 2017; Aliverti, 2021; Onwuachi-Willig, 2017). Criminal law and justice are, thus, replacing border checks as a primary present-day technology of inclusion/exclusion.

A vivid yet under-researched example of this appears in new laws passed around Europe, where nation-states are using criminality as a deterrent against undesired urban practices, openly criminalizing or problematizing various marginal social groups either through urban planning (what I tentatively call the Housing–Migration nexus) or by policing of informal activities in the urban public space, such as unauthorized urban vendors, homeless or others who live on and off the streets. These practices of bordering, that is, attempts to control and order the 'unknown' or 'undesired' subjects which operate at different local scales (Guenter et al., 2016), go beyond administrative exclusion and labour segregation to include housing exclusion and constant exposure to police violence, all-in-all a varied and complex yet under-researched phenomenon which I have labelled urban b/ordering (thus linking the crimmigration literature with the bordering literature of Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002). The Ghetto Package is a compelling example of this worrying trend.

Dealing with this understudied topic builds upon a large amount of literature devoted to racialization and racism in the housing sector at large or the public or private housing sector in particular (Picker, 2017; Quillian et al., 2020; Rothstein, 2017; Taylor, 2021), and more interestingly, recent studies dealing with racial capitalism in relation to the housing

sector (Clare et al., 2022), gentrification measure applied to non-profit housing via racialisation or territorial stigmatization (Bridge et al., 2014; Risager, 2022a, 2022b; Slater, 2021) and urban displacements (Soederberg, 2021).

Consequently, the overarching aim of this article is to contribute to the emergent research on urban bordering and to analyse the processes of criminalisation and problematization of marginalized groups through social and urban policies. It does so through a critical analysis of the policy and discursive background and the implementation of the Ghetto Package in Denmark. The concrete aim is to understand how socio-legal practices produce urban borders and sociocultural boundaries. Consequently, the main research question is, what ideas of the Danish society are present and who are the subjects prone to be expelled? Who is desired for? Under which terms?

In order to deal with this, I have structured the article as follows. First, I will shortly explain the non-profit housing sector in Denmark and its evolution. Following this, bases on a genealogical analysis I will describe the ghetto package, its aims, and measures. Then I will unravel the decision and implementation process and compare some of the concrete urban renewal and action plans proposed, and, finally, reflect upon the inherent problem formulations and detect any elements of bordering.

## Methodology

In methodological terms, the research on which this article is based was carried out during 2020–2022. Although part of a much more extensive research and data collected, the present article mainly uses data obtained through a review of written documents such as legal and policy documents, urban planning documents and history books.

More concretely, for section 'The non-profit social housing sector in Denmark', I did a historical review of books related to the history of the social housing sector in Denmark. For section 'Ghetto politics in Denmark', I did a mixture of qualitative content analysis (see Krippendorf, 2004) and a genealogical analysis of (1) all the legal and political documents related to the parallel society legislation, presented in section 'Ghetto politics in Denmark', and, most importantly, (2) all the proposed and approved urban development plans (*Udviklingsplan*), presented in sections 'Emerging patterns in the development plans ' and 'Governing the other: Urban b/ordering'. The legal and policy documents were all retrieved from the different Ministries or Government repositories, whereas the urban development plans were retrieved from the then Ministry of Building and Housing now Danish Housing and Planning Authority.

Inspired mainly by Bacchi's and Goodwin (2016) framework for policy analysis, this analytical move entailed in the analysis of the legal and political documents related to the parallel society legislation: (1) identifying problem representations and (2) how these had come about (questions 1 and 6 in the What is the Problem Represented henceforth WPR). In the analysis of the proposed and approved urban development plans, it entailed (1) identifying inherent problem representations, (2) unravelling their deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions and (3) detecting the potential effects produced by them and any implicit b/ordering (questions 1, 2, and 5 in the WPR approach). As part and as a consequence, in section 'Governing the other: Urban b/ordering', we are able to reveal and relate the localized practices of problematization and b/ordering to the broader political, economic and discursive processes in Denmark.

*The non-profit social housing sector in Denmark.* The pillars of the social housing sector are according to the *Landsbyggefonden* (The National Building Fund): Non-profit, tenant's democracy and financing. So, the non-profit housing sector in Denmark is organized as non-profit social housing organizations, strictly regulated by law and subsidized by the local municipality, yet, and somewhat different to social housing seen in other European countries typically funded and managed by the State social housing, in Denmark the social housing is self-owned and governed by the tenants through the resident democracy via non-profit rental housing associations.

While the non-profit social housing boomed during the 1960s and 1970s, some authors consider the sector as the backbone of the Welfare state (Larsen

and Hansen, 2015). According to recent figures provided by The National Building Fund, around 979,770 people or ⅙ of the Danish population live in social housing, which indicates that the sector has a substantial size. There are around 573,000 social housing homes, which is one-fifth of all homes in Denmark (Landsbyggefonden, 2022).

Historically, the sector has aimed to provide people of all kinds, and not only the poor or marginalized people, decent housing at an affordable rent. In fact, in Danish, this type of housing is called *almen*, which literally means public. However, as we will see, throughout the years, and even more so, with the consecutive booms in the private housing sector and due to discrimination, non-profit housing took a more active role in relation to accommodating the different arrivals of migrants, refugees and poverty in general.

The social housing estates built during the 1960s and 1970s were at first a great success, solving issues with lack of housing while being very popular. In fact, most were built in the suburbs, where green open spaces, separation of traffic, supermarkets, schools, nursery schools, and other public amenities were collocated. It was a dream for many people to move out of the inner cities, and for the traditional working-class family, the estates would provide relaxing environments after a long day at work (Ahnfelt-Rønne and Gaarsdal Rønnow, 2018: 27). The estates were given names containing 'mountain', 'park' or 'garden' in the name, such as Tingbjerg, Mjølnerparken and Bispehaven, thereby evoking the qualities of the green and natural landscapes.

However, during the 1970s, certain generalized issues slowly emerged. Growing prosperity and tax advantages made single-family houses more attractive and thus large apartments in the social housing estates relatively more expensive to live in, in comparison. Consequently, faced with the possibility of buying their own home, many families rejected the social housing estates (Bech-Danielsen and Christensen, 2017). While less residents meant higher rents, as more families bought their own homes, a negative spiral was created. In 1976, a white paper on housing policy, released by the Danish labour movement, warned that the social housing estates were developing into homes for citizens at the bottom of the social ladder (Bech-Danielsen and Christensen, 2017).

During the 1960s–1970s, new often more industrialized building techniques and materials were used for the first time and the estates had often been built with prefabricated structures of low quality. Consequently, in the 1980s, the social housing estates faced new challenges, as extensive construction damages became evident. Gradually damages became apparent especially in the concrete structures and the flat roofs, leading to rainwater leaks (Bech-Danielsen et al., 2011). With the growing need for refurbishments, the mandate of The National Building Fund was changed to support refurbishment projects, while the state would support the construction of new homes (Ahnfelt-Rønne and Gaarsdal Rønnow, 2018: 28).

In 1986, the so-called 'Winther report' was published, confirming the initial worry that the social housing sector had moved from providing quality homes for everyone to accumulating the weakest groups of the society (Winther, 1986). Crucially, the report – a product of the committee investigating the role of the social housing sector in the housing market – concluded that the issues were not caused by any one reason, but the social housing estates were suffering from correlating social, economic, and physical problems. One of the main factors, however, was the municipal right to assign with which municipalities assigned homes to people in need, such as welfare recipients. While, on the one hand, it provided a purpose for social housing, on the other hand, it had also led to the congregation of poorer population in the social housing estates and with it a higher prevalence of social problems than the population as a whole.

Around 1990, an increased awareness about socially disadvantaged groups emerged. The estates were now called 'malfunctioning areas', where the concentration of ethnic minorities and the shortage of social and integration policies were becoming obvious (Ahnfelt-Rønne and Gaarsdal Rønnow, 2018: 28). Consequently, mayors in the western parts of the Greater Copenhagen region were particularly loud in the political debate, and in 1993, the national government formed a town committee ('byudvalget') that would deal with the issue.

The committee proposed a more integral approach to the issues in social housing estates combining physical refurbishments with reductions of rent levels and social measures concerning integration and crime (Bech-Danielsen and Christensen, 2017). Consequently, coordinated social measures in the social housing sector were enacted, and when evaluating the measures, the committee found that the residents enjoyed living in their area and that the life in the areas were not only social problems (Ahnfelt-Rønne and Gaarsdal Rønnow, 2018: 29).

Meanwhile, since the 1990s and especially around the turn of the millennium, ethnic minorities became a hot political issue (Simonsen, 2016) and the debate about distressed social housing estates began to focus on the ethnicity of residents in the social housing estates, which were generally much more diverse than Danish society as a whole. This change brought with a change in discourse and the widespread use of the words ghetto and parallel society (v. Freiesleben, 2015).

In sum, the structural explanations to this change were often a mixture of lack of tenants (and a vacant flat means higher prices for the other tenants) and a 25 per cent allocation rights for the city councils (sometimes much more), but obviously also increasing prices of private tenancy and mortgages, as well as racial exclusion in the housing sector. The non-profit housing sector has historically been fully inclusive, and at the same time very attractive for low-income households, even more so in marginalized or unattractive areas.

*Ghetto politics in Denmark*. Although already in 2000, the then centre-left government introduced an 'Action Plan against Ghetto-ization', the most important changes were introduced in 2004 at the hands of the then centre-right government (that had taken office in 2001). The Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (the first prime minister to be supported by the far right-wing party, the Danish People's Party) had argued in his New Year speech in 2004 that many years of unsuccessful immigration and integration politics had created 'immigrant-ghettos' (Rasmussen, 2004),[1] this way adopting the anti-immigration and assimilationist discourse of the Danish People's Party (DF).

Later that year, the *Governmental Strategy against Ghettoization* was published (Regeringen, 2004). Elaborated by the *Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration*, the strategy made it possible to govern the influx of people into disadvantaged non-profit housing areas, and thus targeted what it perceived as a ghettoization of the Danish society, and its ultimate goal was to avoid the settlement of 'resource-weak' social groups in the 'ghetto areas' by, among other things, diversifying the type of housing in these areas, introducing more private ownership and commerce (in areas of mainly or only non-profit housing) and offering 'integration initiatives' such as crime prevention, assistance in homework and job-seeking.

The strategy would be reviewed by an 'expert committee' ('Programbestyrelsen'), who in 2008 concluded with a series of recommendations. Of these, however, only few were included into the Ghetto Plan (Regeringen, 2010), a proposal for law which was debated and planned during 2009, and passed in 2010, to be implemented from 2011 onwards.

That same year, the then Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen (last term of a decade of right-wing governments) addressed the 'ghetto' problem in his 'opening of the parliament' speech in October 2010. In the speech, he talked about 'holes in the Danish map' (Rasmussen, 2010), which were, according to him, 'places, where Danish values clearly are no longer dominant' (Rasmussen, 2010). He primarily defined the 'ghetto' policy problem as a problem of lack of 'Danish values': 'the freedom to be different. Responsibility for the common. Respect for the laws of society. Freedom of speech. Equal opportunities for men and women' (Rasmussen, 2010), and importantly, according to his representation, the 'ghettos' were areas where these values were 'missing'.

The *Ghetto Plan* contained 32 different initiatives, including 'strategic demolition of apartment blocks' in areas of non-profit housing, a halt in allocation of refugees to the 'ghettos' and the possibility of prioritizing resourceful residents. In addition, a mandatory daycare for bilingual children included more parental orders, expanded access to video surveillance and a rapid processing of cases with 'young troublemakers'.

The succeeding governments (2011–2014 and 2014–2015) led by the Social Democratic Party introduced only few changes to the plan, in the end they had promoted and later fully accepted the underlying premises, but it was the following right-wing governmental coalitions again led by Lars Løkke Rasmussen (2015–2016 and 2016–2019), again with fundamental support by the Danish People's Party, who would eventually propose a framework for legislation in *Towards a Denmark without Parallel societies. No ghettoes in 2030* (Regeringen, 2018), which would follow up on and put into action the previous policies already laid out in the 2010 Ghetto Plan.

From the initial framework, six measures were agreed upon with the support from the Social Democratic Party. Among these, the following are worth mentioning:

1. The primary action phase comprises the period 2021–2026 and includes – among other things – renovations and demolition in vulnerable residential areas.
2. The areas that have been on the so-called ghetto list for four years in a row – the so-called severe ghetto areas – are obliged to reduce the proportion of non-profit housing for families to a maximum of 40 per cent by 2030.
3. Any settlement into the aforementioned areas for people on social allowance is forbidden.
4. Compulsory learning for 1-year-olds in vulnerable housing areas and stricter penalties for leaders who malpractice.
5. Language tests in zeroth grade, strengthened parental responsibility and sanctions against schools with poor results.
6. Areas with double penalization can be created.

Although they are all worth studying more in detail, to focus on the urban bordering elements in the law, here I will focus on the urban and social implications and implicit moralities of the first three, but first I will explain the criteria for being considered a ghetto.

## The Ghetto list

Since the *2010 Ghetto Plan*, the Danish Government has been publishing a so-called list of Vulnerable Areas of Non-Profit Housing, aka the Ghetto List.

During all these years, these criteria have always related to non-profit housing areas only, and only those that exceed 1000 residents. Since 2010, if at least two of the parameters were above the limit value, the area was added to the list.

Since 2010, a series of changes have been introduced to the criteria, emphasized in bold in Table 1. For instance, *in 2013*, education and income would be included among the criteria, and so, to be added to the list of vulnerable areas, the residential areas should comply with at least three of these now five criteria. And *in 2018*, the crime and education criteria were changed, and more importantly, a new division was introduced which has been in effect since then. Henceforth, the residential areas were divided into three different groupings: *vulnerable areas, ghetto areas* and *severe ghetto areas. Vulnerable residential areas* are defined as non-profit housing areas with at least 1000 residents who meet at least two of the first four mentioned criteria. *Ghettos* are vulnerable residential areas that also meet the fifth criterion of more than 50 per cent of immigrant and descendants from non-Western countries. And areas that have been on the ghetto list for at least the foregoing 4 years will be referred to as *severe ghetto areas*.

The change in criteria meant that the number of areas included in the list increased from 22 to 30, and 16 of these were now labelled severe ghettos. Later, in May 2018, there were a total of 55 vulnerable residential areas according to the newly created definition. When updating the list in 2018, the figures were adjusted to 43 vulnerable residential areas, 29 ghettos and 15 severe ghetto areas. In December 2019, the numbers had dropped to 40 vulnerable areas and 28 ghettos, 15 of which still met the definition of severe ghetto areas.

Crucially, when reviewing the criteria, we see how the problems were primarily perceived as related to the people who *lived* in the areas, and not so much the physical environment or the housing itself. In fact, as many of the housing representatives interviewed confirmed, many of the vulnerable areas were only a few decades old or had already carried out physical reform. And more importantly, the main criteria, the decisive one, the one that can make a vulnerable residential area a ghetto, is the ethnic or racial. That is, only if the proportion of immigrant *and* descendants from non-Western countries

**Table 1.** Criteria for the Ghetto List. The bold is employed to highlight the changes. Source: Author's own elaboration.

| | 2010 | 2013 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Criteria 1 | The proportion of 18-to 64-year-olds with no connection to the labour market or education exceeds 40% | The proportion of 18- to 64-year-olds with no connection to the labour market or education exceeds 40% | The proportion of 18- to 64-year-olds with no connection to the labour market or education exceeds 40% |
| Criteria 2 | Number of convicts 18+ is over 2.7% | Number of convicts 18+ is over 2.7% | Number of convicts **15+ is more than 3 times the national average calculated as an average over the past 2 years (in 2018, this was equal to 2.2%)** |
| Criteria 3 | | **The proportion of residents aged 30–59 who only have a basic education exceeds 50% of all residents in the same age group** | The proportion of residents aged 30–59 who only have a basic education exceeds 60% of all residents in the same age group |
| Criteria 4 | | **The average gross income of taxpayers aged 15–64 in the area excluding education seekers is less than 55% of the average gross income for the same group in the region** | The average gross income for taxpayers aged 15–64 in the area is less than 55% of the average gross income for the same group in the region |
| Criteria 5 | Proportion of immigrants and descendants from non-Western countries exceeds 50% | Proportion of immigrants and descendants from non-Western countries exceeds 50% | Proportion of immigrants and descendants from non-Western countries exceeds 50% |

The changes are in bold.

exceeds 50 per cent can an area be considered a ghetto, and therefore only if this criterion is met can an area be forced to reduce the number of family housing units.

Be that as it may, the implication of the legislation was that the areas listed as severe ghettos in 2019, 15 in total (see the distribution in the Danish geography in Figure 1), would have to reduce the percentage of housing units aimed for family accommodation through the proposal of a Development Plan (*Udviklingsplan*). Now what the specific implementation depended very much on the area in question. Therefore, the section will compare the different plans proposed.

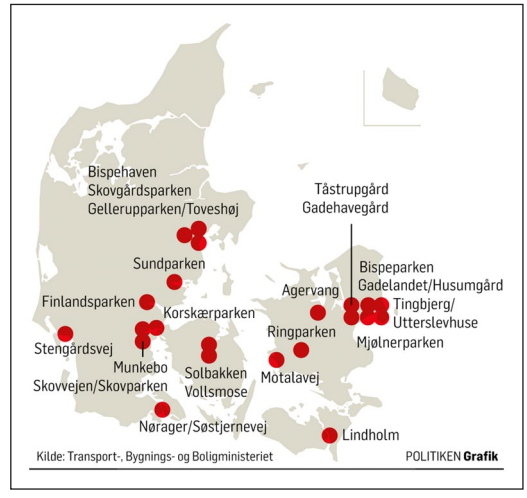


**Figure 1.** Map of the development plans.
Source: Politiken Grafik.

*Emerging patterns in the development plans.* As mentioned earlier, several of the areas in question had been figuring as conflictive areas since the 1990s,

and measures had been taken to curb the negative tendencies detected by the housing associations and city council, with the mandatory approval of the residents. For instance, we see how the strategic and comprehensive plans in Aalborg East (2008, 2012, 2017) became the Aalborg model (The Non-Profit Housing Associations of Denmark (BL), 2019), and how the plans for Gellerup in Aarhus (2010) became an important point of inflection for the later development plans.

However, these were not the only severe ghetto areas with ongoing plans and reforms. In fact, almost all of them, 11 out of 15, had already had at least one integral urban development plan (*Helhedsplan*) implemented, including both physical and social interventions, and some could even see the effects of these. The important story here is that the effects came too late, and with the new legislation this meant that often newly refurbished areas and housing units would be demolished (like in Bispehaven) or sold (like in Mjølnerparken or Vollsmose).

Be that as it may, when looking at the development plans in general (see Table 2), the first thing that draws attention is how they all accept the premise that the housing areas are somehow cut off from the surrounding environment, closed around themselves, and they do not invite people in, so to speak. At the same time, and consequently, we see how there is a clear tendency to want to 'open up', integrate the area into the surrounding environment and invite people from the outside in, or to simply walk or bike through.

When looking closer into the physical characteristics of the areas in general, one can most certainly detect problems with the urban planning. For instance, often we see how certain spatial folds create 'zones of insecurity', and consequently, as in the case of Agervang (Holbæk), more secure areas shall be created by opening the areas up 'so that it can be more alive, secure, and attractive to visit and live in' (Planværkstedet, 2019: 13).

However, one might ask, could this not be said about practically any parking lot or shaded corner in a high-rise building? In fact, this kind of intervention largely corresponds with a broader tendency towards a securitization of public space, and instead, one might rather argue that what this idea seems to suggest is that behind the hegemonic idea of a need for an opening-up (of some spaces) lies an assumption that certain types of spaces are criminogenic, that is, they produce crime. However, if this was true, interventions should and would be made in practically any low-rise private housing area. In fact, in this case the closed-off-ness seems only to be a problem because of the people who dwell in these spaces.

Another important point is that many of these areas are seen to be too homogeneous both in social and in urban terms, even though many either already had private housing or had many different typologies of housing (senior housing, youth residence, and 1, 2 and 3 room apartments). In fact, one might therefore argue that the main narrative behind the law, the idea of parallel societies, is somewhat reproduced in the problem-formulation and solution in the areas: the main problem is that the areas and the people who live there are not part of 'the rest' but rather live on their own, isolated from the surrounding society. It seems to suggest that there are indeed 'parallel societies' and that these should be broken up. Therefore, even though these areas are indeed more heterogeneous in ethnic terms, the main solution to the problems is, much like other European cities, *social mix*.

Now although social mix often refers to the social and economic resources, the areas are often meant to be completely changed through the attraction of people with social and economic resources, also known as *tenure mix*, to promote a mixed composition of residents. It does not take a doctoral degree to whiff the implicit hint at ethnicity and that what is really meant is that the racialized surplus population of the social housing estates, what Fernández Arrigoitia (2018) calls the 'social housing "Others"' (p. 264) must be displaced to other areas (moreover, there is generally not much worry nor consideration regards to where) and people with greater social and cultural capital (i.e. the majority society ethnics = Danes) must be convinced to move in.

In order to scrutinize some of these tendencies and inherent problem formulations with which the politicians, professionals, consultants and the housing associations representatives work, let us look more closely at *Mjølnerparken*. It is a relevant case first because it is one of the most famous 'ghettos' in Denmark and, quite tellingly, the place where the Ghetto Plan was announced in 2018. Second is the complexity of the case, the historic unfolding in the multi-ethnic and gentrified neighbourhood of

**Table 2.** Content of the Urban Interventions. Source: Author's own elaboration.

| Case | Problems | Delimitation | Existing urban development plans | Urban interventions | Social programmes | Aims | Comments | Criteria (2019) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agervang, Holbæk | Closed-off | No change proposed | No | New-build<br>Privatization<br>Re-marking<br>Narrative<br>Installation of public institutions<br>Promotion of private enterprises<br>Sustainability<br>Urban connection/integration<br>Opening up the area (p. 6) | Social interventions<br>Rental agreement<br>Repatriation<br>Employment | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• A housing area which is 'mixed' and 'sustainable' and 'integrated' with the sorrounding areas and the city in general<br>• 'Open up the area so that it can be more alive, secure, and attractive to visit and live in' (p. 13 d.2)<br>• D4Ye 'Create new forms of housing and ways of living and new communities which will enhance the area' (p. 13 d.2) | | 3: unemployment (41.7), ethnicity (56.2) and education (67.4) |
| Bispehaven, Aarhus | Insecurity (already being targetted by the existing development plan)<br>Closed-off | Proposal to enlarge the area | Yes: Tryghedsrenovering (2018) | Renovation<br>Development of local shopping area<br>New infrastructure (roads, public spaces and squares)<br>Public institution: Community Centre (25 units)<br>New-build housing and enterprises (530 private residences and 270 units for commerce)<br>Demolition (318 family units) | | Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework) | | 3: unemployment (43.9), ethnicity (67.5) and education (71.9) |
| Finlandsparken, Vejle | Closed-off | Proposal to enlarge the area and reduce the reduction of family units (Granted) to 68% | Yes: Fysisk Helhedsplan (2010) | Re-marking (family residence to senior housing and commerce)<br>New-build (private residences, commerce and youth and senior housing)<br>Improve the infrastructure to open up the area and better connect it with the surrounding (focus on connections and flow) | Continuation of already existing social programmes such as: Job-seeking counselling rental agreements (fleksibel udlejning since 2018 and kombineret udlejning since 2019) | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework) to 68% (less of a reduction due to dispensation because 'the area shows less indications of parallel society' (Ministry)<br>• Integrate the area into the surrounding areas and the city at large | The Fysisk Helhedsplan implemented in 2010 largely focused on 'three challenges: lack of architectural quality, monotonous composition of residents, and technical problems with the buildings'. It proposed renovations of the buildings and the infrastructure, promoting senior housing and enabling and attracting outside visitors or by-passers | 3: unemployment (41.1), ethnicity (74) and education (77.2) |

*(Continued)*

**Table 2.** (Continued)

| Case | Problems | Delimitation | Existing urban development plans | Urban interventions | Social programmes | Aims | Comments | Criteria (2019) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gadehavegård, Høje-Taastrup | Closed-off<br>Too homogenous | No change proposed | Yes:<br>Strategisk Udviklingsplan (2017) | • Sale of family housing (75)<br>• New-build (private residence, 100 for families and 54 for senior housing)<br>• Instalment of public functions (i.e. community centre and a 'campus-house')<br>• Demolition (260 units)<br>• Conversion (100 single-room residence to larger units)<br>• Re-marking (105 single-room to youth residencey) | | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Integrate with the northern part<br>• Diversify the tenancy and residence type<br>• Create a Knowledge and Information City and a Housing Laboratory | | 3: ethnicity (56.4), convicted (2.07) and education (71.8) |
| Gellerup og Toveshøj, Aarhus | Closed-off<br>Too homogenous in social and urban/ architectural terms | No change proposed | Yes:<br>Fysisk Helhedsplan (2007)<br>Dispositionsplan (2010)<br>Masterplan (2018) | • Renovation (1166 units)<br>• Demolition (600 units)<br>• New-build (903 apartments and 231 units for commerce) | | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Create a new neighbourhood<br>• Diversify type of tenancy and type of residence (for instance by introducing semi-detached housing, penthouses, duplexes apartments, town-houses and other low-rise housing) | The prior plans already envisioned both demolition, new-build, infrastructural work and instalment of public service building. It has in many ways been the urban intervention to follow alongside the ones implemented in Aalborg East | 5: unemployment (49.3), ethnicity (80.8), convicted (2.96), education (82) and income (53.9) |
| Mjølnerparken, København N | Closed-off<br>Too homogenous in social and urban/ architectural terms | No change proposed | Yes:<br>Udviklingsplan Nørrebro (2012)<br>Helhedsplan (2015) | Sale of family housing (233 units) | Social interventions<br>Rental agreement (skærpet fleksibel udlejning) | Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Diversify types of tenancy and residence<br>• Open up the area and close the building | The prior plans already envisioned both new-build (in-fill), conversion of flats to youth residence and commerce, renovations and infrastructural work<br>Similarly, earlier interventions and developments aimed at fostering youth residences in the area, and recently Nordbro was built | 3: ethnicity (80.5), education (75.2) and income (49.6) |
| Motalavej, Korsør | Closed-off<br>Too homogenous in social and urban/ architectural terms | Proposal to reduce the reduction of family units (Partially Granted) to 58% | Yes:<br>Fysisk helhedsplan for Area 15 (2013)<br>Fysisk helhedsplan for Area 21 (2015)<br>Strategi for den almene sektor 2025 (2016) | • Demolition and downgrading of buildings (164 units)<br>• Re-marking (9 family units to youth housing) | Rental agreement | Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Integrate or merge the area with the surrounding<br>• Create attractions for outsider to come in<br>• Diversify types of tenancy and residence | In the previous interventions blocks had been demolished and units had been converted | 3: ethnicity (51.7), convicted (2.2) and education (72.1) |

*(Continued)*

**Table 2.** (Continued)

| Case | Problems | Delimitation | Existing urban development plans | Urban interventions | Social programmes | Aims | Comments | Criteria (2019) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Munkebo, Kolding | Stigmatized<br>Closed-off<br>Too homogenous in social and urban/ architectural terms | Proposal to reduce the reduction of family units (Partially Granted) to 60% | No, however, a renovation has been carried out | • Infrastructural work (roads and paths through and to the area) and a new bus service<br>• Conversion and upgrade of the public spaces<br>• Conversion of the community centre to a neighbourhood centre<br>• Sale (36)<br>• Demolition (36)<br>• New-build (60 private residence and 95 for commerce)<br>• Re-marking to youth (50) and senior housing (12) | | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Attract people with social and economic ressources<br>• Connect/merge the area with the city at large<br>• Open it up | • There's quite a contradiction between the conceptions of the people working in the housing associations and the city council on the one side, and the consultants regarding the closed-off-ness of the area . . . This leads me to ask whether the consultants are simply reproducing certain ideas and literature (discourse) and with it solutions to these areas . . .? If the area is not considered a parallel society, nor closed-off, the only reason to intervene for a mixed city is that the area in social terms and the type of buildings in urban terms are too homogenous<br>• Surprisingly, however, the buildings are of different sizes and heights, the most obvious intervention would therefore be, re-marking and new-build<br>• There are some concerns that the people who will be forced to move, gather in other places | 3: unemployment (40.5), ethnicity (61.7) and education (72.2) |
| Nøjsomhed, Helsingør | | Proposal to reduce the area. Excluding the rest of Helsingør Syd and only focusing on Nøjsomhed/Sydvej (Granted) | Yes:<br>Fysisk Helhedsplan (2019) which includes re-marking to senior housing and through which the area is reduced to under 1000 residents and therefore no longer can be considered a ghetto | | | | | |

*(Continued)*

**Table 2.** (Continued)

| Case | Problems | Delimitation | Existing urban development plans | Urban interventions | Social programmes | Aims | Comments | Criteria (2019) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nørager/ Søstjernevej, Sønderborg | Closed-off<br>Too homogenous in urban/ architectural terms | Proposal to reduce the reduction to 60% (Granted) | Yes: Helhedsplan (2003–2005) | • Re-marking: to youth housing (18)<br>• Conversion of 8 buildings to semi-detached housing units<br>• Demolition of two buildings<br>• New-build (30 private housing units)<br>• Infrastructural work | | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Diversify the area in social, architectural and tenancy | | |
| Ringparken, Slagelse | Closed-off<br>Isolated<br>Too homogenous in social and urban/ architectural terms | Proposal to include an area north to Ringparken which is public domain and where the community centre is placed (Granted) | No, however, a renovation of the facade was carried out in the 1990s | • New-build (94 cooperative youth housing, 228 private and commerce, and an area of almost 5000 $m^2$ for around 247 units)<br>• Demolition (80 and a community centre)<br>• Partial demolition (132)<br>• Conversion from large to smaller buildings: 59 family units to 100 youth housing units<br>• Re-marking: 48 to youth housing<br>• Sale (24 units) | | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Compartimentalize the area into three smaller areas<br>• Merge the area with the surrounding and the city at large | The proposal is quite ambitious and far-reaching, especially for a small city such as Slagelse | 4: unemployment (41.2), ethnicity (57), convicted (2.07) and education (70.2) |
| Skovvejen–Skovparken, Kolding | Closed-off<br>Too homogenous in social and urban/ architectural terms | Proposal to exclude Department 22 (Granted) | No | Infrastructural work<br>• Sale (35)<br>• Demolition (243)<br>• New-build (129 private residence and 59 for commerce)<br>• Re-marking: to youth (52) and senior housing (109)<br>• Conversion of family units to youth housing (8) | | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Attract people with social and economic ressources<br>• Connect/merge the area with the city at large<br>• Compartimentalize the area, break it up into smaller units<br>• Diversify the tenancy and housing in general<br>• Create more sense of security | Much like the other area in Kolding, the buildings are of different sizes and heights, and also there are several institutions Furthermore, had the other areas owned and managed by Bovia on the other side of Skovparken/Skovvejen been counted in, there probably hadn't been any interventions, also with this in mind the area is already quite mixed | 3: ethnicity (65.9), convicted (2.35) and education (72.7) |

*(Continued)*

**Table 2.** (Continued)

| Case | Problems | Delimitation | Existing urban development plans | Urban interventions | Social programmes | Aims | Comments | Criteria (2019) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Solbakken, Odense | Closed-off<br>Old buildings | Proposal to reduce the reduction | Yes:<br>Fysisk helhedsplan (2019)<br>Byrums- og Infrastrukturplan (2020) | • Re-marking of 306 family housing units to 226 youth housing units and 80 senior housing units<br>• New-build (200 private housing units) | | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Merge the area with the surrounding area and the city at large<br>• Renovation of the buildings and housing units (internal and external reforms)<br>• Create a mixed heterogenous housing area | The area is quite heterogenous in the different types of housing units, but they are all cooperative | |
| Stengårdsvej, Esbjerg | Too homogenous in urban/ architectural terms<br>Isolated<br>Closed-off | Proposal to exclude a Dep. 18 with 200 family flats (Granted) | Yes:<br>Helhedsplan (2014) | • Re-marking: to youth housing (114) and senior housing (46)<br>• Demolition (116)<br>• Newbuild (100 private residences and 90 youth housing) | Rental agreement (skærpet fleksibel udlejning) | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Diversify in social, urban and attractivity | | 4: unemployment (43.6), ethnicity (79), convicted (2.69) and education (84.1) |
| Sundparken, Horsens | Closed-off (added in the revised version)<br>Too homogenous in social and urban/ architectural terms | Proposal to include surrounding areas and reduce the reduction of family units to 80% (Partially Granted to 60%) | Yes:<br>Fysisk Helheldsplan (fin 2000) | • New-build (74 private residence)<br>• Demolition and conversion (124 family units as well as buildings used for school, sportscentre and a community centre)<br>• Infrastructural work<br>• Public services placed in or close to the area<br>• Business park | Rental agreement | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Integrate the neighbours in the area with those of the surrounding areas and the city at large<br>• Make the area an attractive area to live in<br>• Attract new neighbours of a different types (diversify the type of people living in the area) to promote a mixed composition of resident | • The Ministry recognizes that the area is well connected to the surrounding areas and that it is safe<br>Nonetheless, a report from the consultant company Copenhagen Economics point out that the area is closed-off and too homogenous | 4: unemployment (47.8), ethnicity (69.1), education (78.4) and income (54.7) |
| Taastrupgaard, Høje-Taastrup | Closed-off<br>Too homogenous in social and urban/ architectural terms<br>Isolated | Proposal to include areas 11ch, 11bæ and 4a, although these won't count towards the reduction | Yes:<br>Fremtidens Taastrupgaard (2016) | • Demolition (223 units)<br>• New-build (250 private residences of 110 $m^2$)<br>• Public functions and services in the area (school, daycare, music and arts-school)<br>• Conversion of family units to senior housing (28 to 40) and youth housing (20), and other 57 for public space and other unspecified purposes<br>• Community centre<br>• Re-marking | | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Merge the area with the surrounding and the city at large<br>• Attract other types of tenants and diversify tenancy types<br>• Diversify in social and architectural terms | The previous developmental plan already envisioned demolitions (188), the establishment of the mentioned public functions and a re-dressing of the new smaller areas in which the area is supposed to be compartimentalized. It also included infrastructural work, improvement of the public space and new-build of private housing to diversify the type of tenants and tenancy | 3: ethnicity (65.1), education (83) and income (52.5) |

*(Continued)*

**Table 2.** (Continued)

| Case | Problems | Delimitation | Existing urban development plans | Urban interventions | Social programmes | Aims | Comments | Criteria (2019) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tingbjerg, Husum (København) | Closed-off<br>Too homogenous in social and urban/ architectural terms<br>Isolated | Proposal to include areas in Tingbjerg not included and Bystævneparken, totalling 465 senior housing units, 349 youth housing units and 73 private residence and almost 461 $m^2$ commerce; although these won't count towards the reduction | Yes:<br>Byudviklingsstrategi for Tingbjerg-Husum (2015) | • Demolition (existing commerce to 300 private residence units<br>• New-build (1536 private housing units, aprox. 270 youth housing units and 110 senior housing units, and 181 for commerce; 250 senior housing units, 650 private housing units and enlargement of the school in Bystævneparken)<br>• Renovation of all housing units<br>• Infrastructural work to integrate the area with the surrounding and the city at large<br>• Re-marking family housing units (116): to senior (50) and youth housing (66) | Rental agreement | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Revitalize the area as an attractive and alive family-town<br>• Diversify the area, tenancy and tenants<br>• Create a mixed and heterogenous housing area | The developmental plan of 2015 already envisioned the changes proposed in the new developmental plan, the only real difference is the number of new-build housing units | 4: ethnicity (73), convicted (2.04), education (75.4) and income (52.8) |
| Vollsmose, Odense | Stigmatization<br>(Habitus of)<br>Poverty<br>Crime<br>Parallel society<br>Insecurity<br>Closed-off | No change proposed | Yes:<br>Byudviklings- og Infrastrukturplan (2015)<br>Den sidste Vollsmoseplan (2018) | • Infrastructural work (streets, paths and connections alongside investment in a light railway)<br>• Demolition of 1000 housing units and creation of 1000 in other parts of the city<br>• New-build (aprox. 1600 private housing units and 30,000 $m^2$ for business and 13,700 $m^2$ for public services)<br>• 150 workplaces located in the area | Rental agreement | • Reduce the percentage of 'family-accomodation' (explicit aim of the framework)<br>• Diversify the area in social, architectural and tenancy<br>• Promote outside activities and passing-through the area<br>• Diversify activities and spaces<br>Create a mixed and heterogenous housing area | • There is a clear worry about the possibility of shoving the problems around and the pushing other already affected areas into more complicated situations and eventually developmental plans<br>• There is already quite a mixed tenancy (200 private housing units) and building types (180 semi-detached, 2070 in 3–4 storey, 420 in 8–10 storey and 230 in 14 storey housing blocks)<br>• The developmental plans of 2015 and 2018 already envisioned the fundamental changes proposed in the new developmental plan | 5: unemployment (49.5), ethnicity (76.6), convicted (2.7), education (77.2) and income (53.3) |


**Figure 2.** Mjølnerparken in aerial view.
Source: Google Maps.

Copenhagen, Nørrebro, and, more importantly, because of the richness of the material with which I have been able to come across. Finally, it is interesting because although on the surface the intervention in the area did not stimulate protest in the general public nor among the political parties in the city nor the city council (rather surprising as it is more leftist than the national government), the residents have organized against the urban interventions rather massively, especially when compared to other places.

## *Mjølnerparken*

Mjølnerparken is a large Non-Profit Housing (NPH) estate located in the classic working-class Outer Nørrebro area (according to Time Out in 2021,[2] the coolest neighbourhood in the world). Built in 1984–1987 for the middle-classes, most of the 560 units in Mjølnerparken are three-room flats. Nonetheless, the estate also contains co-housing for elderly residents in two-room or even four-room flats, and 32 youth accommodation units. According to the figures of the 2019 Ghetto List, the estate had around 1700 residents of more than 80 nationalities, and with around 83 per cent of immigrants and descendants of non-Western ethnic origin (Transport- og Boligministeriet, 2020).

Despite being relatively new, the last two decades several urban renewal plans have been projected. The latest, an integral urban development plan, was agreed upon in 2015. The plan included: (a) an urban renewal of the existing homes, (b) the demolition of the existing top-floors and residential houses, (c) the construction of a neighbourhood centre (as opposed to the existing housing area centre), (d) new-build penthouses and infill homes which would close-off the buildings (on themselves and not the area), (e) the renewal and extension of infrastructure and green areas to open up the area and (f) the conversion of some of the ground floor housing units into business and a daycare centre.

The aim of the interventions was, according to the plan, threefold: (1) to improve the housing standard, (2) to create a more secure and safe environment and (3) to merge the housing estate with the surrounding area. Yet, the main purpose behind all but the first (a) urban renewal of the existing homes is to create a more mixed area: by opening up the streets (e), attracting by-passers through commerce and services (c and f), closing the inter-connectedness of the estate (d), and displacing some residents (b) while attracting new and more affluent (d).

Because of this extensive renewal of the housing units and the area in general, the rentals would

increase by a 12 per cent, the family housing units would decrease by 81 units, and the youth accommodation would increase to 70 units. The plan was ratified by the residents in a general assembly celebrated in June 2015 (Copenhagen City Council (KK), 2015). However, as the residential area fell under the category of severe ghetto introduced in 2018, it had to propose a development plan, thereby adding to the existing plans a reduction in the number of family units. Consequently, the housing association moved forward and, despite local efforts to subvert and oppose this, accepted to include the sale of 276 apartments into the development plans (KK and BoVita, 2019).

Quite importantly then, the most obvious change with the Ghetto Package anno 2018 is not so much the focus on social mixed-ness and the diverse city – hegemonic ideas for many decades – but rather the reduction of family units and an implicit forced displacement of certain subjects. After all, the reduction of family units has a direct effect on the families living in the area, who are mostly poor and therefore will have much difficulty acquiring the most likely expensive private apartments nor to pay a 'normal rent', which following the prices in the area would also be hugely expensive. So, many will be forced to move out and away from the area, and if not, how do you decide who will have to be *forced* to move out? More importantly.

In any case, although the potentially created rent gap is certainly an important element, often missing from the many scientific articles on the topic (see Frandsen and Hansen, 2020; Jensen and Söderberg, 2022; Olsen and Larsen, 2022; Seemann, 2021; Simonsen, 2016), an argument diligently put forward by (Risager, 2022a), most certainly the whole machinery, the Ghetto Package and the execution which is often not led directly by economic interests, show incontestable signs of structural racism (see also Risager, 2022b): in fact, such an important economic factor as social inequalities are dismissed or at best downgraded as the essential problem. On the contrary, we find that some social groups are considered problematic and disposable, while others are desired for. Immigrants and descendants of people with a non-Western ethnic background are considered a problem and are directly determinant for an area to be considered a severe ghetto. Meanwhile, in the short-term rental option and as desired subjects in the different urban action plans, young people, educated and/or with a stable job situation, are granted immediate access and are fundamentally catered for.

*Governing the other: urban b/ordering.* The first estimates were that thousands of residents would be displaced (Andersen and Reiermann, 2019) in what researchers have described as 'the biggest social experiment in Danish history' (Bech-Danielsen et al., 2021). However, what might seem like simple local urban policies at a first glance go much further when compared to similar cases in Europe (see Bridge, Butler, and Le Galès, 2014; Lees et al., 2012) and in Canada (see Mele, 2019). One might indeed argue that there is a tendency to use urban interventions and specifically gentrification via the idea of social mix to handle and control migration and Otherness where one cannot explicitly do this.

The fact is that the interventions imply a contradiction, indeed a fundamental paradox of (neo)liberalism, as the document outlining the framework states 'The Government wants a cohesive Denmark. A Denmark which is built upon democratic values of freedom and legal rights. Equality and liberty of mind. Tolerance and equal rights. [. . .] A parallel society has been created among people with non-Western background. Too many immigrants and descendants are not tied to the surrounding society. Without education. Without job. And unable to speak sufficiently Danish'. (Regeringen, 2018: 4).

Once again, the overarching tendency to culturalize social problems takes its toll (see Lundsteen, 2022): the problem is here the inability and indolent behaviour (read culture) of certain groups of the Danish society (read non-Western), and the way to solve this is to 'integrate' them into society, by moving them and criminalizing the unwanted behaviour.

However, even in the case that one might think that these bordering practices have a noble objective of including people into society – indeed, one might argue, that the establishment of social borders and boundaries is inevitable – the fact is that these practices have social effects that go well beyond the apparently intended ones: specific social groups in Danish society, religious and ethnic minorities, are being problematized and criminalized, indeed

racialized, and we see a management of migration through urban policies and laws.

Without a doubt, as argued earlier as well, these dynamics relate to others that go beyond the mere political sphere, while often the policies meant (for some) to cleanse and promote a deprived area collate with economic interests in the promotion of neighbourhoods, regions, etc. So, we see how, for instance, both Nørrebro in Copenhagen and Gellerup in Aarhus are areas undergoing huge urban transformations and gentrification. And seeing this one might as well ask whether these changes demanded an extra-economic intervention on part of the state, that is, the need to assure the rent gap or simply put, that it was a good investment (see Risager, 2022a).

Surely, as argued earlier, significant urban transformations were in place almost in all the areas, and therefore these would most certainly have undergone a huge socio-economic transformation. Hence, the interventions might in fact (sometimes) be considered the symbolic ordering of the place for the logics of the real estate market. However, in other regions, there simply seems to have been very little interest in investment. The interventions here seem much more like opportunities for development and capital flow to otherwise peripheral areas with little the aim to reorganize and integrate these parts into the city.

Be that as it may, the purpose of this article has not been to argue the contrary, nor go into further detail, but rather argue that the three different interpretations put forward in the introduction are best understood in co-relation to each other. Although gentrification is indeed proposed as a measure to promote social mix, at the same time promoting and implying neoliberal ideas regarding marketization, privatization and the social in general, at the same time, in line with what authors such as Risager (2022b) and Mele (2019) argue, these ideas and projects are inexplicable without reference to racialization and the territorial stigmatization enacted by the law. Furthermore, they both connect to a larger, more abstract vision of the Danish society and maybe even Western liberal societies by large, because through these urban transformations and this social experiment, certain moralities, and moral communities of belonging, are being put in force. In the end, who has the right to decide who is part of Danish society and what is considered Danish, and who can rightfully be move around and criminalized?

Therefore, through the racial neoliberal urbanism that the Ghetto Package is an example of, we also see how certain ideas are implicit about who is displaceable and who is desirable, which go beyond the specific interventions, so much that nobody even seems to question it: the predominant subject is the White male in all the proposed developmental plans. Now, obviously this rests on previous processes of racialization that goes beyond the specific law as such (as several authors such as Risager, 2022b; Olsen and Larsen, 2022 and Simonsen, 2016 have shown very elegantly), but more importantly, it also goes beyond Danish society and point at tendencies that one might argue are more common for urban planning in general (much like authors such as Giovanni Picker et al., 2019, and Ha and Picker 2022 seem to suggest), but also to the neoliberal Capitalist State in its management of poverty and more importantly the so-called surplus populations (Lundsteen, 2020; Smith, 2011; Soederberg, 2021; Wacquant, 2010).

First, it is interesting to see that a whole variety of politicians and civil servants, as well as large part of the representatives and workers in the non-profit housing sector, all agree to the following: (1) there are certain problems in the non-profit housing sector related to crime, culture and poverty (they only diverge on the origins of these), and (2) the solution is a more mixed city or spatial distribution, which entails attracting middle-class Whites to the non-profit housing sectors and pushing the lower-income (often but not always) other-ethnics away, and equally as important, not deliberating on their desires or needs (although it is said that this will be good for them).

Second, one might argue that in Denmark the non-profit housing sector has historically taken over where the State did not reach. However, since the 2000s and the gradual crumbling of the social bosom of the Welfare State, that is, there has been a growing increase in the externalization and delegation of social responsibilities to this 'Third Sector' (between private and public, and rather communitarian), through housing and social projects in the area. At the same time, the State has been toughening up, developing what I call a paternal welfarism, which forces people to mix or blend in, despite any differences or inequalities, thus developing a new organicist and nationalist social democratic idea of society.

In fact, in a more recent turn of events, the Danish government has introduced a change to the wording, moving away from ghetto and instead using the categories: vulnerable areas, parallel society and areas of transformation (see Indenrigs og Boligministeriet, 2022). Similarly, they introduced a new category, preventive areas. For an area to be considered a preventive area, at least 1000 people must live there of which over 30 per cent of the residents must have a non-Western background. In addition, the residents overall meet two out of four criteria: (1) over 30 per cent are neither in work nor education – calculated as an average over two years; (2) at least twice as many as the national average has been convicted of a crime over the past two years; (3) over 60 per cent of the residents have primary school as highest education; and (4) the residents' income is in general below the average of 65 per cent of the incomes in the region, which is basically an extension of the logics of the legislation with a clear aim at extending the effects even further. Finally, at the same time, the government has changed the old category of non-Westerners to MENAPT, which only includes the predominantly Muslim countries in North Africa and the Middle East (Bendixen, 2020).

Therefore, I argue that the ghetto legislation is a compelling example of what I call urban b/ordering (following the ideas put forward already in 2002 by van Houtum and Van Naerssen). A phenomenon which is present in new (by)laws where nation-states are using criminality as a deterrent against undesired practices in urban space, openly criminalizing or problematizing various marginal social groups by policing informal activities in urban public space, such as unauthorized urban vendors or others who live on and off the streets, such as homeless people.

In this sense, the ghetto legislation acts out from the idea that there are pockets in the Danish geography where other norms are present and therefore crime flourishes; however, it acts consistently on the idea of parallel society as equal to a grouping of ethnic Others, and therefore fundamentally argues that these are the important boundaries hindering a cohesive society. Consequently, it acts upon these parallel societies through urban interventions aiming at opening the areas to allow for a higher penetration of Danish middle-class presence and thereby value system. This is often proposed by White Danish middle-class professionals working in the housing associations and not living in the areas, and often overriding neighbourhood demands or already existing urban plans for improvement, much more meaningful for the residents.

## Conclusion

In 2018, the then right-wing government in Denmark led by Lars Løkke Rasmussen and supported by the far right-wing party Danish People's Party presented a new legislation to end 'parallel societies' in Denmark via a toughening of the criminal law (introducing double punishment), enforcing Danish knowledge and nursery school assistance to toddlers, and, more importantly for this article, a series of urban interventions in 'ghetto areas' considered as such mainly when the proportion of immigrants and descendants from non-Western countries exceeds 50 per cent.

Until recently, studies have dealt with the discursive formation and the territorial stigmatization involved in this, and lately studies have focused on the economic aspects of the urban interventions such as rent gap and gentrification. In this article, I have built upon the knowledge from these studies and through a double analytical move, a historical and a genealogical analysis of the ghetto law and a comparative analysis of the different urban development plans proposed. I have aimed at broadening out the analysis through a focus on the bordering elements in these domains, an analytical move which yields some interesting findings.

Consequently, I argue that the Ghetto Package is a compelling example of urban b/ordering – that is, measures taken to attain social order and gain legitimacy by demarcating categories of people to incorporate some and exclude others through urban space. Although the implementation of the legislation is heterogenous, the desired outcome is almost always the same: social mix (meaning more presence of White Danes) through more tenancy mix (privatization and marketization of the common) and an opening up and integrating of the area into the whole (meaning society). That is, the remodelling of the areas dovetails with the establishment of internal borders or boundaries between what are perceived

and represented as problematic or undesirable inhabitants and the rest; the underlying assumptions conclude that the problems in these areas and the problematic residents all relate to or emerge out of the existence of 'parallel societies', which again are the product of a certain set of cultural values (Muslim or Middle-Eastern/African). The solutions therefore encompass a disciplining and forced adaptation of the problematic subjects, who should therefore be forced to fit-in, by moving to another area either willingly or sometimes forcefully through the urban interventions, or move out of the country, via the strengthening of the deportation and criminal law regarding migrants and relatives which have been implemented simultaneously and since 2004 (see The Local, 2022 and Arce and Suárez-Krabbe, 2018) – a remodelling of the social and cultural geography of Denmark that recalls the eugenic and hygienic social and urban policies of the 19th century. After all, rooting out evil in the peripheries, or filling in the holes or cracks on the map of Denmark, very much sounds like social medicine.

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## Notes

1. https://www.stm.dk/_p_7458.html
2. https://www.timeout.com/about/latest-news/time-out-reveals-the-worlds-coolest-neighbourhoods-right-now-100621

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