Affective Evictions: A Cultural Analysis of Contemporary Danish Housing Politics

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Anna Meera Gaonkar's research examines (post)migration, racialisation, and the politics of emotion as formative contexts of artistic, cultural, and political production in the Nordic countries.

Abstract

The article suggests that government statements on anti-ghetto (2021) and security (2020) initiatives feature expressions of 'white homesickness' that manifest as longings for a national past and future with less or no migration to Denmark from outside Europe. The analysed statements justify the planned evictions of racialised-migrantised residents of social housing areas. The article argues that the statements also perform 'affective evictions' of racialised-migrantised members of society from the community of the imagined national home. Drawing on critical postmigration studies and a media-analytical approach to affect theory, two instrumentalised figures are accentuated as the haunting specters of this homesick politics: the figure of insecurity-creating immigrant boys and the figure of parallel societies inhabited by a 'brown underclass.' The article concludes that for racialised-migrantised residents of social housing estates in particular, the threat of 'affective eviction' paradoxically involves the material threat of eviction from society's overarching welfare shelter, that is the threat of being deprived of the right to social security.

KEYWORDS: The Ghetto Law, racialization, migration, insecurity, social housing, immigrants

Who can feel at home in nation-states like Denmark continually shaped by past and ongoing migrations, and on what basis is the citizen constructed as an affective figure? In light of intensifying nationalist mobilisations across Europe, these questions resonate far beyond the borders of Danish society. Dismissals of certain citizens' claims to national belonging spur both legal and political deliberations, but also raise a deeply cultural question: *What affects are mobilised, exchanged, and negotiated when racialised-migrantised members of society are excluded from the community of the imagined national home in our historical present?*

To answer this question, the article presents a cultural analysis of three contemporary political articulations arguing for the evictions of racialised-migrantised residents of Danish social housing areas. By establishing the notion of 'affective eviction', I suggest that the analysed articulations not only address the material evictions of housing residents but also perform affective evictions of racialised-migrantised members of society, destabilising their attachment to the national home as an imagined community. I further propose that the examined affective evictions are closely tied to expressions of a political longing towards a national past and future with less migration from outside Europe, a longing that creates what I understand to be an affect of 'white homesickness'.

By establishing the notion of affective eviction, the article develops an understanding of how affects related to racialised migrancy circulate and gain meaning through media transmissions within Danish society (Ahmed 2014; Lehmann et al. 2019). Adopting an economic approach to affect, the analysis focuses on its relational and collective dimensions – specifically, how affects are mobilised, exchanged, and negotiated through written and oral articulations (Lehmann et al. 2019, 144). Following cultural studies scholars Hauke Lehmann, Hans Roth, and Kerstin Schankweiler, for such a study of the distribution of affects: "the starting point […] is not an individual, autonomous subject, but rather the relational forces and entanglements from which subject-positions emerge in the first place" (Lehmann et al. 2019, 140).

The analysis is also informed by the framing of European societies after World War II as 'postmigrant societies' that are discursively obsessed with issues of migration and integration (Espahangizi 2021; Petersen and Schramm 2017; Spielhaus 2012). Historian Kijan Espahangizi contends that a postmigrant society is characterised by two opposing yet coexisting interpretative regimes which relate to migration as "integral to society *and* as foreign to it – as threat *and* enhancement, as risk *and* potential […]" (Espahangizi 2021, 68). Although migration-positive affects and inclusive cultural engagements are also a pronounced feature of "the postmigrant condition" (Schramm et. al 2019), Espahangizi maintains that a postmigrant society is most noticeably marked by the rise of the figure of the migrant as a permanent problem-causing figure of the nation (2021: 68). In a similar vein, Islamic studies scholar Riem Spielhaus observes that the "visible otherness" of migrants and their descendants continues to "trigger unease and public debate" in postmigrant societies, even though racialised individuals and migrant populations have always been integral to these societies (Spielhaus 2012, 97). Thus, the prefix 'post' in 'postmigration' does not suggest that Europe has moved beyond migration-related issues or racism, but rather that the responses to migration and its societal impacts are historically delayed. Building on this perspective, the article adopts an affect- and discourse-oriented postmigrant analytic.

In the following pages, I analyse a speech by the Danish Prime Minister and two strategy papers concerning the so-called anti-ghetto and security initiatives (Frederiksen 2020; Regeringen 2018, 2020).[1] I treat these texts as discursively interconnected, as they focus on the political management of the social housing sector and its populations. Although the initiatives do not explicitly use the term 'race', I highlight how they nonetheless construct instrumental figures that are both racialised and migrantised in opposition to the Danish majority white population (Svendsen 2014). Race does not, however, serve as the only organising category of distinction for these figures. As we shall see, perceived differences pertaining to class and religion

also contribute to the framing of their affective otherness (Ahmed 2014; Andreassen 2005; Spielhaus 2012).

Since housing politics lie at the heart of Denmark's national discourse on migration and integration, focusing on the governance of the social housing sector is essential for understanding the cultural dimensions of the affective evictions of racialised-migrantised members of society. Furthermore, the current management of the social housing sector enjoys broad support in the Danish parliament, with backing from parties ranging from the centre-left to the far-right.

A contemporary politics of homesickness

According to political scientist Kristina Bakkær Simonsen, integration became a hot topic in Danish parliamentary politics in the 1990s (Simonsen 2016, 84). At the time, a "nativist conception of Danish community" was established by the Danish People's Party, which has since spread to mainstream parties such as the Social Democrats (Simonsen 2016, 84, 97). While it is possible to trace the figure of the migrant as a problematic resident further back in time by studying the national discourse on the so-called 'ghetto' from 1908 and onwards (Schmidt 2022; 2021), Simonsen's analysis of the political management of migrant residents in social housing focuses on a post-millennial policy lineage starting in 2010. Here, the liberal Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen used the term 'ghetto' in his call for action against growing migrant populations in social housing developments. Løkke spoke of "the people living behind the walls", arguing that social housing areas are "holes in the map of Denmark" and places in which "Danish values are obviously no longer leading" (quoted in English by Simonsen 2016, 85). In this first strategy paper concerning the regulation of social housing, known as *The Ghetto Plan* (2010), Simonsen traces instances of "nationalist othering" and a hostile construction of the "immigrant Other, portrayed as an 'enemy within'" (Simonsen 2016, 97). The text, she argues, constructs the ghetto as a spatialised antagonism within the nation that not only alienates but antagonises migrant residents and their children (Simonsen 2016, 97). Simonson emphasises a distinction between "the enemy" and "the adversary" of the nation, stressing that while adversaries are regarded as "legitimate" and "tolerated" opponents in a democracy, the enemy is to be "destroyed" (Simonsen 2016: 97).

More recently, gender studies scholars Mons Bissenbakker and Michael Nebeling have suggested a similar propensity in the anti-ghetto initiatives of 2018, referred to widely as the Ghetto Law and renamed the Parallel Society Law in 2020, albeit this is no law in juridical terms but rather policy initiatives embedded in the Social Housing Act and other legislative frameworks, as we shall see. The researchers perform an affect-oriented reading of the strategy paper on which the Ghetto Law and the Parallel Society Law are founded (Regeringen 2018). Like Simonsen, they highlight a politically produced figure of the ghetto and a figure of the resident of the ghetto. Based on notions of ethnicity and class, they argue that contemporary social housing areas are rendered as a figurative and implicitly "racial place" (Bissenbakker and Nebeling 2020, 16).[2] In short, the ghetto is articulated as being inhabited by so-called 'non-western' populations, described as less educated and affluent as well as more often unemployed and criminal than the average Danish citizen (Regeringen 2018). Yet, the ghetto-resident is not only configured in racial and socioeconomic opposition to the majority white population. The ghetto-resident is also configured in affective opposition to the citizen of the imagined national home because the ghetto-resident feels at home in the ghetto (Bissenbakker and Nebeling 2020, 16–17). Precisely because the ghetto is produced as a territory outside of the affective jurisdiction of the national home, the citizen is assumed to dread the ghetto. With reference to queer-feminist scholar Sara Ahmed, the two researchers advance that the figure of the ghetto produces an economy of fear, constructing the ghetto-resident as multiple figures of danger, including the gang member, the religious extremist, the foreign fighter, and the terrorist (Bissenbakker and Nebeling 2020, 18). These figures are

all male-connotated, and many of them draw associations between criminality and Islam. In political terms, Bissenbakker and Nebeling submit that the ghetto thus signifies obstacles to national happiness: "The reader is promised an Ideal Denmark and is offered the Ghetto Law as a means to fulfilling the moment in which there is no longer a difference between the ideal and reality" (Bissenbakker and Nebeling 2020, 20).[3] The imaginary of Denmark as an ideal society thereby involves a temporal projection – a promise of a less troubled future.

I suggest that the imaginary at play in the anti-ghetto initiatives also conjures up a narrative of a less troubled national past – an imaginary of a lost golden age of the Danish welfare state. In effect, the sense of a loss of security induces a longing for a time when migration did not pose a threat to social cohesion, and a fear that social cohesion may never be achieved again so long as the presence of migrants and their offspring is not regulated more strictly. Migration is thereby framed as a disruption and not as a historical continuum in Denmark. As the two researchers make clear, the notion of an "Ideal Denmark" is underscored by a desire for the *imagined* ethnic homogeneity of the national past – a longing that I describe as an affect of 'white homesickness' in this article. Expressions of white homesickness seem to be temporally suspended between national imaginaries of pasts and futures as well as affectively suspended between feelings of loss, fear, nativist nostalgia, and postcolonial melancholia (Gilroy 2005). The strategy paper's articulation of the government's desire for "a coherent Denmark"[4] speaks to the affect of white homesickness. As I will argue, expressions of white homesickness and affective evictions of racialised-migrantised residents of social housing areas belong to the same political discourse as those outlined by Simonsen, Bissenbakker, and Nebeling. Within this discursive logic, the nation is constructed in opposition to the figure of the ghetto and its residents as well as to migrants and descendants of migrants in general (Regeringen 2018, 4). I propose the term affective eviction as it connects to the actual evictions of racialised-migrantised members of society from social housing areas. However, while being evicted from one's physical home marks a definitive act, affective evictions are dynamic in the sense that the subject is never fully evicted. While being affectively evicted from the national home, the figure of the migrant resident is kept hostage and made the scapegoat in the same political imaginaries that work to consolidate the possibility of a future Denmark in which national cohesion is achievable as a permanent societal situation. As the analysis will underline, the political regulation of racialised-migrantised members of society increasingly takes place through these complex and ambiguous affective modes of governing (Bissenbakker and Myong 2019).

In *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2005), cultural studies scholar Paul Gilroy gages national longings from a broader historical perspective. He presents 'postcolonial melancholia' as a political structure of feeling that not only characterises Britain, which is the focus of his work, but all European nation-states in which colonialism is a part of the national historical account, such as Denmark (Gilroy 2005, 100; Williams 2009). Departing from Freud's focus on individual grief, Gilroy applies melancholia in the vein of German social psychologists who deal with Germany's post-World War II reactions to "the loss of fantasy of omnipotence" (Gilroy 2005, 99). For the British, Gilroy suggests that postcolonial melancholia is not only a mournful reaction to the atrocities of the colonial era and its racist hierarchies. This form of melancholia also marks a sense of loss of "British greatness" and imperial potency, a loss of order and stability within society, and a troubling recognition of the "fragility of national life and the real value of empire" for British citizens (Gilroy 2005, 100–101). Gilroy proposes that because former colonial subjects – embodied by the figure of the migrant – now reside *in* Britain, the nation is faced with "the discomforting ambiguities of the empire's painful and shameful but apparently nonetheless exhilarating history" (Gilroy 2005, 100). Postcolonial melancholia thus involves affective elements of longing and unhomeliness that relate to the nation in ways similar to white homesickness. Like Danish political expressions of white homesickness,

postcolonial melancholia *also* includes a longing for an imagined time before migrants came to the nation. Postcolonial melancholia similarly includes white feelings of unhomeliness that arise as the racialised figure of the migrant becomes a permanent body in Europe. Postcolonial melancholia also highlights the sense of security that comes with the ability to govern migrant bodies as a part of a neo-imperialist politics, as well as a longing for the power to be able to do so again. For while postcolonial migrants are central to Gilroy's formulation, he maintains that other migrants ignite similar political sentiments: "Later groups of immigrants may not, of course, relate to the history of empire and colony in any way whatsoever. However, they experience the misfortune of being caught up in a pattern of hostility and conflict that belongs emphatically to its lingering aftermath" (Gilroy 2005, 101).

Cultural studies scholar Tobias Hübinette and sociologist Carin Lundström discuss the notion of 'white melancholia' in a similar vein in the context of contemporary Sweden (Hübinette and Lundström 2011). The researchers argue that the Swedish political Right and Left mourn the loss of both "'old Sweden', i.e. Sweden as a homogenous society" and "'good Sweden', i.e. Sweden as a progressive society" arguing that these imagined pasts are "perceived to be threatened by the presence of non-white migrants and their descendants" (Hübinettet and Lundström 2011, paragraph 3). Following Espahangizi, Spielhaus, Gilroy, Hübinnette, and Lundström, the affective propensities of postcolonial society are quite analogous to the affective propensities of postmigrant society: Both thrive on antagonistic feelings toward the presence of racialised-migrantised bodies *within* the nation-state and in turn foster a nationalist nostalgia for uninterrupted whiteness. As the conceptualisation of postcolonial melancholia also suggests, the political configuration of the migrant is, for the most part, a racialised configuration (Gilroy 2005, 101). To this extent, I hold on to Gilroy's premise that "the political language of race", however convoluted or silenced it may be on the policy level in countries like Denmark, exposes the nation's imaginings of itself and its histories of colonialism, also in postmigrant society's affective economy (Gilroy 2005, 149). What also becomes clear is how the categories of 'race' and 'migrant' continue to overlap in intricate ways within the Danish context – and how it is not always possible to draw definite lines between processes of racialisation and processes of migrantisation.

In the following pages, I outline the so-called anti-ghetto and security initiatives. While the concrete policies are not the subject of my analysis, an introduction to the legislation is needed to understand their political power to regulate.

Tryghedspakken: The Security Initiative

In October 2020, the Danish government released a strategy paper called *Tryghed for alle danskere*[5], which I will refer to as the Security Initiative (see fig. 1). This initiative was part of a police settlement, commonly known as *Tryghedspakken*, introduced by Social Democratic Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. Frederiksen first presented the initiative in August 2020 and highlighted it in her opening address to parliament that October.

The Security Initiative proposes several measures to address insecurity in residential and public areas, including social housing. It suggests increasing police authority and staffing to restore security by targeting "instigators of unrest" [6] (Regeringen 2020, 2). The initiative also proposes giving authorities the power to ban residents of social housing from gathering in public spaces like parking lots, train stations, and shopping arcades for up to 30 days (Regeringen 2020, 2). Additionally, it would allow police to fine individuals who violate these bans, impose penalties of 10,000 DKK, or seize valuables such as smartphones and expensive clothing without court approval. In serious cases, offenders could face up to 30 days of imprisonment (Regeringen 2020, 2). While a majority in parliament supported the initiative in June 2021, the most controversial measure – the imposition of temporary public residence bans – was rejected for violating fundamental freedom rights for *all* members of society (Jørgensen 2021).[7]

Before the Security Initiative, an initiative known as the Law on Insecurity-Creating Camps gave police the authority to shut down homeless camps and evict individuals from public spaces. [8] The Law also allows fines and restraining orders for homeless individuals, even restricting them from entire municipalities. Unlike the anti-ghetto initiatives, this law does not target people based on ethnicity or race, though authorities note that most individuals charged under it are foreign nationals (Nordvang Jensen 2018).

Parallelsamfundsloven: The Parallel Society Law

In March 2018, a series of so-called anti-ghetto initiatives, often referred to as the Ghetto Law or Parallel Society Law, were passed by a large majority in the Danish parliament. In 2019, the government shifted from the Liberal Party to the Social Democrats. Both parties had supported the initiatives in the strategy paper *Ét Danmark uden parallelsamfund – ingen ghettoer i 2030*[9] (Regeringen 2018, see fig. 2). A political agreement to end the official use of the term 'ghetto' was reached in 2021 ("Aftale mellem..." 2021, 4) and the anti-ghetto initiatives are now commonly known as the Parallel Society Law. I refer to the Ghetto Law only when referencing discussions about the anti-ghetto initiatives before 2021.

In brief, the Parallel Society Law aims to prevent social housing estates from becoming so-called 'parallel societies', previously called 'ghettos' and, before 2010, 'socially vulnerable housing areas' (Simonsen 2016, 85). Each year, the ministry in charge of the social housing sector publishes a list of estates designated as parallel societies ("Liste over..." 2021). Housing estates are added to this list if they have a high percentage of migrants and descendants from "non-western countries" (Regeringen 2018, 11). In addition to ethnicity, four socio-economic factors – unemployment, crime rates, education levels, and wealth – are used to categorise these estates.[10] Once an estate is listed, authorities must implement various social initiatives within the housing estate. Estates that have been classified as parallel societies for consecutive years may face demolition, evictions, or privatisation.[11]

According to Statistics Denmark, the category 'non-western countries' includes all countries not considered 'western,' which are defined as 28 EU countries, the UK, Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway, San Marino, Switzerland, the Vatican, Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand (Elmeskov 2019). This classification has led to widespread criticism of the Parallel Society Law for disproportionately affecting ethnic minority populations in Denmark, particularly those racialised as 'non-white.' While racialised individuals from 'western' countries are not targeted by the initiatives, the primary criterion still predominantly impacts 'non-white' residents of social housing areas.

In addition to categorising estates as 'parallel societies,' the Parallel Society Law – which, as noted, is not a single law but a set of initiatives embedded in various legislative frameworks – includes punitive measures aimed at improving integration within social housing areas. For example, courts are required to double sentences for specific crimes committed in designated zones within social housing areas (Regeringen 2018, 22–23). Children over one year old must attend daycare for at least 25 hours a week (excluding naps), where they are taught "Danish norms and values," such as "equality, community, participation, and responsibility" (Regeringen 2018, 24). Families failing to comply may have their social benefits reduced.

The Parallel Society Law continues to face intense national and international criticism (Barry and Sørensen 2018; O'Sullivan 2020; O'Brien 2022). Danish media have described it as "the biggest social experiment of the century" (Reiermann and Andersen 2019). The Danish Institute for Human Rights and the UN's Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism have criticized the law for racial discrimination, as it primarily targets residents from 'non-western' countries (Hvilsom 2022).

The Law has also sparked aesthetic and cultural criticism. Activist movements have directly challenged its material effects. This counts a civil movement of residents from social housing areas

that surfaced in 2018 under the hashtag #ViFlytterIkke, 'we are not moving' (Bissenbakker and Nebeling 2020). This movement, Almen Modstand, meaning 'common resistance', provides legal support and social networks, and facilitates cultural events to tackle local housing evictions, the subsequent splitting of communities, and the gentrification and privatisation of the social housing sector in general.[12] Another example is the Danish-language podcast series *Mere end Mursten* (2020), 'more than bricks', hosted by historian and journalist Farhiya Khalid. Several artists have moreover created impactful works that address the affective consequences of the Parallel Society Law and its perceived racism. One example is Aysha Amin's video artwork *Demolition Tour: A Sonic // Virtual Walk to Gellerup* (2020), where Amin's voice guides viewers through Gellerup using Google Street View. Amin discusses the brutality of the evictions and demolitions but also highlights the cultural abundance and emotional resilience of Gellerup's inhabitants. Another example is the experimental podcast *Generationen*, 'the generation', by rapper and radio documentarist Babak Vakili. Mixing hip-hop, radio montage, interviews, staged dialogues, and archival recordings, the podcast explores the political regulation of the social housing sector from the point of view of racialised-migrantised residents. Vakili contends that political hostility toward the social housing sector has been growing for two decades and interprets this hostility as an expression of opposition to the "brown underclass" (Blokken 16:24–16:30). Like Bissenbakker and Nebeling, Vakili emphasises that the "brown underclass" is a politically produced figure based on notions of both ethnicity and class.

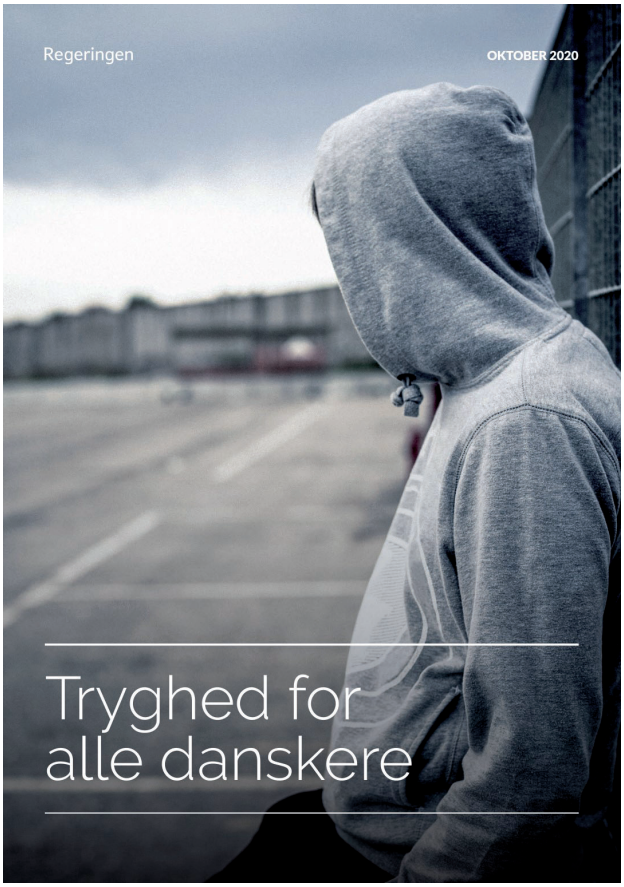

Fig. 1.
Tryghed for alle danskere (2020), 'Security for all Danes'.

The scope of this article does not allow me to unfold how the works of Khalid, Amin, and Vakili offer highly critical perspectives on Danish housing politics. Their artistic and cultural productions emphasise that the Law stirs feelings of unhomeliness in the targeted residents. To this extent, expressions of white homesickness, like the ones I will analyse, seem to cast off an inverse mode of homesickness, which is expressed by racialised-migrantised artists and cultural producers and mobilised through the circulation of their work. This homesickness can be understood as an affect of racialisation – as an emotional response to political acts of unhoming and a reaction to the nativist vision of the national home and its imperatives.[13] Artistic expressions of this homesickness – the experience of being made to feel unhome – may serve as a reminder that, unlike children born to families *outside* social housing areas, children born to racialised-migrantised residents or their offspring are targeted by the nation from the day they are old enough to attend day-care.

The figure of insecurity-creating immigrant boys

The news of an upcoming police settlement hit Danish media in August 2020 (Regeringen 2020).

Fig. 2.
Ét Danmark uden parallelsamfund. Ingen ghettoer i 2030 (2018)
'One Denmark without parallel societies. No ghettoes in 2030'.

At a press conference following the Social Democrat's summer group meeting, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen presented an initiative to combat insecurity in and around social housing areas. Together with the Minister of Justice, Nick Hækkerup, Frederiksen proclaimed that the government intended to target groups of "immigrant boys",[14] whom she argued were making ordinary people feel insecure in public spaces (Ritzau 2020). The immigrant boys – an expression I employ when referring to Frederiksen's configuration – were not being targeted by the government for violating any specific laws. Rather, the Prime Minister suggested that the immigrant boys were producing a sense of insecurity in other people and spaces and that the creation of insecurity was what needed regulation. While Frederiksen's definition of 'insecurity' remained unclear throughout the briefing, the government's tactic was clearly communicated. The plan was to get rid of public insecurity by ridding the public of its alleged makers.

The Minister of Justice was likewise incapable of defining how insecurity is produced and induced in public spaces by individuals or groups who are not breaking the law. Frederiksen explained to the media that "this is about the fact that when you use the S-train lines in Greater Copenhagen, you should not be afraid to go home in the evening because there are 15–17 immigrant boys who cannot figure out how to behave properly" (Ritzau 2020).[15]

News agencies reported that none of the ministers explained how they would assure "security and freedom" – how they would govern these affective experiences of feeling insecure in public (Ritzau 2020). Frederiksen's image of immigrant boys entering a train and making fellow commuters feel insecure does a better job of illustrating what the administration meant and still means by 'insecurity'.

Reflecting upon the scenario, we can ask how the so-called immigrant boys make others on the train feel insecure, to begin with? From Frederiksen's example, we gather that insecurity is tied to improper behaviour as well as to the 'immigrant' label. The insecurity referred to is not created by *any* random group of misbehaving children or teenagers entering a train or a station late at night. The targeted troublemakers are 'immigrants.' In affective terms, Frederiksen migrantises and racialises insecurity by migrantising and racialising its source. What makes the boys come across as *immigrant* boys and not just *any* boys? The most obvious answer relates to the boys' appearances – their perceived differences in terms of ethnicity and race, and potentially also class. Here, we are reminded of Gilroy's and Spielhaus' points that the visible otherness of migrants and their descendants continues to trigger unease in postmigrant and postcolonial societies (Gilroy 2005, Spielhaus 2012). It also aligns with media studies scholar Rikke Andreassen's research on the representation of visible minorities in Danish news media. As

Andreassen suggests, the visible minority man is often framed as violent and as an inherent threat, and thus, as a maker of insecurity (Andreassen 2005).

Several media outlets circulated Frederiksen's affectively stimulating configuration of racialised-migrantised boys as a socially disruptive force and her wish to combat 'insecurity-creating immigrant boys'. The term stuck to popular discourse, even as months passed (Zamani 2021).[16] The cover of the strategy paper concerning the Security Initiative further enlivens the figure and its stickiness (Ahmed 2014): We cannot see a face, though a lock of black hair peeps out from beneath a hooded and male-connotated silhouette leaning up against a fence in an empty parking lot (Regeringen 2020, see fig. 1). This silhouette could be any dark-haired young person who hangs around in public. However, a comment in a press release by the Minister of Immigration and Integration at the time, Mattias Tesfaye, elucidates how specifically immigrant boys are targeted by the Security Initiative:

> *I am tired of hearing that society is always to blame. Denmark is a fantastic country that provides young people with all opportunities. This also counts for the youth of immigrant families. Now, those, who create the insecurity in our local communities, must decide whether they want to be a part of Danish society or not. If the answer is no, they must know that they will be faced with restraining orders and confiscations ("Nye tiltag…" 2020).*[17]

Reflecting upon the title of the strategy paper, 'Security for all Danes', as well as its visual cover, a concrete distinction is made between those in need of security – the unmarked category of all Danes – and the makers of insecurity – the dark-haired cover boy.

Like most deliberations on issues of migration and integration in Denmark, the Security Initiative caused a public uproar of disapproval and justification. The Prime Minister was accused of stigmatising an entire generation as troublemakers (Cekic and Zamani 2020). Critics dismissed Frederiksen's singling out of racialised minorities from social housing areas and rejected her culturalisation of the social challenges at hand (Ritzau 2020). Some critics noted that the term 'immigrant boys' was inappropriately used by the Prime Minister, as the targeted young men were born in Danish hospitals as Danish citizens (Cekic 2020). The Danish Institute for Human Rights expressed concern that the Security Initiative failed to legally define what 'insecurity' and 'creating insecurity' means, stating that it is a mandatory requirement for the law to be apparent to everyone ("Beslaglæggelser, bøder…" 2020). The chairman of the Danish Police Union disassociated from the initiative, which was, as already mentioned, planned as a part of a new police settlement. He stated that the proposed laws had not been requested by or discussed with the police but represented a "political desire"[18] ("Beslaglæggelser…" 2020). Contrarily, other observers praised the head of state for not problematising migration and migrants in general. They applauded Frederiksen's approach to concretely tackle the challenges in social housing areas concerning a specific group of young men (Zamani 2021). In short, while some voices emphasised that insecurity seems to be the government's own creation, others highlighted that insecurity is a social and not a cultural or racial problem, while yet others sided with the government and called for disciplinary measures and legislative expansions.

This reading has highlighted how the political deliberations on insecurity present a clear-cut problematisation of the migrant as a racialised, gendered and class-coded figure as well as the political management of migration as an affective matter. Frederiksen configures the makers of insecurity as immigrants who trouble the feelings of citizens with the promise that the government can protect their feelings. The insecurity-maker thus resembles Simonsen's description of "an enemy within" who cannot be tolerated (Simonsen 2016, 97). Nonetheless, the internal enemy cannot be definitively destroyed or evicted as the figure works to convince us that insecurity is not the consequence of a failed social politics. As Gilroy points out, group identifications within "the precarious

nation-state" often develop "in opposition to the intrusive presences of the incoming stranger", and so the figure of the insecurity-creating immigrant boys contributes to an imaginary of Denmark as a secure national home if only the insecurity-creating immigrant boys were not around to instigate unrest (Gilroy 2005, 101).

The Security Initiative illustrates, I argue, how Danish political discourse on integration and migration involves intense affective circulations in which the migrant as a problem-causing figure is both affectively evicted and held hostage within the imaginary of the national home in a discursive mode of house arrest. To draw on the illustrative phrasing of Ahmed, the Prime Minister's configuration of insecurity-creating immigrant boys demonstrates how speech acts produce affects that stick to certain figures or stick certain figures together, "a sticking that creates the very effect of a collective" (Ahmed 2014, 19). As Ahmed writes, "emotions *do* things, and they align individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments" (Ahmed 2014, 19). The term 'boy' can of course evoke innocence by association to childhood, but 'boy' also alludes to the family unit. In the previous quote, Tesfaye specifically describes the immigrant boys as "the youth of immigrant families". The insecurity-creating immigrant boys, and in extension their families, are produced as the locus of insecurity – the logic being that wherever they go, insecurity follows. While the immigrant boys are not framed as criminals, they stick to social housing areas as well as to other figures of potential danger such as gang members (Bissenbakker and Nebeling 2020). I propose that the initiatives to restrict the movements of this figure – as well as the movements of racialised and male-connotated bodies to whom the figure sticks – are partly made possible through their affective eviction, through the unhoming of their bodies from the imaginary of the national home.

Following the passing of the initiatives concerning security in 2021, it came as a surprise that the government's suggestion to impose temporary public residence bans to combat insecurity near social housing areas was rejected by a majority in parliament. The main opposition party, the Liberals, stated that it had realised very late in the hearing process that the ban would affect *all* members of society – and not *just* the troublemakers (Jørgensen 2021). While the ban was terminated, the Security Initiative's racial configuration of insecurity-creating immigrant boys lives on in new headlines and public discourse.

In April 2024, the figure of the insecurity-creating immigrant was for an example radicalised further by Frederik Vad, the Social Democrat's spokesman on immigration. During a speech in parliament, Vad expressed a "realisation" concerning the integration of migrants and their offspring in Denmark: "the realisation that work, education, housing, access to associations and a clean criminal record are not enough if you also use your position to undermine Danish society from within" (Klingenberg 2024).[1920] Vad added that social housing areas are no longer the only "parallel societies" that exist in Denmark: "It can also be a canteen table in a government agency. It can also be a pharmacy in North Zealand" (Klingenberg 2024).[21] Racialised-migrantised members of society are described by the Social Democrat as potential producers of insecurity in *all* layers of Danish society – affectively evicted from the imagined national community and simultaneously promised conditional belonging if only they learn to behave in accordance with the affective imperatives of the national home. Referring especially to patriarchal religious and cultural values, Vad concluded his speech by expressing that integration is only achievable if immigrants fully commit to Danish values like gender equality. The question remains what it entails to prove or pledge full affective commitment to the nation, and who holds the power to decide this in everyday situations during lunch in the canteen or over the counter? While Vad's articulations were fully supported by the Prime Minister, they were heavily criticised by several Social Democrats accusing Vad of creating a new foundation for racism in Denmark (Ritzau 2024).

"All you who want to be a part of Denmark"

Political sociologist Bilgin Ayata examines state-subject relations and posits that European nation-states are increasingly managing issues of migration through affective governing. Employing the concept of "affective citizenship", Ayata contends that belonging to the national community remains in question for citizens who are perceived as different in terms of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and religion (Ayata 2019, 330–331). These citizens are often asked to perform additional efforts to confirm their rightful belonging within the nation, as previously stated by Vad. Following Ayata, affective citizenship is a useful concept to think with in relation to subjects who are, legally speaking, at home in society but made to feel unhome because of their perceived differences in comparison to the majority population. Ayata argues that the affective management of migrants and their descendants in Europe has been fuelled by the War on Terror, which was led by the US and its allies, including Denmark (Ayata 2019, 331). The war has especially contributed to the "problematisation of migration, difference, and plurality as potential threats to social cohesion and national security", she argues and concludes: "Thus, it no longer only matters where 'one is really from', but also 'how one really feels' (toward the nation, state, or political community)" (Ayata 2019, 330–331).

In the following reading of a speech by Mette Frederiksen, I suggest that the Prime Minister relies on the threat of affective eviction to formulate her imagining of the ideal national home. In her opening address to parliament in October 2020, Frederiksen deliberated on what she believes to be pressing challenges facing the Danish welfare state. These challenges included organised crime, unemployment, gender-based oppression, and insecurity in social housing areas (Frederiksen 2020). The Prime Minister narrated how she convened with residents from Motalavej, a social housing estate in Korsør. At the meeting, a female resident made an impression on Frederiksen. Described to us by Frederiksen as "in some way related to a minority", the woman complained that the current regulations in social housing areas were too soft: "Why don't you just take the social security from the troublemakers?" [22] the woman asked (Frederiksen 2020, 6–7). The head of state intuitively seemed to understand to whom the woman was referring: "I understand her frustration. Insecurity has been allowed to grow in far too many places" (Frederiksen 2020, 8). By entertaining the woman's question, the thought of depriving troublemakers of their rights to social benefits was not Frederiksen's inclination, nor was the configuration of the maker of insecurity. The troublemaker was introduced to us by a resident of Motalavej, by a native informant, so to speak.

Though neither ethnicity nor race are mentioned as markers of difference, Frederiksen does make several affectively excluding distinctions during her elaborations on the challenges of the social housing sector. We do not know how she determines the woman's status as being "related to a minority". This becomes more apparent as the Prime Minister starts to address the woman's peers by saying: "Many of you, whose roots lie outside Denmark" (Frederiksen 2020, 14). No borders are specified, but she continues to draw on euphemisms like "imams", "non-western" and "brothers" that largely connote Muslim and racialised minorities (Andreassen 2005; Frederiksen 2020, 27, 42, 89; Svendsen 2014). In the following two examples, Frederiksen configures a collective "you" that sticks the figure of the troublemaker to their parents as well as to a broader community. In the first example, the Prime Minister addresses a feminised "you", in the latter example, the "you" is masculinised:

> *Many of you are in a battle of values – a battle for freedom – a struggle to escape from the archaic and obdurate culture that, unfortunately, still controls some social circles. Whereas the fight for women's rights in Denmark in the 1970s happened publicly, in broad daylight, with marches and television campaigns, your fight happens in places that are more hidden away. This makes your fight more difficult than ours. Therefore, everyone's effort*

> *is called for. This also applies to the imams who are residing in Denmark (Frederiksen 2020, 21–27).*
>
> *All of you who want to be a part of Denmark. Hold on to that. And to all of you young men who, via social media, dissociate from the murder in Brønshøj*[23] *last week: Keep on doing that. Dissociate from what is wrong – take on responsibility for doing what is right (Frederiksen 2020, 28–31, 35–37).*

In the first example, we are told that the collective "you" is fighting against an unspecified yet Muslim-connotated patriarchal culture, as suggested by the metonymical referral to "imams". Although the Prime Minister notes that everyone's effort is called for in the present, a distinction is made between "your fight" and "ours". In favour of Frederiksen, one could argue that she does not address feminism as a universal matter. However, her distinction idealises the Danish nation's past by suggesting that Denmark won the fight for women's rights in the 1970s. Moreover, Frederiksen implicitly produces a distinction between racialised men and unmarked Danish men as feminist allies. Hübinette and Lundström register a similar political idealisation of a Swedish past, noting that the nationalist "[…] Sweden Democrats' longing for 'old Sweden' is expressed as a wish to return to a time when there were no ethno-racial conflicts and no non-western 'patriarchal excesses' (Hübinette and Lundström 2011, paragraph 25).

In the second example, we gather that being "a part of Denmark" necessitates the action of the collective, masculinised "you". Thinking back to Vad's speech, being a law-abiding member of society does also *not* automate inclusion into "Danishness" for Frederiksen. In line with Ayata's formulations on affective citizenship, young men are asked to dissociate from an unsolved murder to prove their feelings towards the nation (2019). Frederiksen thereby creates an affiliation between the collective "you" and the supposed killer, a gang member. Across the country, young men "whose roots lie outside Denmark" are thereby indirectly rendered as potential supporters of gangs or, worst, potential supporters of murderers.

Frederiksen's opening address also engages with a third collective "you" determined by class and social status as a marker of perceived difference. This "you" is not a resident of social housing areas, though it denotes a racialised minority. Frederiksen states that she is aware that some minorities encounter "prejudices" in their daily life (Frederiksen 2020, 54). The troublemakers, she explains, are to blame for these prejudices, which are "caused by the wrong behaviour shown by others" (Frederiksen 2020, 54–55). We are not told what links the troublemaker to the third collective "you". We do not know whether the "prejudices" are founded on perceived commonalities relating to race, culture, or religion. Meanwhile, Frederiksen blames the troublemaker for turning social housing areas into unhomely places within the nation. Again, Frederiksen paints the picture of a bright national past – a time in which the social housing areas were comfortable bastions of the welfare state:

> *The residential areas, which today are spoken of as socially deprived areas, were originally built in order to provide more freedom and an improved quality of life for ordinary people seeking to move out of the cities. […] But now, in too many places, the opposite has happened. In the socially deprived areas, one per cent of the residents commit almost half the criminal offences when you take the seriousness of the offences into consideration. In that way, it actually is an 'us' and 'them' (Frederiksen 2020, 56–62).*

Frederiksen antagonises a majority "us" outside the social housing areas and a minoritised "them" within the social housing areas. Once again, the current residents of social housing estates are rendered as the locus for insecurity. But the opposition does not insinuate "white against brown" or "young against older", the Prime Minister assures, as she mentions "white" and "brown" as racialising markers for the first and only time during her speech (Frederiksen 2020, 63). Instead,

she distinguishes between "those of us who want security, decency, democracy, equality, freedom" and "those who want the direct opposite" (Frederiksen 2020, 63–66). The division conjures up an image of "them" as intentionally lawless individuals. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister argues that police should be able to prohibit not only "the gang member" but also "the rest of the group" from making public spaces feel insecure. What is ultimately at stake in this example is the project of protecting the feelings of "ordinary people" by restricting the movements of residents of social housing areas.

Although Frederiksen asserts that insecurity is not a racial issue of "white against brown", she resolves her thoughts on how to combat insecurity by generating yet another nativist idealisation of the national past. In this past, Denmark had fewer problems, she notes, referencing the post-war years before labour migrants and refugees came to Denmark in large numbers from outside Europe: "The immigration policy of the past was a mistake; it is as simple as that" (Frederiksen 2020, 114). To protect the future of Denmark and reinstall a sense of security, the Prime Minister determines that Denmark is to "deal with asylum cases away from Denmark – in countries outside the EU, which can provide security for those in need of protection" (Frederiksen 2020, 129–130).

Once again, insecurity is affectively structured by migration. Labelling the Mediterranean as a "cemetery", Frederiksen argues that outsourcing the Danish asylum system to a country outside of EU-Europe will prevent Denmark from making the so-called migration mistakes of the past *and* prevent the deaths of migrants at sea (Frederiksen 2020, 123). We are to understand that it is in favour of everybody's sense of security if Denmark helps asylum seekers from their own "regions of origin" (Frederiksen 2020, 129).[24] The abstract notion of a "region of origin" as opposed to a "country of origin" prompts the question of how Frederiksen constructs 'home' not only in national but in translational terms. Frederiksen does not mention which nations are to house future asylum seekers hoping to reach Denmark. However, the media covered the Danish government's negotiations with the Rwandan government to install permanent asylum camps long before the UK announced its first plans to do the same in April 2022 (Høj 2022). The inclusion of the Rwanda plans illustrates the depths of the problematisation of the presence of the migrant figure for the nation. The plans to outsource asylum also expose the affective intensity at play in connection to the future-oriented fear of a larger influx of climate refugees from the Global South.

Social housing, a site of homesick contestations

This article has analysed how three political parliamentary articulations of white homesickness are founded on imaginaries of national pasts and futures structured by the migrant figure as a racialised problem-causing figure *for* rather than *in* Denmark. I have examined how Danish Prime Ministers since 2010 have outlined a present in which affective commitment to Denmark is required for certain groups of racialised-migrantised members of society to be acknowledged as "a part of Denmark". The analysis has also made clear that both the Security Initiative and the Parallel Society Law set out to eradicate 'insecurity' as a migration-related and publicly circulating affect. However, for racialised-migrantised residents of social housing estates in particular, the threat of affective eviction involves the material threat of eviction from society's overarching welfare shelter: namely, the threat of being deprived of one's right to social *security*. Drawing on critical postmigration studies and a media-analytical approach to affect theory, I have accentuated two figures that come into being as the haunting specters of this homesick politics: the figure of insecurity-creating immigrant boys and the figure of parallel societies. Interestingly, the political articulations of white homesickness seem to depend on the figure of the problem-causing migrant to maintain that insecurity is *not* a product of political neglect. Critiques of the security and anti-ghetto initiatives are, however, also mobilised and circulated within contemporary Danish society, just as its political figures

are heavily contested. Especially within art and culture, the material and emotional consequences of the political acts of unhoming and affective evictions for racialised-migrantised members of society are powerfully depicted by artists and cultural producers like Farhiya Khalid, Aysha Amin, and Babak Vakili.

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Notes

1 In Danish, the Security Initiative is broadly referred to as *Tryghedspakken*. The Parallel Society Law is referred to as *Parallelsamfundsloven* but was named *Ghettoloven* until 2021. The decision to depart from the term 'ghetto' was made by the same parties in parliament who voted in favour of the initial Ghetto Law in 2018 ("Aftale mellem..." 2021: 4). The official usage of 'ghetto' ignited national as well as international criticism. The term has a loaded history, as it connotes Nazi Germany's separation of Jewish people during WWII. The term also denotes older spatial separations in Copenhagen as well as more recent spatial separations within urban US American and European contexts (Schmidt 2022; 2021, Simonsen 2016). For an English-language overview of the Danish debate, see: Barry and Sørensen 2018.

2 "så defineres den først og fremmest som et klassemæssigt og etnisk (og dermed implicit racialt) sted."

3 "Læseren bliver lovet et Ideal-Danmark og tilbydes ghettoloven som midlet, der skal sikre, at vi når frem til der øjeblik, hvor der ikke længere er forskel på ideal og virkelighed."

4 "et sammenhængende Danmark"

5 In English, 'Security for all Danes'.

6 "uromagere"

7 In November 2021, the government published a supplementary strategy to improve security. As this strategy does not specifically tackle social housing areas, I do not include it in my analysis.

8 In Danish, *Loven om utryghedsskabende lejre* or *Lejrloven*.

9 In English 'One Denmark without parallel societies – no ghettos in 2030'.

10 As an example, social housing estates considered in the risk group of becoming a 'parallel society' consist of 1,000 residents minimum. Of those residents, 30% or more are migrants or descendants of migrants from 'non-western' countries. Additionally, the residents meet two of the following four criteria pertaining to 1) higher rates of unemployment, 2) higher crime rates, 3) lower education levels, and 4) lower gross income than the rest of society ("Aftale mellem…" 2021: 2).

11 For instance, in June 2022, housing evictions began in Mjølnerparken in Copenhagen. Residents were rehoused by authorities and had no choice on the location or cost of their new housing. Private real estate investors have bought significant shares of the estate's flats (O'Brien 2022).

12 In Danish, social housing is referred to as *almene boliger*, with *almen* meaning 'common' and *modstand* meaning 'resistance'. As such, the movement refers to itself as a resistance group consisting of 'common people'.

13 I unfold the notion of a subversive 'postmigrant homesickness' in art and culture in my PhD dissertation *Feeling Sick of Home?* (2022). This article is a shortened adaption of a chapter from the dissertation which includes a thorough analysis of Babak Vakili's *Generationen.*

14 "indvandrerdrenge"

15 "Det her handler om, at når man bruger S-togslinjerne i Storkøbenhavn, så skal man ikke være bange for at tage hjem om aftenen, fordi der er 15–17 indvandrerdrenge, der ikke kan finde ud af at opføre sig ordentligt."

16 "Utryghedsskabenbe indvandrerdrenge"

17 "Jeg er træt af at høre om, at det altid er samfundets skyld. Danmark er et fantastisk samfund, der giver unge alle muligheder. Det gælder også unge fra indvandrerfamilier. Nu må dem, der skaber utryghed i vores lokalsamfund, beslutte sig for, om de vil være en del af det danske samfund. Hvis svaret er nej, skal de vide, at de vil blive mødt med opholdsforbud og beslaglæggelser."

18 "et politisk ønske"

19 For Vad's full speech in Danish see: Klingenberg 2024.

20 "en erkendelse af, at arbejde, uddannelse, bolig, turpas til foreningslivet og en pletfri straffeattest ikke er nok, hvis man samtidig bruger sin position til at undergrave det danske samfund indefra".

21 "Et parallelsamfund er ikke længere kun et boligområde i Ishøj. Det kan også være et kantinebord i en statslig styrelse. Det kan også være et apotek i Nordsjælland".

22 The Office of the Prime Minister provides an English-language version of the Danish-language opening address. As I draw on the official translation, I do not provide Danish original quotes in the footnotes. I refer to the numbered lines of the official translation.

23 The "murder in Brønshøj" refers to the murder of Kevin Ibraimovski. At the time of the speech, Danish police assumed that the murder was a gang-related crime, though the case was formally unsolved.

24 In the Danish version of the speech, the Prime Minister uses the term "*n*ærområderne" meaning 'proximate areas.' The term is, however, officially translated into "regions of origin."