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**Reproducing Ethnic
Discrimination: A
Critical Policy Analysis
of the Danish 2018
Ghetto Plan**

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Introduction

'A critique does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based' (Foucault, 1994:456).

In March of 2018, the Danish center-right government published its so far most comprehensive effort to combat social issues in underprivileged areas under the title “One Denmark without Parallel Societies – No Ghettos in 2030.” Just a few months prior, during the 2018 New Year’s speech, the then Prime Minister of Denmark, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, stressed the importance of the common responsibility to take care of the country. He talked about positive things – how many people with foreign background are employed, pays their taxes and raises their children to be democratic citizens, to get an education. He also talked about the negative things – the young people who are not allowed to marry who they love, women who are considered less worthy than men, and people clumping together in parallel societies (Ministry of the State, 2018). The message in Løkke’s New Year’s speech sparked the conversation about ‘parallel societies’ in Denmark and can now be seen as an introduction to the policy published in March of 2018. The policy, dubbed “the Ghetto Plan” in Danish media – and for the sake of consistency in this thesis as well – consists of a large amount of legislative measures to combat ‘parallel societies’ and ‘ghettos’ in Denmark. Some of the more extreme changes relate to demolishing parts of the residential areas so that public housing units make up of a maximum of 40 percent; harsher penalties if a crime is committed within a ghetto or within a radius of 1 km; mandatory daycare for children from the age of 1 living in a ghetto, where the purpose is to learn the Danish language and Danish values (Danish Government, 2018a).

The definition of a ‘ghetto’ according to the Danish government, is understood as a public housing area with at least 1.000 residents where the proportion of immigrants and descendants from non-Western countries exceeds 50 percent and where at least two of the following four criteria are met:

1. The proportion of residents aged between 18-64 with no connection to the labor market or education exceeds 40 percent as average over the past two years.

2. The proportion of residents convicted for violating the Criminal Code, the Firearms Act or the law on euphoriant substances is at a minimum three times the national average over the past two years.
3. The proportion of residents aged 30-59 who only has basic education exceeds 60 percent of all residents of the same age group.
4. The average gross income of taxpayers aged 15-64 in the area (excluding students) is less than 55 percent of the average gross income of the same group in the region (Danish Government, 2018b).

In Denmark, the Constitution states that all are equal to the law. The law does not discriminate and every single individual has equal rights. This should be obvious, especially since it is legally binding. However, today's Denmark has changed. Danish citizens are no longer equal to the law. The government's Ghetto Plan is black on white a discriminating policy. Now, a specific group of people living in a deprived neighborhood can be punished up to double as hard compared to the rest of the population for committing the same exact crime. Children living in a 'ghetto' will be forced to attend daycare while children living outside of 'ghettos' will not. Non-Western immigrants and their children have solely become the focal point of the Danish Ghetto Plan. According to the Danish government, non-Western immigrants and descendants form the so-called 'parallel societies' that exist in Denmark and thus becomes not only a burden, but also a "threat to our modern society when freedom, democracy, equality and tolerance is not accepted as fundamental values" (Danish Government, 2018a:5).

Non-Western immigrants and descendants are through the Danish Ghetto Plan being held responsible for the deep social issues that exists in the deprived neighborhoods and 'ghettos' of Denmark. It is, however, puzzling how a singled out group of society (or, some of them) can be to blame for these issues simply because they live in one area of a city instead of another. Furthermore, several Danish policies have tried to argue that there is link between human behavior and where you live without providing substantial academic evidence to prove this.

According to political scientists Carol Bacchi and Susan Goodwin political initiatives and policies include problem representations that are able to produce specific "targeted groups as responsible for an assumed "problem", creating stigma and silencing the operation of other factors"

(Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016:69). This leads to ask the questions of how one group of society can be to blame for the larger societal problems in Denmark, but also how the focus on ethnicity/and or nationality is considered legitimate. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how the targeted group are held responsible and what effect follows, when the Danish government uses stigmatization to further marginalize already disadvantaged residents.

Problem Formulation

How does the Danish 2018 Ghetto Plan reproduce the problems with parallel societies that it seeks to solve?

Methodological Framework

Research strategy

In the following section the structure of the thesis will be presented. To examine the Danish 2018 Ghetto Plan I have collected my data through secondary sources in terms of the plan itself, relating government policies, news articles and citizen surveys. There are several benefits of using secondary data. Firstly, it is less time and costs consuming. Secondly, because secondary data often have been used in previous research, it may be easier to carry out further research. However, the disadvantages of using secondary data is that it investigates other issues that does not necessarily relate to my research questions. Another disadvantage by using secondary data in relation to the surveys I have used, for instance, is that the underlying factors are not presented or identified.

The structure of the thesis can be split into five parts. The first part introduces the motivation behind conducting the analysis of the thesis and presents the problem formulation. In the second part, the methodological framework where the choices behind method, theory and case is provided and explained. The third section introduces the theoretical contributions to the study of ghettos by LÖiq Wacquant, the What's the Problem Represented to be? approach by Carol Bacchi and an explanation of how the two complements each other to jointly assist in answering my research questions. In the fourth part, the case of the Danish 2018 Ghetto Plan is presented. The fifth part includes the analysis where the six research questions will be answered. In this last and sixth part, a conclusion will be provided, demonstrating the importance of my findings.

Choice of method

In this thesis I draw on the work of political scientist Carol Bacchi and her “What’s the Problem Represented to be?” (WPR) approach to make the argument that governments do not necessarily solve problems, but that they to a much larger degree produce the “problems” as particular sorts of problems. Bacchi’s contribution to policy analysis is especially useful to my analysis because her emphasis on problematization, power relations and knowledge practices allows me to critically analyze the way in which problem representations are produced, how this production has come about and what effects follow. In my analysis, this will come across as a critical examination of the discourse surrounding the representation of non-Western immigrants and descendants in the Ghetto Plan – that is, how the language, concepts and categories are used to frame non-Western immigrants and descendants. Furthermore, the methodology of the WPR approach involves multiple strategies including an analysis of discourse and genealogy. While these types of analytical strategies can be related to somewhat complex theories, Bacchi has made it simple to use the WPR approach making it easy to access and apply. The six interrelated questions in the approach work as a useful tool to systematically assess the problem representations within the Ghetto Plan.

Choice of theory

In connection to the WPR approach by Carol Bacchi, this thesis also makes use of Løiq Wacquant’s theoretical contributions to the study of ghettos, ethnicity and urban marginality. Whereas the WPR approach has a micro-level focus, Wacquant’s approach takes a more macro-analytical examination of ghettos from the top. Wacquant focuses on the social processes that create and reproduce urban marginality. Additionally, Wacquant is applied to understand, interpret and explain the concept of ‘ghetto’, the process of ghettoization in Denmark as well as the use of the concept in Danish policies, media and the wider society. One of the main focuses in Wacquant’s writings relates to the need of paying particular attention to how symbolic structures produce and reproduce inequality and marginality. If these structures are left unexamined, the examination of ghettos will consequently focus on the “poorness” of the deprived neighborhoods instead of the underlying problems that actually need to be addressed. The state, Wacquant argues, should therefore be considered playing the central role in social and spatial production of urban marginality (Wacquant, 2014:1692). Because this thesis focuses primarily on examining state policies, Wacquant’s contributions are useful and relevant.

Choice of case

The choice of case in this thesis relates to my own personal interest in Danish immigration policy. Additionally, the discourse revolving Danish immigration policy has changed over time, depending on which type of government Denmark is ruled by. The discourse in the Ghetto Plan stands out because it is the first extensive measure targeting one specific group in society. Being a child of immigrants myself, born and raised not only in Denmark, but also in a so-called ‘ghetto’, this topic is of important matter to me. Therefore, I do recognize that in the process of choosing a specific policy, I have already involved myself in the analysis. Furthermore, I recognize that my personal reasons for choosing the specific policy will undoubtedly influence my own views about the subject. I will make it an important task to not distort specific segments of the policy to support a particular interpretation. Carol Bacchi also stresses the importance of acknowledging contesting positions in a policy document when they are apparent (Bacchi, 2009:20). Additionally, I find it particularly interesting to examine how we understand and discuss socially underprivileged neighborhoods and how we talk about the people living in them. The Danish Ghetto Plan and previous policies on the same subject are rather suitable for that examination. The Ghetto Plan opens up for a new discussion about the problems within underprivileged housing areas and who we are to blame for these problems. Surely, the discourse revolving this subject and the subject of immigration policy in Denmark has always (and especially since the “refugee crisis”) been an important matter for Danish politicians. While the discussion on the subject is not a new focus area, it is however quite noteworthy how non-Western immigrants and descendants as well as ‘ghettos’ and ‘parallel societies’ have developed into the dominating discourse. By choosing this specific policy and conducting an analysis using the WPR approach, I am not attempting to arrive at a conclusion that is final or better than other critical analyses of the policy. My aim is to analyze how the issues the government is trying to fix may contribute to further marginalization. This is just a small part of the larger debate on immigrants, ‘ghettos’ and ‘parallel societies’ in Denmark. A debate that is on-going and difficult to change. The discourse within the policy, relating policies and in the Danish media is difficult to change. In the analysis, a further explanation of exactly this difficulty will be provided.

Limitations

My initial strategy for this thesis included collecting data from the areas the government has characterized as ‘ghettos’. However, due to the current health situation, I chose to limit myself and focus only on secondary sources. For my initial strategy, I wanted to interview both residents and

housing organizations to examine how each group was affected by the government's initiatives and examine how they believed the initiatives could fix the societal issues. The current health crisis, however, complicated these wishes both because of time but also because physical interaction with respondents was not possible. By conducting interviews, the thesis could have been provided with a deeper understanding on the issue and arguably, it may have supported the findings.

I acknowledge that due to my personal background and my involvement in this topic, it is difficult to obtain complete objectivity. Nevertheless, by including conflicting perspectives in the analysis and minimizing my own bias, I have attempted to act in good faith.

Another limitation relates to my choice of only focusing on Denmark. I could have conducted a comparative analysis in order to examine the differences and similarities. Both to include different perspectives, but also to demonstrate that Denmark is not a unique case in terms of 'ghetto' policies.

Löiq Wacquant

Löiq Wacquant is a French-American interdisciplinary sociologist specialized in urban studies, racial inequality, social theory and the politics of reason. He is mostly known for his work with "advanced marginality" and "territorial stigmatization." Additionally, his contribution to the study of 'ghettos' and urban sociology is of great use to this thesis. Wacquant is currently a professor of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley where he is affiliated with the Center for the Study of Race and Gender, the Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory and the Center for Urban Ethnography as well as a researcher at the Centre de Européen de Sociologie et de Science Politique in Paris (Wacquant, n/d)

In his 2015 article *Ghetto*, Wacquant states that social sciences often have used the term 'ghetto' as merely a descriptive one, rather than creating an analytical concept of the same (Wacquant, 2015:121). In the article, Wacquant makes the effort to construct just this relational concept of the ghetto as an instrument of 'ethnoracial control and closure' by drawing on the history of the Jewish diaspora in early modern Europe, the sociology of the African American experience in the 20th century urban areas as well as the anthropology of African and East Asian outcasts (Wacquant, 2015:121). According to Wacquant, the term 'ghetto' derives from the Italian *giudecca*, *borghetto* or *gietto* to initially refer to the forced shipment of Jews to specific areas by the authorities of the city (2015:122). In the medieval times of Europe, it was common for Jews to be allocated into areas where they would live by themselves, work with only each other and follow their own customs. In the

Judenstadt of Prague especially, which can be considered the biggest ‘ghetto’ of the 18th century, the Jews even had their own city hall (Wacquant, 2015:122).

In his book, *Punishing the Poor*, published in 2009, Wacquant lays out four elements that make up a ghetto: 1) stigma, 2) constraint, 3) spatial/territorial confinement and 4) institutional encasement. The result of the formation of a ghetto can be characterized as a “distinctive space containing an ethnically homogenous population”, which ultimately finds itself developing its own set of institutions (schools, workplaces, places of prayer, civil unions) that resembles those of the broader society, from which the group is ostracized (Wacquant, 2009:205). On one hand, this parallel institutional connection offers the subordinate group some degree of protection, autonomy and dignity, but, on the other hand, at the cost of locking in the relationship of a long-lasting structural subordination and dependency (Wacquant, 2009:205). The ghetto can therefore be seen as serving two functions: 1) maximizing the material surplus extracted from a group considered impure (economic extraction) and, 2) minimizing intimate contact with the residents within the ghettos (social boycotting) (Wacquant, 2015:122).

Wacquant further makes the attempt to articulate the concept of ‘ghetto’ by clarifying the “structural and functional differences between ghettos and ethnic neighborhoods” (2015:123):

1. *Poverty is a frequent but derivative and variable characteristic of ghettos:* While it is true that most ghettos throughout history have been places of pervasive misery due to the lack of place, the settlements being rather dense and the economic exploitation and overall mistreatment of its residents, it does not necessarily mean that a ghetto is poor or destitute. Wacquant argues how the *Judengasse* of Frankfurt, which was abolished in 1811, consisted of Jews who “helped the city become a vibrant center of trade and finance” and how the 1930’s Harlem was the “cultural capital of black America” (Wacquant, 2015:124). Poverty within a ghetto relates to a much larger degree to policies within the state, the way in which the economy is shaped and the demography of the area. Nor can all poor neighborhoods be characterized as ghettos and the study of ghettoization cannot be limited to a simple study of slums and lower-class areas of a city (Wacquant, 2015:124). It should be noted here, that it is not possible to transfer the analysis of ghettos in the United States and France to Denmark. This thesis is written from a perspective that ghettos does not exist in Denmark. Wacquant, also, does not believe ghettos exist in Denmark. In a 2013 article, he stated the following:

“It is crazy to talk about ghettos in a welfare state like the one in Denmark. There are no ghettos in Denmark. When the Danish Government lists socially vulnerable neighborhoods and publishes them annually it is not only an expression of a sick mind, it is also an idiotic policy that ultimately pushes the socially disadvantaged areas further into the mud. It is ultimately a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is a worrying trend that we unfortunately have seen across most of Western Europe over the past two decades”. (Wacquant in Omar, 2013)

The quote illustrates the point in which I am making. There are no ghettos in Denmark, so when the Danish government attempts to force this view upon us, it is important that we challenge it from their point, hence providing arguments that disprove the ones of the Government.

2. *All ghettos are segregated but not all segregated areas are ghettos.* Wacquant here makes the argument of how the luxurious cities and exclusive areas of Paris, Berlin, Toronto and Miami are monotonous when it comes to capital, income, jobs and often ethnicity, but are never characterized as ghettos. The residents within these types of segregated areas have made the choice completely voluntary. Therefore, the segregation becomes neither complete nor everlasting (Wacquant, 2015:124). Wacquant argues that residential segregation is a necessary condition for a ghetto, but not sufficiently enough to describe a process of ghettoization. Firstly, territorial confinement, as mentioned earlier, must be all-inclusive and encompass all, and secondly, it must be followed by a set of mirrored institutions making it possible for the residents within the ghetto to reproduce themselves within their assigned borders (Wacquant, 2015:124).

Wacquant argues how the French *banlieues* is a good example of illustrating how involuntary segregation neither alone produces ghettos in his book *Urban Outcasts – A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* written in 2008. The book focuses on the black ‘ghetto’ in Chicago compared to the French *banlieue* of Paris to make the case that urban marginality is not the same everywhere (Wacquant, 2008). By comparing the United States with France, Wacquant makes the argument that structures and policies of the state play a key role in the formulation of class, race and place. The central theses of the book focuses on disentangling the spatial nexus of class, ethnicity, and state in Europe. Wacquant argues how the 2000s was characterized by a “panic discourse” of ghettoization across the European continent which was evident in an announcement by then Danish prime minister Løkke Rasmussen’s 2010

government plan to “confront the parallel societies of Denmark” thus directing 29 ghettos characterized by the combination of immigration, lack of jobs, and crime (Wacquant, 2016:1086). Wacquant argues that while both black American ghettos and French *banlieues* can be considered close at the phenomenal level, they differ completely in terms of the way they make up and the way in which they function. In the French public discourse, the *banlieues* had been characterized as ‘ghettos’ even though the concentration of the residents within these areas to a large degree was based on class and not ethnicity. As a result, the *banlieues* could be considered culturally heterogeneous because the residents consisted of a mix of native French families and immigrants from many different nationalities; there did not exist duplicated institutions but rather a lack of internal organizational structure that could keep them outside of meaningful employment and satisfactory public services. The French *banlieues*, just as the inner cities of many European countries, are therefore what Wacquant characterizes as *anti-ghettos* (Wacquant, 2015:124). Following Wacquant, the usage of the term ‘ghetto’ is misleading and inaccurate when used to describe socially deprived areas and term *anti-ghettos* stem, to a large degree, from Wacquant’s argument of the misuse of the concept ‘ghetto’ by policy-makers, politicians and to some agree even academics (Cummins, 2016:267).

Furthermore, a ghetto can be considered an isolated district both in terms of material and symbolic which is best figured by a wall, whereas an ethnic neighborhood can be considered a springboard for assimilation through cultural knowledge and mobility, both social and spatial, which is best figured by a bridge (Wacquant, 2015:125).

Wacquant argues, that because ghettoization typically is structurally connected to poverty, segregation, and ethnicity it makes it empirically difficult to distinguish which of the attributes displayed by the ghetto residents are “ghetto-specific cultural traits” in contrast to attributes related to class, society or masculinity (Wacquant, 2015:125). Additionally, the cultural forms created within the ghetto often spreads further than within its boundaries and circulates throughout the wider society becoming “outward signs of cultural rebelliousness and social eccentricity” (Wacquant, 2015:125). Again, the difficulty here lays in how to discern between the cultural forms generally accepted within the ghettos’ residents and the public image of the residents spread in the wider society and within academia (Wacquant, 2015:125).

It is therefore rather useful to think of ghettos and ethnic neighborhoods as “two ideal typical configurations situated at opposite ends” of a scale where different groups of people can be located or travel over time depending of the power with which the dynamics of stigma, constraint, spatial/territorial confinement and institutional encasement all-encompassing melts together and affects them (Wacquant, 2015:125). Then, the study of ghettos can become “a multilevel variable for comparative analysis and empirical specification” where it can become weakened to the point where the ghetto through steady destruction of its spatial, social and mental limits devolves into a chosen ethnic concentration which functions as a “springboard for structural integration and/or cultural assimilation in the broader social formation” (Wacquant, 2015:125).

Wacquant’s concept of *territorial stigmatization*, as mentioned in the beginning of this section, relates to social dynamics formed in the relationship between housing areas characterized as ‘ghettos’, the wider society, as well as the feeling of “personal indignity” it carries (Wacquant, 2008:29). Following Wacquant, the process of territorial stigmatization encourages amongst residents sociofugal strategies of shared avoidance and distancing which results in processes of social fissions, feeds mistrust and undermines the sense of unity that is necessary when engaging in community-building and mutual action (2008:30). From this perspective, Wacquant is useful when examining how residents in ‘ghetto’ areas are blamed for the social issues within their place of residents and how this affects them. The process of territorial stigmatization does indeed take place through the government’s Ghetto Plan and it can therefore be argued that the changes the government wants to see are haltered by their own policies.

Carol Bacchi and WPR

The WPR approach is a tool created by Carol Bacchi for analyzing public policy and policy proposals. The approach focuses on asking questions about the sources in policies and how they operate while specifically “understanding how governing takes places and with what implications for those so governed” (Bacchi, 2009). Following Bacchi, there exists an underlying assumption that policy is something good, something that fixes things and that the policy makers are in charge of the fixing. Furthermore, the idea of “fixing” is followed by an understanding that something should be “fixed” – hence, that there exists a *problem*. This “problem” is not always explicitly presented in a policy or a policy proposal, but rather is implicit in the notion of policy, implying that something must or needs to be changed (Bacchi, 2009). Bacchi therefore argues that policies incorporate implied

‘problems’ and it is here the WPR approach enters. The approach argues that it is necessary to make the implicit problems in public policy explicit, and to critically examine them (Bacchi, 2009).

Furthermore, the argument is that the way in which the “problem” is represented is of important matter because the representation carries different types of implications for how to think about the issue and for not only how the people involved are treated, but also how they view and think about themselves (Bacchi, 2009:1). Bacchi’s approach to policy analysis consists of six interconnected questions (see below) which then are applied to one’s own problem representations.

Q1: What’s the “problem” represented to be in a specific policy?

The goal in Question 1 is rather straightforward. Here, we begin with identifying a place to start the analysis, that is, identifying a problem representation. This is done by sort of “working backwards” from a policy, to then see what is problematized (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016:20). Because policies often can be very complex, there may be more than one problem representation in a given policy. It should therefore be recognized that identifying problem representation in policies is a challenging task. However, if there exists overlapping problem representations or problem representations that may contradict each other, the goal is to identify the most dominant one and work with that (Bacchi, 2009:4).

Q2: What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem”?

After identifying the most dominant problem representation(s) in a policy, the analysis is followed by examining the understanding that supports identified problem representations. Within Q2 Bacchi asks: What is assumed? What is taken for granted? What is not questioned? (Bacchi, 2009:5). Presuppositions or assumptions, the terms used in Q2, refers to the background knowledge that is often overlooked. An important point to make here, is that the assumptions; meanings or beliefs we are examining are not those of the policy makers. It is the assumptions; meanings or beliefs we can identify within the policy representations (Bacchi, 2009:5). Bacchi argues that the analysis carried out through the WPR approach “goes beyond what is in people’s heads to consider the shape of arguments, the forms of ‘knowledge’ that arguments rely upon, the forms of ‘knowledge’ that are necessary for statements to be accorded intelligibility” (2009:5). In other words, the task is not to analyze *why* something happens, but rather *how* something is happening – and what meanings, beliefs or assumptions need to be in place for that to happen.

Bacchi proposes to make use of discourse analysis within Q2. Following her, discourse is more than just language and can be thought about as “meaning systems.” Analyzing meanings, beliefs, and assumptions is analyzing discourse. The WPR approach therefore recommends to engage in discourse analysis by identifying and interrogating the binaries, key concepts, and categories within a policy:

Binaries

Public debate is often rested on binaries where one side of a binary is not only considered to be excluded from the other, but also where one side is more privileged or valued than the other due to the hierarchy often implied within the binaries (Bacchi, 2009:7). Working with the WPR approach, the task is to identify where binaries appear in policies and how they work to shape the understanding of the problem.

Key concepts

Policies always include a large amount of concepts, which can be understood as abstract labels that often are open-ended, hence strongly contested. Concepts can be understood differently and people tend to apply different meanings to them. The difference we see in people understanding concepts often relates to competing political visions (Bacchi, 2009:8). The task here, is to identify concepts within the problem representations for then to analyze which meanings or beliefs are applied to those concepts.

Categories

Categories can be understood as key concepts that play an important part in how governing takes place, i.e. gender categories, ethnicity categories, age categories etc. Bacchi stresses the importance of not merely accepting these types of categories as “normal” or “given”, but to identify how they work to give meanings to problem representations (2009:9).

Q3: How has this representation of the “problem” come about?

Within Q3 we seek to examine the origins, history and mechanisms of the identified problem representations within a policy. Bacchi argues that Q3 includes two objectives: 1) to look into the specific developments that have made the formation of the identified problem representation possible,

and 2) to recognize that opposing problem representation have existed over time and all over the world and therefore, things could have looked different (Bacchi, 2009:10).

The important task in Q3 is to look at one's policy in the present and ask how we got here. To trace the roots and the history of current problem representation, examine the "twists and turns" rather than simply thinking that the developments of policies happen through "natural" evolution (Bacchi, 2009:10). By tracing the roots, one needs to examine and identify important moments where key decisions were made, to then see how the problem has taken a particular direction. The analysis of differential power relations is also of importance within Q3. Bacchi argues how the analysis of differential power relations will examine how some groups have more power than others in making sure that a specific problem representation hangs on.

Q4: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the "problem" be thought about differently?

In Q4 the critical analysis within the WPR approach begins. One way of doing this is to examine the limits within the underlying problem representations – asking "what fails to be problematized?" (Bacchi, 2009:12). Because some policies are constrained by how they represent problem, the objective in Q4 is to include a discussion of how specific issues and perspectives are "silenced" in problem representations (Bacchi, 2009:13). The discourse analysis performed in Q2 is of great use here. The binaries identified in the analysis can help indicate where misrepresentation of certain problems occur, because binaries often helps simplify complex or overlapping experiences. When we can draw attention to contradictions within problem representations, we can simultaneously expose the limitations in the way problem are being represented in policies (Bacchi, 2009:13). Also Q3 can help with identifying the silences within problem representations, because the "tracing of roots" analysis highlights competing problem representations.

Q5: What effects are produced by this representation of the "problem"?

In Q5 the critical analysis is continued. Following the WPR approach, policy analysis begins with the understanding that certain problem representations create complications for some groups of society more so than other members of society. Bacchi argues that these complications or difficulties "form a standard and predictable pattern" (2009:15). This is the reason why we must critically

examine the problem representations to identify where and how they work to benefit some and not others as well as examining what we can do about this.

Within this analysis attention is directed to the effects that are followed by certain problem representations. These “effects”, within an WPR approach, are rather subtle in the way in which they work and calls for an understanding of both poststructuralist discourse and feminist theory (Bacchi, 2009:15). Bacchi identifies three interrelated types of effects which will be elaborated on: 1) discursive effects, 2) subjectification effects, and 3) lived effects.

Discursive effects

Here we have direct links to Q2, Q3 and Q4. The way in which problem representations are identified and the discourses in which they are framed can make it extremely hard to think differently or otherwise and thus limits the types of analyses that is possible to produce. This type of silencing in a WPR approach is an effect that needs to be thoroughly examined and monitored (Bacchi, 2009:16).

Subjectification effects

Here we examined how subjects and subjectivities formed through discourse. Bacchi argues that the concept of subjectification can be difficult to understand, but explains how we become particular kinds of subjects through the way policies establish social relations and position us within them (2009:16). The thing is, how we understand ourselves and how we understand the ones around us is to an extent an effect of how specific subjects have been produced in public policies. Bacchi further explains how problem representations within polices regularly positions social groups against each other, for example, ‘citizens’ versus ‘residents’ or ‘employed’ versus ‘unemployed.’ It is furthermore argued, that this kind of stigmatizing of minority groups can serve a government purpose by encouraging a specific, desired behavior by the majority (Bacchi, 2009:16).

Additionally, problem representations often include some kind of implication concerning who is at fault for the problem. Another task within the WPR approach is therefore to identify these attributions of responsibility in order to clarify if the responsibility of the problem is directed correctly as well as clarifying and examining what kinds of effects that follow from specific attributions of responsibility (Bacchi, 2009:17).

Lived effects

The concept of lived effects is rather straightforward. It relates to the impact problem representations can have materially. Bacchi argues how the way in which problems are represented in policies have a direct effect on people's lives and how this effect "in the real" affects our lives (Bacchi, 2009:17).

Q6: How/where has this representation of the "problem" been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

The last question in the WPR approach relates to the practices and processes that opens the door for specific problem representation to obtain dominance. Here, the task is to thoughtfully consider how the identified problem representations have reached their target audience and in this matter gained legitimacy (Bacchi, 2009:19). In Q6 we wish to analyze the relationship between the discourse, speakers and its target audience. What role does the media play in disseminating or supporting certain problem representations? What is the discourse surrounding those resisting the problem representations? Overall, the goal in Q6 is to direct attention towards how problem representations become dominant as well as critically examining the possibility of challenging problem representations that can be considered harmful (Bacchi, 2009:19).

Now that the WPR questions have been thoroughly explained, it is now possible to relate it to the problem formulation and the research questions used in the analysis will therefore be the following:

Q1: What's the "problem" of parallel societies represented to be in the Danish 2018 Ghetto plan?

Q2: What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the "problem" of parallel societies?

Q3: How has this representation of the "problem" of parallel societies come about?

Q4: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation of parallel societies? Where are the silences? Can the "problem" be thought about differently?

Q5: What effects are produced by the representation of the "problem" of parallel societies?

Q6: How/where has this representation of the "problem" of parallel societies been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

Löiq Wacquant in connection to Carol Bacchi

The following section will attempt to explain how the ghettoization theory of Löiq Wacquant works in relation to Carol Bacchi's WPR to answer the problem formulation of "*how does the Danish 2018 Ghetto Plan reproduce the problems with parallel societies that it seeks to solve?*" and the research questions that follows. Firstly, the WPR approach can be considered a method to analyzing the framing of problems within policies. It opens up for the possibility to critically analyze, examine and interpret taken-for-granted assumptions that always are embedded within public government policies. The theory provided by Wacquant then has the function of offering different understandings of the concept of 'ghettos', thus also the concept of 'parallel societies'. Following Wacquant, as critics we are forced to challenge the way in which 'ghettos' is loosely used to describe and identify areas characterized by a high foreign population composition, high rates of crime and poverty, and lack of employment. One of the main points in Bacchi's approach, is the task to challenge all forms of expertise, experience and knowledge which coincides with Wacquant's argument of challenging traditions ways the concept of 'ghetto' is not only used, but also justified to further marginalize already stigmatized people. Because the first three questions within the WPR approach offers space for rather descriptive answers, the contribution of Wacquant will be concentrated around the last three questions of the approach. It can, however, be argued that even though Wacquant is not explicitly used in the first three questions, his notion about how the residents within 'ghettos' are heavily stigmatized because of where they live, is heavily related to the way in which binaries are created and used by the Danish government and identified within question 2 of the WPR approach. Where the contributions of Wacquant specifically work well in relation to the WPR approach is within question 4 and 5 where the task is to examine how firstly, the Ghetto Plan "silences" specific knowledge in order to support or strengthen their arguments and secondly, what effects are produced when a problem representation of 'non-Western immigrants' isolating themselves and thus creating parallel societies are created and used in public policy. In question 4 specifically, where the task is to examine silences and what is left unproblematic in the policy, Wacquant is used to challenge the way in which vulnerable housing areas in Denmark are referred to as 'ghettos' – leaving space to compare them to the harsh American Black ghettos – with the implicit purpose of constructing a view of some parts of the Danish society as directly dangerous and a threat to the wider society. In question 5 specifically, where we examine the effects of the problem representation, Wacquant is of great use to examine the *lived effects* that residents within the vulnerable experience when stigmatized by the government

based solely on where they live. The analysis will show that further stigmatization of immigrants and descendants ultimately will result in changes in not only behavior but also public perception of them.

“One Denmark without Parallel Societies – No Ghettos in 2030”

The Danish strategy is based on 22 initiatives spread out on four different themes; residential areas, housing assignment, crime, and daycare/school (Danish Government, 2018a:8).

Residential areas

1. Physical demolition and transformation of vulnerable residential areas

1.1. changing the physical appearance of residential areas

1.1. is rather straightforward. The physical structures of the ‘ghettos’ needs a complete transformation in order to “open the ghetto areas in relation to the surrounding society” (Danish Government, 2018a:12). Within changing the physical appearance of the residential areas, there is also a wish to change the mixture of housing forms. Following the government, the residential areas almost exclusively consists of public housing units which are clearly delineated in relation to the surrounding society. The transformation of the ghetto areas will be achieved by increasing the sales of public housing units, allowing private investors and homeowners with new housing forms to assist in changing the composition of residents in the area. This wish will be done either by having private investors buying parts of the current public houses or by building new private housing units (Danish Government, 2018a:12).

1.2. new opportunities for the complete dismantling of the most vulnerable ghetto areas

1.2. relates to introducing the opportunity for the government to impose the housing organization to launch a specific dismantling plan in particular congested ghetto areas. Following the government, this will be areas where “it has not been possible to reverse the negative trend of social issues, negative social control, crime, lack of education and employment” (Danish Government, 2018a:14). Following this strategy, it will be possible for the government to intervene and complete the dismantling, if the housing organization and the municipality fails to dismantle the ghetto area within a given time frame or if there does not exist a specific plan of it. The dismantling will take place either through a complete sale and/or demolishing of the area, the residents will be offered a new place to live and a new development project will be launched to restore and transform the area into a mix of housing forms.

The individual resident will thus be given the opportunity to obtain a new home “where the prerequisite for the individual’s social integration is better” (Danish Government, 2018a:14).

1.3. access to terminate tenants when selling public housing properties in vulnerable residential areas

1.3. in short relates to changing the law so that it is possible for landlords and housing organizations to terminate tenants with the purpose of selling the public housing unit. The termination will be done with an appropriate notice, an offer of replacement housing in the existing public housing units and assistance with relocation. The government argues how the current law is a “barrier to ensure mixed housing forms and a more mixed residents composition” (Danish Government, 2018a:14).

Housing assignment

2. Further control of who can live in vulnerable residential areas

Next to changing the physical structures of the residential areas, the government argues how a more balanced composition of who lives within the vulnerable housing areas can contribute actively to achieving the goal of no ghettos in 2030. An addition to this is ensuring how it is no longer possible to be reunited with a spouse (family reunification) who lives in a congested residential area (Danish Government, 2018a:17).

2.1. Stopping municipal allocation of benefit recipients to vulnerable housing areas

2.1. refers to prohibiting municipalities in designating housing applicants to vulnerable housing areas if one member of the household has received integration benefit, education benefit, cash benefit, early retirement, unemployment benefit or sickness benefit for at least six months (Danish Government, 2018a:18). The purpose behind this strategy is, following the government, to ensure that unemployed residents are spread out and in contact with the surrounding society instead of gathered within a vulnerable housing area.

2.2. Mandatory flexible rental in vulnerable housing areas

In point **2.2.** “mandatory flexible rental” relates to the process of letting residents with particular characteristics come first in line to available public housing units. Following the government, it must be mandatory for the municipalities and the housing organizations to apply the rules of flexible criteria relating to occupation or education. In other words, the proposal forces the municipality and

the housing organization in vulnerable housing areas to prioritize citizens with the following characteristics (Danish Government, 2018a:18):

- People with permanent connection to the labor market
- People pursuing an education
- People in apprenticeships
- People who have been self-supporting in six consecutive months (not applicable for people on retirement pension or similar)

2.3. Lower public benefits for newcomers to ghetto areas

As a part of changing the composition of residents within the vulnerable housing areas, point **2.3.** relates to the government seeking to make it “economically less attractive” for benefits recipients to move in to the harshest ghetto areas. The government suggests reducing the cash- and education benefits to the level of integration benefits for people who choose to move into one of the harshest ghetto areas (Danish Government, 2018a:18).

2.4. Stop the relocation of integration benefit recipients

Point **2.4.** is also straightforward and here, the government basically suggests making it impossible for citizens on integration benefit to move into the harshest ghetto areas. The reason behind this suggestion is to minimize the access of people on welfare benefits and with no connection to the labor market moving into ghetto areas (Danish Government, 2018a:19).

2.5. Cash reward to municipalities successful with integration efforts

Within point **2.5.** the government seeks the opportunity to financially reward those municipalities successful with the integration effort. The reward will be given when more “non-Western immigrants and descendants achieve education and employment” (Danish Government, 2018a:19). The reward is supposed to encourage the municipalities to strengthen their incentives for non-Western immigrants and descendants so that more people actively participate in the Danish society. An example of this type of “reward” can be found in the Ghetto Plan:

“The individual municipality will each year receive a cash reward of DKK 50.000 for each additional non-Western immigrant and descendant in the active age between 25-64 who in the previous three years have been in at least 380 hourly un-supported and consecutive employment pr. quarter compared to the year before” (Danish Government, 2018a:20).

Crime

3. Strengthened policing and higher penalties shall combat crime and provide more security

3.1. Strengthened policing in particularly vulnerable housing areas

Point **3.1.** relates to the rising fear happening within residents living in vulnerable housing areas. Following the government, a safety investigation from the police in 2017 showed that “residents in the particularly vulnerable housing areas feel less safe than the rest of the population” (Danish Government, 2018a:22). Other than increasing the physical presence of the police in congested areas, the government also seeks to develop a national strategy for policing in the particularly vulnerable housing areas to strengthen the effect of police work and strengthen the safety in the vulnerable housing areas (Danish Government, 2018a:22).

3.2. Higher penalties in specific areas (sharpened penalty zone)

In point **3.2.** the government seeks the opportunity to punish criminals harder if the crime is committed in specific areas. Specifically, the government wants to create a system that makes it possible for the police to identify particular areas plagued with crime and insecurity, where the penalty for certain types of crime is significantly increased for a period of time (Danish Government, 2018a:23). As a starting point, the higher penalty will be doubled whereas forms of crimes with existing high penalties will be increased by a third.

3.3. Criminals out of the ghettos

The last point within the theme of crime, point **3.3.**, relates to denying criminals the opportunity to move into a vulnerable housing area. Additionally, the government suggests that tenants and members of the household who commits a crime within and around the housing area that they live in, should faster and more efficiently be evicted from their homes in the area (Danish Government, 2018a:23).

Daycare and schools

4. A better start to life for all children and young people

Following the government, there are too many children living in vulnerable housing areas who are isolated and does not participate in leisure and association life in the Danish society. With this follows that the children rarely meet other Danish children and thus do not get acquainted with Danish norms and values (Danish Government, 2018a:24).

4.1. Compulsory day care must ensure better knowledge of Danish before starting school

In point **4.1.** the government suggests to introduce a requirement of compulsory day care for a minimum of 30 hours per week for children living in a vulnerable housing area from the child turns 1, if the child is not already enrolled in a daycare. Additionally, if the parents do not oblige to the requirement, the municipality has to make the decision to stop the child checks (Danish Government, 2018a:25).

4.2. Better distribution in day care institutions

Point **4.2.** relates to a better distribution of children in day care. Here, the government argues that “children living in vulnerable housing areas perform worse in the education system than other children and young people” and that “with a high concentration of children living in vulnerable housing areas follows worse preconditions for understanding Danish norms and values” (Danish Government, 2018a:25). The government therefore suggests a maximum of 30 percent of children from vulnerable housing areas to be accepted into each day care over a calendar year. Furthermore, if private institutions accept more than 30 percent of children living in a vulnerable housing area over a calendar year, their license should be suspended. Additionally, children who are not living in a vulnerable housing area, will not have the possibility of being allocated to day care institutions in connection to the vulnerable housing areas (Danish Government, 2018a:25).

4.3. Targeted language tests in 0. grade

In point **4.3.** the government argues that the proportion of “less good” readers in the second grade is higher in primary schools with more than 30 percent of students living in vulnerable housing areas compared to other primary schools (Danish Government, 2018a:26). Based on this assumption, the government proposes to enforce so-called ‘language tests’ in the 0. grade on schools where more than 30 percent of the children are living in areas that for the last three years have been on the list over vulnerable housing areas. Additionally, if the child does not pass the tests after three times, the child will not be eligible for starting the 1. grade (Danish Government, 2018a:26).

4.4. Penalties for primary schools performing poorly

Point **4.4.** relates to the opportunity to sanction primary schools that perform poorly. To note, the government estimates that the following proposals will significantly apply to primary schools with a

high proportion of students living in vulnerable housing areas (Danish Government, 2018a:27). The proposals include a temporary ‘state takeover’ of management responsibilities on the schools in order to combat the poor results, offers of counseling courses or a complete closure of the school.

4.5. Strengthened parental responsibility through the possibility of abolition of the child checks and a simpler parental order

In point 4.5. the government stresses the importance of young children learning the Danish language and values. Following the government, most parents take on the necessary responsibility, but argues that “there are parents in parallel societies that does not take on the responsibility and leaves the child to itself” (Danish Government, 2018a:27). The government therefore proposes two central obligations for parental responsibility in relation to the children’s schooling in primary school: 1) the child checks will lapse in one quarter if a child without valid reason has more than 15 percent absence during a quarter, and 2) the child checks will lapse in the first-coming quarter if a child is absent from a test or final exams without valid reason (Danish Government, 2018a:27).

Following the point of a “simpler parental order” the municipalities today have the opportunity to impose parental orders which may entail that children are home at a specific time or that a child must attend daycare. If these orders are not met, the parents may have their child checks voided. However, before such measures can be imposed, there needs to be a child assessment in place first. The government’s proposal is therefore “to simplify the use of the parental order by removing the requirement of always completing a child assessment before a parental order can be issues” (Danish Government, 2018a:27).

4.6. Better distribution of students in high school

“A high concentration of students with foreign ancestry in high schools increases the risk of a parallel culture which may lead to educational challenges, consequences for the student’s professional competence and ultimately, their integration broadly seen” (Danish Government, 2018a:28). That is the government’s argument to why a better distribution of students is needed in high schools. The government therefore proposes to give high schools the opportunity to require local distribution rules if they experience disproportionately large number of applicants for first year students with foreign ancestry. The limit will be set at the average proportion of applicants with foreign ancestry in the distribution committee area plus 5% points – though at least 20 percent (Danish Government, 2018a:28).

4.7. Criminalization of “re-education” journeys

In point 4.7. the government seeks to criminalize parents who send their children on so-called “re-education” journeys. The government proposes to penalize parents with prison up to four years. Additionally, the government seeks the opportunity to withdraw the passport of the child, when there is reason to assume that the child will be sent on a so-called “re-education” journey against the Danish law (Danish Government, 2018a:29).

4.8. Tougher stance on domestic violence

Point 4.8. relates to “social control, honor-related conflict and violence” as well as “women and young girls in oppressive family patterns” that is unacceptable social issues in Denmark. The government therefore proposes to double the penalty for repeated simple violence, when the violence is committed by people in or closely related to the household of the aggrieved (Danish Government, 2018a:29).

4.9. Early detection of vulnerable children

In point 4.9. the proposal relates to efforts in ensuring that no child is living in a violent home. The government argues how “violence in families and honor-related conflicts often is surrounded by taboo” and how “the threshold for when authorities are notified may depend on cultural differences if, for example, the parents have backgrounds in countries with parenting patterns where violence is permitted” (Danish Government, 2018a:30). The government argues that municipalities need better opportunities for early detection of vulnerable children in parallel societies and that the government itself will look into ways of strengthening the detection work of the municipality and the support to ethnic minority women who have been exposed to violence and/or negative social control (Danish Government, 2018a:30). The government therefore proposes that municipalities will gain access to information about the child (i.e. absence from the dentist, the number of notifications on the child, parental addiction treatment and connection to the Job Center).

4.10. Increased penalties for breaching the specially extended notification obligation

Point 4.10. is also rather straightforward and relates to punishing professionals with either jail for up to four months or fine if they fail to comply with the rules of the specially extended notification obligation. If particularly aggravating circumstances should occur, the level of jail time should be increased with up to one year. Particularly aggravating circumstances could relate to an intentionally

committed failure to notify, a systematic or repeated failure to notify or if the failure to notify has resulted in serious personal damage (Danish Government, 2018a:30).

Analysis

Q1: What's the “problem” of parallel societies represented to be in the Danish 2018 Ghetto plan?

The first question of the WPR approach should be understood as a clarification exercise. We want to clarify what the Danish government proposes to do in the Ghetto Plan, what it wants to change and thus, what it produces as a problem.

On 1 March 2018 the then Prime Minister of Denmark, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, together with seven other ministers introduced the legislative framework for the government's highly anticipated 'ghetto' strategy. The strategy, *One Denmark without Parallel Societies: No Ghettos in 2030*, was introduced in Mjølnerparken (a Copenhagen housing area on top of the ghetto list) and comprises of 22 initiatives spread out on themes relating to mandatory daycare, demolition and redevelopment, lowering benefits within 'ghettos', incentives for reducing unemployment and tougher criminal punishment in certain areas (Perrigo, 2018).

Within the Ghetto Plan, the government's primary focus is to combat so-called 'parallel societies' in Denmark that, they claim, have emerged among people with non-Western background (Danish Government, 2018a:4). In the Ghetto Plan, the concept of 'parallel societies' is not defined. Rather, it is referred to through different characteristics in contrast to Denmark itself. For example, "places that are against with the rights, obligations and democratic and liberal values that our society is built on" (Regeringen, 2018a:7). In question 4, a discussion and analysis revolving the concept of 'parallel societies' in Denmark will be provided.

The 22 initiatives identified previously can be considered the government's proposals and we have therefore clarified what the government proposes to do, whereas changing the population composition in order to achieve a much more mixed composition in the 'ghettos' can be considered what the government wants to change. In order to identify what the government produces as a "problem" to these changes can be found in the reasons and concerns behind the strategy. To begin with, it is important to point out that the measures are generally aimed at tenants and benefit recipients and not specific groups of people. But when measures include not being able to move into a ghetto if you are on integration benefits (point 2.4) or when stating that parallel societies have emerged among

people with non-Western background it can easily be argued that the measures have a specific target group – that is, ethnic minorities living in vulnerable housing areas. The concept of ‘parallel societies’ and the target group “non-Western immigrants” can therefore be considered interconnected in the Ghetto Plan. In sum, the primary problem representation in the Ghetto Plan derived both from the 22 initiatives as well as the reasoning behind the strategy is considered to be *non-Western immigrants isolating themselves from the wider society and thus, creating parallel societies*.

Additionally, it can be argued that the Ghetto Plan includes several problem representations. It is also possible to ask the questions of “what is the problem of *unemployment* in parallel societies represented to be?” or “what is the problem of *crime* in parallel societies represented to be?” because these issues also constitute the initiatives within the strategy. Bacchi also clarified that when doing a WPR approach “problem representations tend to nest with one another, making it necessary to ask what’s the problem represented to be? over and over again” (Bacchi, 2009:56), but that it may be useful to focus on the most dominant one. The problem representations related to crime, culture, unemployment and lack of income that are to be found in the Ghetto Plan all have in common that they are constantly traced back to non-Western immigrants and descendants, which will be evident in the following analysis. Therefore, for this thesis, the most dominant problem representation within the Danish 2018 Ghetto Plan is *non-Western immigrants and descendants living in ‘ghettos’, isolating themselves from the wider society and thus, creating parallel societies*.

Q2: What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem” of parallel societies?

Now that the most dominant problem representation has been identified, we move on to question 2 where the purpose is to identify assumptions or presuppositions within the problem representation. The task is to understand what underpins the problem representation by examining what is assumed and what has been taken for granted? This is done by engaging in a form of discourse analysis where identifying and interrogating the binaries, categories and key concepts within the Ghetto Plan can assist in identifying how meaning is created and used.

If we begin with taking a look at the problem representation of non-Western immigrants and descendants isolating themselves from the wider society by living in ‘ghettos’ and consequently creating parallel societies, it is important to firstly point out a specific understanding of social relations within the Ghetto Plan. In the beginning of the Ghetto Plan, a question of “What has gone wrong” is asked and replied with “Firstly, each immigrant has the biggest responsibility. To learn

Danish, to get a job and to become a part of the local society” (Danish Government, 2018a:5). The understanding of immigrants “taking care of themselves” or “helping themselves” underpins the Ghetto Plan. The whole understanding of immigrants being independent of the government structures the discussion throughout the Plan through an *independent/dependent* binary where dependency on welfare benefits is considered the less valued side.

The understanding of this specific social relation is evident through multiple binaries produced in the Plan. The binary *non-Western immigrants/Danes* are produced through the government stating that “immigrants and descendants with non-Western background *cost* Denmark DKK36 billion in 2016” (Danish Government, 2018a:5) and through the representation of being an economic burden to the Danish society and Danish taxpayers: “Danish taxpayers could have saved almost DKK17 billion if non-Western immigrants had been in employment to the same extent as Danes” (Danish Government, 2018a:5). Throughout the entire strategy, non-Western immigrants are repeatedly put in opposition to Danes, creating an “us vs. them” rhetoric, especially when it comes to what the government considers “cultural” worldviews: “nearly 4 out of 10 immigrants and descendants believe that the man naturally is the head of the family. That is the view of only 1/10 with Danish background” (Danish Government, 2018a:9) and “social control is more common among people with non-Western backgrounds than among people with Danish backgrounds” (Danish Government, 2018a:5). People with non-Western backgrounds are as shown repeatedly differentiated from ethnic Danes, even though the overall purpose of the Ghetto Plan is to “integrate” them better into the Danish society. Additionally, non-Western immigrants are also put in opposition to “other” immigrants through the *non-Western immigrants/immigrants* binary. This is evident when the government mentions “positive” things about immigrants in Denmark. Here, immigrants are “doing well (...) actively participating in local sports clubs and Danish society in general” (Danish Government, 2018a:5). Only here, they are not characterized as “non-Western” but merely “immigrants”. It is somehow evident then, that it is not *all* immigrants that are the focus of the Ghetto Plan, but specifically non-Western immigrants and descendants.

The binary *responsible/irresponsible* can be compared to the binary *independent/dependent* as well as the binary *non-Western immigrants/Danes*. The government states that citizens in parallel societies must be made co-citizens who contribute to society in line with all other Danes (Danish Government, 2018a:7). Here, “citizens in parallel societies” can be argued to cover “non-Western immigrants” because the Ghetto Plan directly states that parallel societies have emerged among non-Western immigrants (Danish Government, 2018a:4). The citizens are considered as being

irresponsible because they fail to learn Danish, obtain a job or become part of society. The citizens do not “take sufficient responsibility” (Danish Government, 2018a:5) and parents do not take sufficient parental responsibility (Danish Government, 2018a:8).

All of the abovementioned binaries appear in the Ghetto Plan and they function to shape a specific understanding of the issues within parallel societies. That is, the binaries identified make up what the government characterizes as ‘parallel societies’. The government uses these binaries to create a clear distinction between non-Western immigrants and ethnic Danes where the non-Western immigrants are portrayed as an expense for the Danish society because they fail to contribute in the same matter as the rest of society and fail to take on the responsibility of being a citizen in Denmark.

The binaries are used to repeatedly oppose non-Western immigrants from Danes where non-immigrants are considered of lesser value. The only place in the Ghetto Plan where non-Western immigrants and descendants are considered “Danes” is when the subject concerns children. Here, the government does not mention ethnicity: “We owe it to all Danish children and young people to become part of Denmark’s future. No matter where they were born and by whom” (Danish Government, 2018a:8).

It has now been clarified how binaries function to shape a specific understanding of the issue with parallel societies. The examination of categories within the Ghetto Plan is closely related to the one of examining binaries, because the task is to identify how the meanings applied to the categories work to give meaning to the problem representation. Throughout the Ghetto Plan, ‘non-Western immigrants’ are interchangeably referred to as ‘immigrants’, ‘refugees’, ‘family reunification’ and ‘new Danes’. There is no distinction between the categories in the Plan and, at no time, is any type of explanation or definition of when a group belongs to a specific group or what it means to be part of a specific group. Common for all of the categories is that they are represented through negative characteristics throughout the Plan. ‘Non-Western immigrants’ are characterized as citizens where “social control is exercised over young women and people” and where “domestic violence” is considered a cultural norm (Danish Government, 2018a:5). One specific way in which beliefs are applied to these categories is when the group is characterized as *passive*. This can also be thought about in binary passive citizens/active citizens because the ‘non-Western immigrant’ group repeatedly is opposed to the ‘Danes’ group, where ‘non-Western immigrants’ are referred to as “residents on passive support” (Danish Government, 2018a:11) and “immigrants in long-term passive state” (Danish Government, 2018a:5).

We then turn to examine how not only the key concepts of ‘ghetto’ and ‘parallel societies’ are understood throughout the policy, but also which meanings and beliefs are applied to these concepts. The concept of ‘ghetto’ is used over 120 times in the Ghetto Plan. As mentioned in the Introduction, a ‘ghetto’ is public housing area where the proportion of non-Western immigrants exceeds 50 percent and where two out of four criteria relating to crime, education, income and labor have to be met. Based on the full definition provided in the Introduction, 28 housing areas in Denmark are considered ghettos as of December 1, 2019 (Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing, 2019). Following the Ghetto Plan, ‘ghettos’ are considered housing areas where people who “have not integrated into the Danish society” live and the place where “people have been allowed to clump together” (Danish Government, 2018a:5). The ‘ghettos’ are characterized as the root of where social issues such as high crime rate, lack of employment and education as well as a high level of immigrants, are located. It is evident throughout the Ghetto Plan that ‘ghettos’ is unwanted in the Danish society, hence the title of the Plan.

We then move on to examine the concept of ‘parallel societies’. The concept is to be understood as the consequence of ‘ghettos’ being created by non-Western immigrants and descendants living in these areas and excluding themselves from the wider society. The Ghetto Plan does not include a specific definition of what ‘parallel societies’ really are, which makes it difficult to understand the scope of the concept in a Danish context. Nevertheless, the government does apply specific meaning and beliefs to the concept that will be examined next. The concept of ‘parallel societies’ is firstly used to describe the type of societies that have emerged among non-Western immigrants. ‘Parallel societies’ are characterized as “a threat to our modern society”, a “burden for societal cohesion” and a “economic burden when citizens do not participate in the labor market” (Danish Government, 2018a:5). ‘Parallel societies’ are furthermore considered a place where “a large group of immigrants and descendants who have not embraced Danish values” (Danish Government, 2018a:6) isolates themselves and a place where residents do not meet the ordinary Denmark (Danish Government, 2018a:7). ‘Parallel societies’ are furthermore represented as a place where the behavior of the residents “is contrary to the rights, obligations, and democratic liberal values of freedom on which our society is founded” (Danish Government, 2018a:7). The way in which ‘parallel societies’ repeatedly is put in opposition to ‘Denmark’ or ‘our society’ function to shape a specific understanding where ‘parallel societies’ are considered unsafe, a threat to the Danish society, a place where rights and obligations are not followed and where people live in isolated enclaves (Danish Government, 2018a:5). In contrast, Denmark is represented as ‘a society with safety, freedom, free

education and good job opportunities” (Danish Government, 2018a:5), and characterized as a country built on “democratic values, equality, tolerance and a Denmark where everyone actively participates” (Danish Government, 2018a:4). ‘Parallel societies’ are therefore represented as non-Danish and in this connection, it is important to remember that non-Western immigrants are directly connected to ‘parallel societies’ in the Ghetto Plan. This is especially evident when the Plan states that “About 15 percent of all families with non-Western background have multiple characteristics that suggest they are living relatively isolated from the wider society. The typical family lives in a public housing area where many of the residents have a non-Western background” (Danish Government, 2018a:7).

Through this passage, it is possible to argue that non-Western immigrants are represented as the sole reason for the existence of ‘parallel societies’. Through implicit rhetoric, they are blamed for social issues that follow such an isolated society.

The notion of putting the “blame” on one specific group is argued to be the overall mentality behind the Ghetto Plan. Non-Western immigrants are held responsible for complicating the transition into the Danish society and for providing the framework where crime and lack of education and employment grow effortlessly. A discussion of who’s responsible and where to put the blame will be provided in question 5.

Q3: How has this representation of the “problem” of parallel societies come about?

In question 3 the task is to examine the history of the identified problem representation and ask the question of “how did we get here?”. The following section will provide a chronological examination of previous ghetto policies that has laid the ground for the most recent ghetto policy to exist and made the problem representation possible. An additional task is to recognize that competing problem representation have existed over time, and therefore things could have looked and developed differently. To clarify, we want to examine how the problem representation of non-Western immigrants somewhat choosing to live in housing areas with a large composition of other non-Western immigrants and thus, lives outside of the wider Danish society have emerged.

In the summer of 1993, several mayors around the city of Copenhagen declared that their municipalities were not able to cope with the large amount of immigrants living in the non-profit housing buildings. This is to be seen in perspective to the massive influx of refugees and immigrants in the beginning of the 1990’s. Citizens with different ethnic backgrounds were considered ‘problematic’ and contributors to unmanageable behavior in schools and housing areas which resulted in serious strain on the municipal budgets and social benefit systems (Vagnby, 2011:13). Based on

this, the Social Democrat government set up an interdisciplinary committee under the leadership of the Minister of Interior and with membership of the Minister of Housing, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Education. An interdisciplinary approach was used to signal will and seriousness (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2000:37) and the overall purpose of the action plan was to “set off a new positive development in the social vulnerable housing areas” and the starting point was founded on “respect for people across social, economical, ethnic and religious divisions” (Vagnby, 2011:13). The initiatives behind the strategy that was introduced in 1994 are similar to the ones of the most recent ‘ghetto’ policy. One of the initiatives focused on ensuring that the concentration of socially vulnerable Danes and foreigners was changed in order to achieve a wider and more mixed population composition. Other initiatives focused on guaranteeing that children with foreign languages learn Danish before they start school, preventing crime in the vulnerable housing areas, and that adult foreigners immediately are offered teaching in Danish language, culture and society (Vagnby, 2011:14). The action plan also included employment initiatives for refugees and immigrants, including internships for young immigrants (Socialministeriet, 2000:37). The main conclusion following the action plan in the following years of its implementation claimed that “the efforts have led to a halt to negative developments in the housing areas” and that “it has prevented many of the problems in the areas from worsening and it has reduced some of them. But it has not removed the problems” (Vagnby, 2011:15). On the basis of the action plan of 1994, it can be argued that solving the social issues within vulnerable housing areas is a challenging one, first and foremost for the residents, but also for housing associations, municipalities, authorities and politicians.

The 1993 Commission ended their work in 1998 and with that followed a set of recommendations including so-called “neighborhood lift” and a “neighborhood strategy” with the purpose of overturning the negative spiral of developments in vulnerable housing areas (Bech-Danielsen & Christensen, 2017:28). The strategy introduced was, to a much larger degree, based on citizen participation and a complete process of orientation as an expansion of democracy into a coordinated and integrated partnership (Vagnby, 2011:18). The residents under this strategy, unlike the most recent one, were considered important actors whose voices should and could be heard. Furthermore, the strategy was focused and aimed at entire areas and not specific people or buildings. Following Vagnby, the previous experiences of Danish ‘ghetto’ policies and also the ones of European policies had shown that strengthening the capacity among the local residents and thus creating ‘enabling strategies’ where the role of public authorities shifted from governing and

regulation to being a constructive partner (Vagnby, 2011:18). In 2000, a new law was implemented in public housing areas that allowed for reprioritization. The law offered the opportunity for housing organization to receive support if they experienced that their areas were plagued by physical attrition, high levels of crime, socio economic issues, high rent and vandalism (Bech-Danielsen & Christensen, 2017:28). Recommendations showed that resident satisfaction in the areas were increasing as a result of more local participation and the newly implemented reprioritization law.

Only one year later, the Social Democratic government was replaced by a liberal government and the following years were characterized by an increase on the focus of ethnic segregation in the housing market. The leading dominating discourse was now that the integration of refugees and immigrants of the 1990s had failed and vulnerable housing areas were now characterized as ghettos (Bech-Danielsen & Christensen, 2017:29). In relation to the government shift, the Town and Housing Ministry was shut down which consequently meant deprioritization of housing and renewal policies and a loss of the previous work made by politicians in order to combat social issues in vulnerable housing areas (Vagnby, 2011:20).

In all the previous programs, the concept of ‘ghetto’ was only used sporadically when referring to the vulnerable housing areas. In 2004, when Anders Fogh Rasmussen was the Prime Minister, the concept really entered the public discourse in a ‘strategy against ghettoization’ (Vagnby, 2011:20). The following quote from the introduction of the strategy is rather noteworthy: “Ghettoization is *not* a result of free people’s free choice. The ghetto areas are *not* formed because someone wants them. On the contrary, the negative development of certain housing areas is strongly linked to previous years’ failure in planning and in integration and labor market policies” (Danish Government, 2004:7). Compared to the discourse of today, where non-Western immigrants to a large extent are blamed for ghettoization and the creation of parallel societies, it is significant to see how the discourse has changed over the years. The change in discourse from then up to today can also say to have an impact on the policies of today. That is, if the discourse revolving non-Western immigrants had stayed somewhat the same, things could have looked differently. The overall goals of the strategy were to 1) prevent the continued movement of disadvantaged citizens, 2) make the areas more attractive to resourceful citizens, 3) improve the integration of immigrants and descendants living in the areas, 4) promote the provision of new housing opportunities for immigrants and refugees outside of the ghetto areas and 5) attract private actors and investments to the areas (Danish Government, 2004:17). The ghettoization strategy followed the establishment of a so-called Programme Board which purpose was to follow the development in vulnerable housing areas and assess the need for changes in the

most vulnerable ‘ghetto’ areas. The Board stressed the importance of creating lasting changes in the areas, especially focusing on children, changing the composition of residents, increasing employment and providing safety (Bech-Danielsen & Christensen, 2017:30). The ghettoization strategy concretely points out eight possible ghetto areas where the proportion of adults on social benefits in 2002 was between 57 and 71 percent and where the proportion of immigrants and descendants in 2003 varied between 27 and 92 percent (Vagnby, 2011:20). Following the 2004 government, the eight areas identified were chosen solely on the basis of having a very high proportion of residents on social benefits and that the examples did not necessarily represent the actual identification of the most vulnerable areas (Danish Government, 2004:16).

The 2004 strategy also lists the indicators that typically characterizes ghettos in Denmark:

- 1) High proportion of working-age adults on cash benefits
- 2) Low educational level
- 3) Public housing areas
- 4) Skewed exit and enter pattern (resourceful residents move out; disadvantaged residents stay or move into other ghettos)
- 5) Lack of private businesses and private investments (Danish Government, 2004:15).

Again, it is interesting to see how the proportion of immigrants does not seem to be a factor in the 2004 strategy, compared to the 2018 strategy. However, as mentioned above, the strategy does mention proportion of immigrants and descendants when they give examples of possible ghetto areas at the time.

In 2005 and 2006 new housing deals were made covering the period between 2006-2010. The deals were made to function as an evaluation of the projects made under the ghettoization strategy. The start evaluation in 2006 concluded that projects with municipal formulated goals were hard to sell to the local community, whereas projects with local formulated goals from the jump gained ownership and were secured because they were extracted from local needs (Vagnby, 2011:20). The midway evaluation in 2008 similarly concluded that projects extracted from local needs are most beneficial compared to the projects initiated by the municipalities that still had to work harder to gain the trust and commitment from the local community. The midway evaluation further noted that the initiatives work rather well when institutions and culture as well as children and young people are given the opportunity to work as agents of development, so to say, and when they are empowered to take action and seek influence. It is especially the relation between children and parents in connection to the school and to cultural institutions where the ability to create integration related and social

changes (Vagnby, 2011:23). The final evaluation concluded that the projects contributed in more people being employed, that the residents in the vulnerable housing felt safer, and that they were satisfied with the increase of activities in the areas. Furthermore, it was assessed that the cooperation had most success when the distribution of responsibility and activities was clearly defined (Bech-Danielsen & Christensen, 2017:33).

The center-right government issued another ghetto package in 2010 titled “The Ghetto back to Society – a Confrontation with Parallel Societies in Denmark” (Danish Government, 2010). The strategy consisted of 32 initiatives and can, compared to the rather “soft” initiatives under Fogh Rasmussen, be characterized as the first strategy to hit hard down on vulnerable housing areas. The strategy was implemented under Lars Løkke Rasmussen and likewise the 2018 strategy, it is pointed out how Denmark has “freedom of diversity”, “equal opportunities for men and women”, “respect for the laws of the society” and “fundamental trust in that we want the best for each other” (Danish Government, 2010:5). The 32 initiatives are spread out on four different themes: 1) More attractive housing areas that break the isolation, 2) better balance in the composition of the residents, 3) strengthened efforts for children and young people, 4) away from passive support for public benefits, 5) combating social fraud and crime (Danish Government, 2010:5). The purpose and reason to why the strategy is important and needed following the government is, on the other hand, due to “areas of society where Danish laws does not have the same effect because Danish values are not bearing” and “high concentration of immigrants leading to people maintaining their close relations to the country they are from instead of the Danish society where they live” (Danish Government, 2010:5). The 2010 government defines ghettos as particularly vulnerable housing areas with 1.000 or more residents and where at least two of the three criteria below are met:

- The proportion of immigrants and descendants from non-Western countries exceeds 50 percent
- The proportion of residents aged between 18-64 with no connection to the labor market or education exceeds 40 percent as average over the past four years
- The number of people convicted of violating the Criminal Code, the Firearms Act or the law on euphoriant substances per 10.000 inhabitants exceeds 270 as average over the past four years (Danish Government, 2010:37).

On the basis of this, 29 housing areas were characterized as ghetto areas in 2010 and since then, a new list have been published every year. The ghetto lists are used to give the municipalities and housing organizations further incentives to work with efforts aiming against a more mixed

composition of residents which is the goal in many physical renovations (Bech-Danielsen & Christensen, 2017:34). Some of the initiatives in the ghetto plan related to strategic demolition of housing buildings, prioritizing resourceful residents moving into ghetto areas and mandatory daycare for bilingual children.

In 2013 the center-left government issued yet another ghetto strategy – this time titled “Vulnerable housing areas – the next steps” (Danish Government, 2013). The new strategy changed the criteria for the selection of ghetto areas with the argument that “the overall selection of housing areas must be more broad and involve several relevant dimension” (Danish Government, 2013:4). The new model is built on and complements the existing model. As the previous model, a housing area must still consist of at least 1.000 residents. The three criteria still stand and is now supplemented by two new criteria:

- The proportion of residents aged 30-59 without vocational education (including higher education) exceeds 60 percent of all residents in the same age group
- The average gross income of taxpayers over the age of 15 and above in the area is less than 60 percent of the average gross income of the same group in the region (Danish Government, 2013:5).

With the new criteria, three out of the five have to be met in order to be classified as a ghetto area. The municipalities are in the 2013 strategy put in the forefront of the initiatives and it is argued that the best results stems from municipalities launching solutions and coordination between the relevant actors.

The purpose with question 4 is not to assess whether the social issues within vulnerable housing areas has improved or worsened, but rather focuses on the way the discourse has changed, that is, how the representation of immigrants in Denmark has changed through the different “ghetto” policies. The analysis illustrated how throughout the 1990s, social issues in vulnerable housing areas were treated from a viewpoint where respect for social, cultural and religious differences was in focus. Residents were not considered at fault for the social issues, but it was rather acknowledged that failures in labor and housing policies had mainly created the issues. Problems related to immigrants and refugees were not considered uniform but instead considered a web of multiple problems that should not be treated in the same matter. The municipalities in coordination with the residents were responsible for lifting the community together and initiatives were solution-based. The early 2000s were characterized by an increase of the use of ‘ghettos’ and residents within these areas were blamed for creating the social issues related to mostly unemployment, low educational levels and crime.

During this time, the objective was that issues with integration could be solved through changing the housing policies. The focus was that by changing the composition of residents in the areas and evening out immigrants across the cities, issues with integration would simultaneously change because the immigrants would be exposed to more ethnic Danish citizens and vice versa. The 2010s were characterized by a harsher method of solving the issues within vulnerable housing areas compared to the policies of the 1990s. ‘Ghettos’ were not considered part of the Danish society but instead a place threatening Danish values and norms. Residents are no longer part of the ‘solution’ because the responsibility from the municipalities are also removed and replaced with governmental forces. As we see with the most current policy, ghetto criteria have remained almost the same except from minor changes, the government is still trying to solve integration issues through housing policies and residents are not considered part of the solution. The residents are not acknowledged as active participants but rather passive pieces of the puzzle.

Q4: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation of parallel societies? Where are the silences?

As established in question 2 and 3 of the analysis, the “problem” of parallel societies is represented to be due to *passive, unemployed and criminal* non-Western immigrants and descendants living in public housing areas considered ‘ghettos’ where they have created their own society away from Danish culture and values. In question 4, we seek to examine what is missing from this analysis and where specific knowledge or information have been silenced.

Firstly, as mentioned in question 1, the Ghetto Plan never defines what a ‘parallel society’ is. Let us briefly take a look at how the concept of ‘parallel societies’ is being used in the report, to then challenge the view by including two opposing discourses on the topic. The publisher behind the 2018 strategy, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior (dismantled in 2019, now Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior), has in their own internal report “Parallel Societies in Denmark” claimed the following: “a parallel society is physically or mentally isolated and follows own rules and norms without any significant contact to the Danish society and without the desire to become part of the Danish society” (Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior, 2018:1). This definition can therefore be argued to form the foundation of how we should understand parallel societies in Denmark and how to understand the way in which the concept is used in the Ghetto Plan. Keeping in mind that the task in question 4 is to challenge the deficiencies within the problem representation, one is tempted to ask how such a definition can function as a starting point for political action.

Professor of Cultural Encounters at Roskilde University in Denmark, Garbi Schmidt, states that the report identifies non-Western immigrants as the category from which the phenomenon of parallel societies can be studied and further argues that the use of non-Western immigrants neither is clear or useful in relation to disclosing the concept (Schmidt, 2018). She proposes, that if one truly seeks to examine the problem with parallel societies, it is necessary to begin the examination by looking at the population as a whole. Then questions and hypotheses should be established that can measure the degree of *mental or physical isolation*, an everyday life based on *own rules and norms* as well as the *contact* between groups of society, that would be considered essential and hence be characterized as significant (Schmidt, 2018). Contrary to this, the report (and also the Ghetto Plan) contains a unique look at non-Western immigrants and descendants without providing substantial empirical evidence that parallel societies, according to the definition, only exist among this specific group of people (Schmidt, 2018).

According to the report, the criteria used to designate ghetto areas (as defined in the introduction of this thesis) have a significant correlation with what could characterize people living in parallel societies (Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior, 2018:7). However, it also seems to be difficult for the report to clarify when people are part of parallel societies and who is: “it is not possible to make safe arguments as to how many people from non-Western backgrounds live in parallel societies and a clear definition of when one belongs to a parallel society does not exist” (Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior, 2018:8). So, based on this, while it is not possible to clarify when people belong to parallel societies, the binary of non-Western immigrants/Danes – as examined in question 3 – is still highlighted and used for further analysis. Both the report and the Ghetto Plan uses the binary for analysis without ever defending or explaining why exactly this angle of the issue is meaningful. Following Schmidt, it is simply not enough to claim that this angle of the issue “goes without saying” – and especially not from a critical point of view. Schmidt argues that “it makes little sense to highlight one specific group as particularly characterized by parallel societies without having it compared to other groups of society in a way that actually relates to the definition of parallel societies” (Schmidt, 2018). The government attempts to force a specific perception of non-Western immigrants as passive, criminal, unemployed and uneducated when it should not be necessary to state that this specific group of society of course represents both different countries but also different educational and employment levels. One can fittingly here ask if some groups of ethnic Danes fit under the definition of parallel societies? Following both the report and the Ghetto Plan, the focus on non-Western immigrants makes a clear statement that neither the definition of parallel

societies and the initiatives with the strategy is aimed at ethnic Danes. In the search for including opposing discourses on the subject of ‘parallel societies’ I was met with a rather large amount of articles claiming that such society does not exist in Denmark. Lector at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen, Brian Arly Jacobsen, argues that while the report on ‘parallel societies’ claim that such society exist in Denmark based on the definition provided earlier, that is not what is being examined. The definition relates to mental or physical isolation from the wider society, but that is not what is being examined – the report has not asked residents in vulnerable housing areas whether or not they are isolating themselves (Barse, 2018). Rather, if your child does not attend daycare or attends a school with a larger proportion of non-Western immigrants, this indicates that you may be living in a parallel society. Professor of Sociology at Roskilde University John Andersen argues that the report illustrates different kinds of inequality and social vulnerability, but that there exists no research that shows a correlation between that and being against the norms of the society (Barse, 2018). Marie Stender, anthropologist and researcher at the Danish Building Research Institute under Aalborg University does, however, believe that demolishing buildings as part of the Ghetto Plan can assist in preventing parallel societies from emerging. She argues, that problems within ‘ghettos’ are not solved by simply removing them, but that opening up areas can make space for new residents, new daycare institutions or new parks (Kaasgaard, 2018). She furthermore stresses the importance of not demolishing all ‘ghettos’, but that an individual assessment should take place. The different discourses on the topic of ‘parallel societies’ in Denmark – both from the government as well as professors does illustrate that the concept is difficult to understand in a Danish context.

If we ask the question of “what has been left unproblematic” it is fitting to look into the way in which the government makes use of the concept of ‘ghetto’. As previously mentioned, the government has put up different criteria that make up a ghetto. But following Wacquant, four elements – stigma, constraint, territorial confinement and institutional encasement – have to be in place in order to characterize an area as a ghetto. Starting from the latter, people who know just a little about public housing areas in Denmark also knows that institutional encasement does not exist. The residents within vulnerable housing areas have not created their own parallel institutions in relation to the wider society. It is true, that there may exist individual institutions (such as workplaces or places of worship) where the marginalized group are more prominent. However, it is not enough to make strong assumptions that complete parallel societies exist. The vulnerable housing areas in Denmark does have a large amount of stigma attached to it (being poor, having foreign background,

closely related to crime or knowing somehow who is, and if ethnic Dane, you are associated with being from a “low” social class). Relating to constraint, residents in the vulnerable housing areas are not forced to live there. However, the allocation of housing is very closely related to income. That is, where you live depends mostly on what you can afford in rent. In Denmark, the housing market is built in such a way, that if you are from the lower class of society and have difficulties entering the labor market it will undoubtedly affect your housing opportunities (Schultz Larsen in Berlingske, 2015). Examining territorial confinement, it is difficult to state whether or not it can be applied to the Danish context. The residents within the vulnerable housing areas are not per se forced to stay there, but one also needs to recognize the natural feeling of wanting to reside close to other people whom they may share a culture or a language. That is, when something is foreign – it may help to reside close to people who can assist in learning them the Danish system, the Danish culture and the Danish language. Characterizing vulnerable housing areas in Denmark, on the basis of this analysis, therefore seems as an attempt from the Danish government to further marginalize already stigmatized residents.

When looking for silences within the problem representation, it is also necessary to examine the academic studies behind the Ghetto Plan’s proposals, or rather the lack thereof. As mentioned previously, the Ghetto Plan does not define ‘parallel societies’ and does not mention the report on parallel societies either. However, in a question asked by Enhedslisten (a socialist party in Denmark) politician Søren Egge Rasmussen to the Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing about whether or not any scientific evidence that parallel societies exist in Denmark exists, he is referred to the report on parallel societies published by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior (Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing, 2018). It has already been established that the report itself finds it difficult to significantly claim how many people in Denmark live in parallel societies but then claims that “on the basis of register data, it is possible to establish different indicators for non-Western origins living relatively isolated from the surrounding community. Isolation can be a barrier to learning, understanding and accepting the Danish society and its values” (Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior, 2018:8). It is contradicting, that on the first hand, it is impossible to claim the number of people living in parallel societies, but, on the other hand, it is possible to establish several indicators from register data to identify non-Western immigrants living isolated from Danish society and thus living in parallel societies. These indicators include 1) living in a public housing areas where at least 25 percent of the residents have a non-Western background; 2) children between the age of 1-4 not attending daycare; 3) children between the age of 0-6 in day care where at least 25 percent have a non-Western background; 4) children and young people in primary schools where at

least 25 percent have a non-Western background; 5) children between the age of 12-14 convicted under the Criminal Code, etc. within a year; 6) young people between the age of 15-29 convicted under the Criminal Code, etc. within a year; 7) young people between the age of 16-29 who are inactive; and 8) young people and adults between the age of 22-59 who are prolonged passive (Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior, 2018:9). The report's analysis, on the basis of these indicators, then claims that about 11.000 families in Denmark are affected by at least three out of the eight indicators where additional 17.000 small families (1-3 members) are affected by two different indicators which results in about 28.000 families affected by different indicators (Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior, 2018:10-11). The report concludes that it is difficult to quantify exactly how many people with non-Western background live in parallel societies. In the Ghetto Plan, it is claimed that "an analysis by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior shows that 28,000 families from non-Western backgrounds can be said to live in parallel societies" (Danish Government, 2018a:7). Both the report on parallel societies and the Ghetto Plan operate with very few sources. The definition of parallel societies nor the chosen indicators are based on academic science or studies. Rather, the report sources "own calculations". Throughout the examination of both the report on parallel societies and the Ghetto Plan, it is evident that the binaries identified in question 2 continues and are constantly used to justify discriminating policies. The Danish Government operates from a viewpoint that if you are a non-Western immigrant or descendant, you are most likely also a criminal (or related to one), unemployed, uneducated and without the will to engage in the Danish society. The report on parallel societies does attempt to characterize non-Western immigrants and descendants as living their lives based on values and attitudes different from the surrounding society by referring to a 2017 citizen survey. The survey showed that 20 percent of citizens with non-Western background firmly believed that the man is the head of the family, compared to only 3 percent of citizens with Danish background (Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior, 2018:4). Additionally, the survey showed that 92 percent of ethnic female Danes, to a large extent, felt they had the same freedom as their male counterparts, which only was 53 percent of female immigrants and descendants (Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Interior, 2018:4). However, it is puzzling that the report only chooses to showcase a rather one-sided result of the citizen survey and for example not include that immigrants and descendants, to a much larger degree, would accept if their child married a person with a different ethnic background than their own (Ministry of Immigration and Integration, 2017:9) which must be argued contradicts the notion of "not wanting to be a part of the Danish society". This example was not chosen to paint a particular picture of ethnic minorities but

rather to challenge the choices made in the parallel society report. Picking out individual survey results does not result in sufficient answers.

Q5: What effects are produced by the representation of the “problem” of parallel societies?

In question 5 the task is to identify the effects of the specific problem representation so that it can be critically assessed. The examination will focus on three overlapping kinds of effects: discursive effects, subjectification effects and lived effects. The analysis of question 5 will conclude by discussing how some parts of the Ghetto Plan are harmful to specific groups and if it is possible to achieve the changes sought in the policy.

Discursive effects

Following Bacchi, discursive effects are created by limits imposed on what can be said or thought within specific problem representations (2009:69). As seen through the previous analytical questions, the Ghetto Plan consistently frames immigrants – with an emphasis on non-Western – descendants and refugees in such a way that makes it difficult to view or perceive them as other than passive, welfare dependent, lazy and without the will to contribute to the Danish society. When the dominant problem representation within the Ghetto Plan is how non-Western immigrants and descendants isolate themselves from the wider society and thus create parallel societies, it takes a critical eye to think otherwise. The discursive construction of the Ghetto Plan leaves non-Western immigrants and descendants as the problem because of certain lack of abilities and negative character flaws that the Plan imposes upon them. The negative discourse on the specific residents within the vulnerable housing areas makes it difficult for readers (and the wider society) to draw attention to other conditions (such as, the difficulties with being hired due to their foreign names (Lund & Pedersen, 2016) that inevitably favors some people over others.

Subjectification effects

The analysis of subjectification effects can be split into two parts. Firstly, looking into how we as people become specific kinds of subjects through the way policies create social relations and insert us within them. Here, one has to acknowledge that the way we perceive both ourselves and others, to a large extent, is an effect of how particular subjects are produced in public policies (Bacchi, 2009:16). Secondly, because problem representations often direct the “fault” at specific people or

groups, it should be examined if the attributions of responsibility are directed correctly and what kinds of effects that follow from particular attributions of responsibility (Bacchi, 2009:17).

Residents living in vulnerable housing areas and especially residents with non-Western background experience what Wacquant calls territorial stigmatization. Territorial stigmatization occurs when negative social dynamics are formed in the relations between housing areas labelled as ‘ghettos’ and the wider society. The result of this relationship will undoubtedly carry a feeling of personal indignity for the stigmatized group – in this case residents with non-Western background. By politically degrading the residents living in so-called ‘ghettos’ and thus creating parallel societies, the Ghetto Plan reproduces the issues it is trying to fix. If the problem with non-Western immigrants and descendants is that they may be unemployed, then how will discrimination based on one’s address help them obtain a job? Wacquant also makes the argument that discrimination based on one’s address will affect the job search in a negative manner and contribute to entrenching local unemployment (2008:74). Throughout the entire Plan, non-Western immigrants, descendants, refugees and in general residents living in ‘ghettos’ are characterized as overall *passive*. On top of the stigmas already attached to ethnic minority and poverty, the Ghetto Plan assist in reproducing the issues they are trying to solve. When the group of non-Western immigrants are put in opposition to the majority of the population by being characterized as being “outside” of the wider society because of the different negative attributes placed upon them, the opposite group – here, ethnic Danes/taxpayers/law abiding/employed residents etc. – are encouraged to think of the group as *lesser* than them and hence producing an *us vs. them* division. It can be argued that dividing practices are at work here. Because not only does the subjectification effects influence the way in which other people perceive us, but also they way in which we perceive each other. The examination of how the marginalized group perceive each other, in this case the residents living in the vulnerable housing areas, can be closely related to the examination of “who’s at fault”.

Firstly, as mentioned earlier, territorial stigmatization encourages strategies among the residents of mutual avoidance and distancing hence contributing to feeding mistrust. This process undermines the sense of unity that is necessary to engage in neighborhood building. The Ghetto Plan has selected several indicators of parallel societies relating to unemployment, crime, ethnic origin, education, income and etc. Because ethnic origin is prioritized within the Ghetto Plan and the ‘ghetto’ criteria explained in the introduction, residents who are employed, who has a stable income and never committed a crime are affected exactly the same way as all other residents in the area. This shows that the Ghetto Plan also affects people who do not live up to the stigma attached to ‘ghettos’.

Secondly, it has been established multiple times that the Ghetto Plan blames the residents within ‘ghettos’ for detaching themselves from the wider society and thus creating parallel societies. They are held responsible for producing and maintaining low employment, crime and low education. They are able to do this, because they draw parallels between human behavior and place of residence.

In February 2020 CEPOS (Center for Political Studies) published a report titled “Ghetto laws are not based on research”. The report concluded that yes, residents within ‘ghetto’ areas are lower educated, they do commit more crime compared to the rest of the population and they are more likely to receive public welfare benefits (CEPOS, 2020:1). However, it was not possible to significantly state whether, the social issues within these areas were caused because the areas itself promotes the negative results or because the areas attract particular kinds of people and groups. The Danish Ghetto Plan and related ghetto strategies are not built on academic studies or science but rather implicit assumptions about the connection between the physical appearance of residential buildings, population consumptions, and the extent of issues of low education, low employment and crime (CEPOS, 2020:8). If it is not possible to, with significance and certainty, determine that ‘ghettos’ produce social issues, then there are absolutely no grounds for the extreme measures taken out on residents within vulnerable housing areas who at this moment are being forced out of their homes. In addition, if the social issues are not produced and reproduces within the ‘ghetto’ then having residents relocate will only result in the problems also relocating. It is important to mention that CEPOS is a right-liberal oriented think tank. Their contribution to this matter should not be seen as scientific research, but rather a debate input. Nevertheless, their report and its findings are still considered relevant and important to relate to.

Lived effects

The lived effects of those affected by the initiatives within the Ghetto Plan are many. Firstly, it has previously been mentioned that the initiatives within the Ghetto Plan further marginalized already disadvantaged citizens. The very first initiative within the Plan, *changing the physical appearance of residential areas*, forces residents – in this case both residents with non-Western background as well as ethnic Danes – to move out of their homes. The initiative hits people who may have been living in the same home for over 20 or 30 years and are now taken away their rights to live where they want. The initiative was made because it is assumed that moving people from one place to another will solve the societal issues. Additionally, it was made to make the buildings look more appealing so that ethnic Danes and people with larger income would move in and help mixing the composition of

residents. Initiative 2.1, *stopping municipal allocation of benefit recipients to vulnerable housing*, can also be said to affect both non-Western immigrants and ethnic Danes in such a negative manner, because already disadvantages citizens are taken away the possibility to move into the residential areas – areas that, at the time they were created – was meant to accommodate exactly these citizens. Through this, the Ghetto Plan can therefore be said to worsen the ability for citizens who already have few financial resources in their access to housing.

The Ghetto Plan has from a legal aspect also had negative lived effect for the residents within ‘ghetto’ areas. The Ghetto Plan and related ghetto strategies are to a large extent violating the rule of law in Denmark and thus jeopardizing legal protection for the residents. The rule of law in Denmark is built on principles of being general and not aimed at specific people. The law is not retroactive and the law should at all means respect the autonomy of the individual. With the Ghetto Plan this has changed. The Criminal Code has been changed so that crimes in one area of a city is penalized much harder than in the rest of that city. The Ghetto Plan completely contradicts the notion of rule of law and it is heavily argued that the initiatives and strategies within the Plan are arbitrary and without evidential substance.

Now that the produced effects of the “problem” with parallel societies have been examined, it is important to reflect upon questions of what is going to change and what is going to stay the same with this specific representation of the problem. The Ghetto Plan hold non-Western immigrants responsible for settling down in ‘ghettos’ and for creating parallel societies in Denmark, resulting in further stigmatization of the group. The structural relations that produce the effect of ghettoization and thus ‘parallel societies’ as well as policies that may contribute to a continuation of *passiveness* are completely and deliberately overlooked. The changes that the Ghetto Plan seeks are unlikely to happen when the citizens are met with humiliation and degrading policies. This is and will always be difficult to change, because of the way meaning is created within our society. As human beings, we assert meaning to things through our social interaction with other people. For this case, the way we understand the discourse revolving immigrants in Denmark has to do with the way meaning has been socially constructed to us. Understandings of immigrants in Denmark as uneducated, unemployed, welfare dependent or poor are generally viewed as normal. This is a social construct which is constantly reproduced from both sides and may not be an accurate reflection of reality. The consequence of this is that the discourse will continue to be reproduced – unless a change in society as a whole will happen – and the gap between different groups will deepened, which the Ghetto Plan is a good example of.

Q6: How/where has this representation of the “problem” of parallel societies been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

In question 6 of the WPR approach we draw on the findings from question 3 and think about the means in which specific problem representation gain legitimacy and reach their target audience. A short examination of the role of the media will be provided along with identifying how the media may or may not support the specific problem representation. At last, we recognize that discourses are plural and at times very complex. It was therefore deemed important to also include opposing discourses and resistance to the Danish Ghetto Plan.

The problem representation of non-Western immigrants isolating themselves from the wider society and hence creating parallel societies has dominated Danish discourse in a form that is difficult to compare to other social issues. When we ask how this may be, we draw on the findings made in question 3. There, we saw how the discourse containing to immigrants and housing policies has been an important matter for Danish politician for a long period of time. Since the 1990s, Danish politicians have tried to tackle the problems in vulnerable housing areas by creating one ‘ghetto’ policy after the other. Social issues emerging in housing areas with a large proportion of non-Western immigrants shifted into ‘ghetto’ issues. This was in large due to fixing integration policies through housing policies which can be seen through the frequent use of ‘ghetto’s in the early 2000s. The concept was used to separate some vulnerable housing areas from others – the same way the government does today by characterizing the ‘ghettos’ as harsh. Today, it is evident that the Danish government still wish to solve integration issues (parallel societies) through housing policies by demolishing the homes of thousands of residents, so that resourceful residents can move in instead and thus change the composition of residents in the area.

The discussion of parallel societies in Denmark have resulted in a large number of articles, news segments and debates talking about the issues with immigrants and their role in the issues. Following Teun van Dijk, prominent scholar within the field of Critical Discourse Studies, the power of the media is both discursive and symbolic and has the ability to control public opinion to a large extent. van Dijk argues, that within ethnic minority affairs the control of public opinion is more widespread due to several facts relating to the white majority having limited daily experience with minorities, in public policy they have few alternative sources for information relating to minorities, and because ethnic minorities have almost no power to publicly defend themselves in biased reporting (van Dijk, 2000:37). It would be ignorant to believe that the power of not only a public government

policy but also the following natural media reports will affect and assist in creating a negative perception of the marginalized group. In several Danish news articles, residents living in so-called ‘ghettos’ have become subject to the discourse within the Ghetto Plan. Consider the following headlines: “all ghetto-parents are this year sending their 1-year-old in daycare” (JydskeVestkysten, 2019) or “ghetto-children have to attend daycare” (Ekstra Bladet, 2018). An article in Altinget changed their headline from “Should you force ghetto-children to attend daycare” to “Should you force children from ghettos to attend daycare” (Altinget, 2018). It appears as though the concept of ‘ghetto’ and the deep negative connotations goes unregistered. This again has to do with the way we through social interactions accept specific definitions as the norm. The media is playing a significant role in producing and reproducing these labels, hence reinforcing these representations of the ‘problem’.

Opposing discourses to the Danish Ghetto Plan has also emerged. In late May of 2020, while writing this thesis, a group of residents from Mjølnerparken in Copenhagen sued the Danish state. More specifically, the residents are suing the Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing on claims of discrimination and human rights violations (DR, 2020). The law suit centers around the criteria of having a residential area where the proportion of residents from non-Western countries exceeds 50 percent. According to the New York Times, all of the residents in the lawsuit are Danish citizens and represents different ethnic background and races (The New York Times, 2020). Additionally, lawyer of the plaintiffs Eddie Khawaja says the criteria “raises issues under Danish and EU law” and on behalf of the residents say that “the measures are alienating and risk creating a lesser class of Danes based on ethnicity and skin color” (The New York Times, 2020). The residents suing are all part of Almen Modstand – a resistance movement against the discriminatory ‘ghetto’ laws in Denmark – which was created as a response to the Ghetto Plan. They have since May of 2018 fought for resident’s rights and demanded concrete influence, the total stop of sale and speculation, a democratic process and lastly, that the ghetto list and its criteria are deleted (Almen Modstand, n/d).

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate how the Danish Ghetto Plan reproduces the problems with parallel societies that it seeks to solve. Through contributions to the study of ghettos by LÖiq Wacquant and the WPR approach by Carol Bacchi, the analysis has identified the dominant problem representation in the Danish 2018 Ghetto Plan as *non-Western immigrants and descendants living in*

'ghettos', *isolating themselves from the wider society* and thus, creating parallel societies. The analysis illustrated how non-Western immigrants and descendants constantly was put in opposition to ethnic Danes through binary pairs such as *passive/active*, *dependent/independent*, *non-Western immigrant/Danes*, etc. The so-called 'parallel societies' were similarly characterized in opposition to the Danish society through the binary pairs.

The critical analysis mostly focused on the lack of academic research behind both the Ghetto Plan and the relating report on parallel societies. When the Danish government makes use of concepts such as 'ghettos' and 'parallel societies' in a Danish context, without providing sufficient evidence to support their claims, the Plan comes off as rather arbitrary. Consequently, a *us vs. them* division is constantly fed and reproduced. To revert back to the problem formulation of this thesis, the government therefore reproduces the problems with parallel societies that it seeks to solve by reproducing and maintaining a negative discourse on not only immigrants in Denmark but also vulnerable housing areas. By repeatedly referring to vulnerable housing areas as 'ghettos' and the societies within these areas as parallel to the Danish, there may be a risk of further distancing the areas from the wider society. Additionally, further marginalization and stigmatization through negative discourse will spill over into the wider society, thus affecting the residents in their access to jobs and everyday life. Achieving positive and effective integration into the Danish society is therefore severely challenged, though this is the aim of the Danish 2018 Ghetto Plan.

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