

Betrayed by the system?

- A critical research on the political focus on repatriation of Syrian refugees living in Denmark



“I learned how to sing "Giv mig Danmark tilbage ligesom i de gamle dage" - I had to learn that song - teach my mouth to move with the same rhythm as the language, because it is hard and then he said "yeah she only knows good Danish because her husband taught her"”

- Naima, Syrian refugee in Denmark

(Interview with Naima 2021 min. 21:23-36:57)

Abstract

The current political focus on repatriation means that refugees are to be returned to their country of origin. With the most recent report from the Refugees' Appeals Board [Flygtningenævnet] on the situation in Damascus in Syria, it has been deemed that the region is safe for Syrian refugees to return to. However, a discrepancy occurs due to reports from international organizations and other countries that are of a different opinion. They argue, that only very little changes have taken place in Damascus so the overall stability in the region is not well enough to declare it safe to return to. This is followed up by personal narrations of torture, arrests and killings still taking place in Damascus.

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate how it is for Syrian refugees in Denmark to uphold their daily lives while experiencing uncertainty about their future safety and how it affects their motivation for taking part in the Danish society. In addition, what it means for their integration process, choices they make and actions they take.

To answer the research question, a qualitative method is implemented with personal in-depth interviews with Syrian refugees living in Denmark. Both preliminary and primary interviews have been conducted. The preliminary research covers interviews with Syrian refugees who are not at risk of being returned to Damascus as well as an interview with a social worker with years of experience with refugees. The primary research consists of four in-depth interviews with Syrian refugees who are at risk of being returned to Damascus. They describe their experiences with the Danish integration system, their meeting with the Danish society and their daily lives in Denmark.

In the analysis, Maslow is implemented to examine how the Syrian refugees prioritize certain needs and how motivation occurs and is affected by the uncertainty of an unknown future. In addition, theory of securitization is implemented in order to shed a light on societal processes and dynamics that affect the Syrian refugees in relation to motivation for investing in the Danish society.

The analysis demonstrates a complexity in up keeping a daily life and taking responsibility for ones own integration when experiencing uncertainty about ones future and safety. In addition, the analysis shows correlations between political statements in the media and how Syrian refugees are perceived by people in the Danish population. This in turn has an impact on the motivation to take part in society.

Conclusively, the Syrian refugees put an emphasis on the need for safety and they take actions in order to increase their feeling of safety as well as securing opportunities for a stable future. Furthermore, the political focus on repatriation and the rhetoric that follows contributes to demotivation for investing in society.

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1. Introduction

Problem field

In 2015 the temporary protection status §7.3 in the Alien Consolidation Act was implemented. It was introduced by the Minister of Justice at the time, Mette Frederiksen (Frederiksen 2014). The §7.3 status is developed for refugees who are fleeing their country of origin because of general conditions (Bendixen 2020). Thus, the §7.3 status is in opposition to the §7.2 status which is for refugees who are persecuted or in other ways individually affected by the situation in their country of origin (Bendixen 2020). The §7.3 status can be considered a weaker protection than the §7.2 status since it entails fewer rights for the refugees who are assigned the §7.3 status (Bendixen 2020). As described by Danish Refugee Council in relation to the §7.3 status, the government also *“changed the rules on revoking and denial of prolonging resident permits in such a way that it was made possible to revoke resident permits for the refugees with this status, if an improvement of the general conditions in the country of origin have happened, even if the conditions – despite improvements – continued to be serious and must be considered fragile and unpredictable. This is in opposition to the former practice – that follows the Refugee Convention – that “fundamental, stable and lasting changes in the country of origin need to be present” ”* (own translation) (Danish Refugee Council).

The changes in relation to rules and regulations within the field are currently affecting Syrian refugees with the temporary protection status §7.3 and even some with the §7.2 status as well according to Danish Refugee Council (DRC brochure). This is due to the fact that the Refugees’ Appeals Board [Flygtningenævnet] has deemed the general conditions in the Damascus province in Syria safe for refugees to return to. This entail that several of Syrian refugees with the status of §7.3 is currently receiving a letter stating that their residence permit are being revoked. This assessment is based on reports made by the Danish Immigration Service [Udlændingestyrelsen] among others (Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet 2020).

As a reaction to the assessment from the Refugees’ Appeals Board various personal stories from Syrian refugees living in Denmark as well as narrations from local Danes have filled the public debate both in the traditional media and on the social media. The debate is centering on the issue that refugees, who often are deeply involved and invested in the Danish society, have to leave

Denmark and return to Syria. This has evolved into an overall debate on whether or not Syria, more specifically the Damascus province, is safe to return to since it is still lead by Bashar al-Assad. The UNCHR has criticized and “[...] warned Denmark in 2021 that the new policy of temporary stays is harmful to the integration of refugees.” (European Commission 2021).

The question of the safety matter in the Damascus province is a question that divides both political parties and the Danish population. The decision on sending Syrians back to the Damascus province has met international critique both from the EU and the UN (Langensiepen et al. 2021, UNHCR 2021: 213, Condruk 2021).

The personal stories have resulted in an up-rise from the Danish community which has been explicit in the form of demonstrations where groups of people have gathered to show their disagreement with the political decisions and to show their support to the refugees who are experiencing the consequences from the changes revolving the §7.3 status. People within the local Danish communities have not only been demonstrating, but have also addressed specific politicians on the matter as well as they have done research of their own to investigate the justification of the authoritative decision (Debatten 2021: min. 33:33-35:25). The current situation appears to be complex with many different opinions and experiences represented. It is clear in the media that Syrian refugees are affected by the changes regarding the §7.3 status. But how are they affected and what does it mean for them on a personal level? What does it mean for their choices regarding their future as well as their daily lives? What does it mean for their process of integration while they are still in Denmark?

As I will show later on during the analysis of this dissertation, the stories about Syrian refugees are several and do in their own way through specific examples elucidate how some of the refugees are dealing with the fact that they are to be deported or moved to a deportation center, if their appeal does not move in favor of them staying in Denmark. The stories paint a picture of a complex life in Denmark when trying to integrate while being concerned about possible deportation. A complexity I wish to investigate further to get an understanding of what is at stake for this specific target group – Syrian refugees in Denmark.

In addition, I find it interesting and relevant to first and foremost understand some of the underlying processes regarding the decision of sending back people who have been offered protection by the Danish state in the first place when initially arriving to Denmark. Some relevant points and overall knowledge on this matter will be presented later on in the context chapter and will serve as a

preliminary insight to certain important events throughout time that has had an impact on the political scene and decisions today. However, this is not the main content of this dissertation. It will only serve the purpose of background knowledge in order to understand why and how certain attitudes or perspectives have developed over time. The most important aspect of this dissertation will be to zoom in on how the Syrian refugees navigate, feel and act in a situation where they are asked to leave Denmark or possibly will be asked to do so in the near future. I am interested in investigating how the current politics and the decision on sending back Syrian refugees affect the Syrian refugees themselves.

According to the Alien Consolidation Act §1, one is responsible for one's own integration (Alien Consolidation Act 2019: §1). Thereby, the responsibility is put on the refugees themselves making them accountable for their own integration. This makes it interesting and important to ask the refugees themselves about their situation since they are at the center of their own integration. Thus, the target group for this dissertation has been narrowed down to Syrian refugees seeing as they are people who currently are to be deported or face the risk of future deportation. The chosen target group will be elaborated later on in the chapter Delimitations under the subchapter Target group. For many years, integration has been perceived as the tool to make people – especially refugees – become part of society. The concept of integration has been part of former governments' strategies when it comes to refugees and them taking part in the local community as well as the overall Danish society (Statsministeriet 2012: 2). However, the newly adopted focus on repatriation, as part of the broad political acceptance of *The Paradigm Shift* [Paradigmeskiftet, own translation], can be perceived as a challenge to the concept of integration since the concepts seems to be each other's counterparts. Integration is in the Integration Act described as the process of becoming part of as well as contributing to society (IA§1). But repatriation is the concept of people having to return to their country of origin when possible. Thus, it can be boiled down to an understanding that refugees have to involve themselves in a society that they will later be forced to leave behind. This specific point entails reflections on the matter, some of which will be investigated further in this dissertation. The reflections are as follows: What kind of impact does it have when laws are changed and the people targeted by the laws have to leave the country? What lies behind such political decisions? What do these changes entail for the refugees themselves?

On the basis of the abovementioned reflections I have developed the following research question:

How does the Danish political focus on repatriation affect Syrian refugees in Denmark?
- And how does the focus on repatriation interact with the Syrian refugees' motivation for integration into the Danish society?

In order to answer the research questions it is necessary to know more about the political focus on repatriation what lies behind the decision of sending back Syrian refugees. It is necessary to have insights into the law and the processes leading up to the creation of the laws. For this reason some background information on the subject is needed which will be presented in the following chapter.

The political focus on immigration

Anne Mette Kjær (2020) writes about the change in the Danish developmental politics [*udviklingspolitik*, own translation] throughout the past three decades. She describes a shift in focus within developmental politics which can be explained as an effect of different decisions influenced by past events (Kjær, 2020: 136). She mentions events such as the tearing down of the wall in Germany in 1989, 9/11 in New York and the so called “refugee crisis” in Europe in 2015. According to Kjær (2020) these events influenced political decision-making in Denmark in different ways. She mentions how the tearing down of the wall in Berlin influenced and contributed to an overall more activist foreign policy at the time and she describes how 9/11 in New York contributed to an overall focus on security in the years to come. Lastly, she mentions how the so called “refugee crisis” has influenced decisions on preventing future mass influx of migration to Denmark (Kjær 2020: 125-145). Kjær’s point in this context is that these events all contribute to and “feed”, so to speak, different political decisions. All of which is further influenced by other “*dynamics in domestic policy*” (Kjær 2020: 136). This correlates with what Wæver, inspired by Hannah Arendts concept of “*Banality of evil*” (Arendt 1963), describes as “*Politics never takes the form of someone ‘capturing power’ and ‘producing’ an output from a plan – it is always about action that relies on others’ actions before it generates some results, [...]*” (Wæver 2011: 468). In this way the events as Kjær (2020) is presenting activate political actions, which again active further political actions an so on. Kjær (2020) shows that there seems to be a somewhat clear distinction in how Denmark financially aided other countries throughout the past decades, starting with a more generous approach around the 1990’s, but shifting to a more critical view on aiding other countries financially during the 2000’s. The latest tendency during the 2010’s is a common understanding that the financial aid should be used for avoiding migration to Denmark (Kjær 2020: 137) both locally and abroad - the latter as part of what other scholars has described as border externalization

(Casa-Cortes et al. 2015; Boswell 2003; Lemberg-Petersen 2012).

That past events affect political decision making is also visible in the development of the Danish immigration policies, where especially 9/11 showed a shift in world politics including a change in political rhetoric. An example of this is visible in the emerging focus on protecting the country through border security and the framing of refugees and migrants as a security threat to society in relation to Danish values and norms, as I will show later on. In addition to this, there is the public focus on refugees posing a terror threat to the country which has entailed a change in rhetoric towards refugees – latest case to show this is the one about the Syrian children and their mothers returning to Denmark from an ISIS-camp after several month of public debate (Nissen et al. 2021). All of this combined paints a picture of a shift towards a more restrictive focus within the Danish immigration politics as described by other scholars as well (Gammeltoft-Hansen in Bendixen: 2011:5). As described in the introduction, this has resulted in a tightening of laws on the subject as well as an overall strict rhetoric towards refugees and migrants (Uberg 2017, Condrup 2021, Henriksen 2019). Especially the Danish political right-wing has through the past three decades contributed to the emerging understandings and reproduction of immigrants and refugees as persons or outsiders who do not belong in Denmark, because they are posing a threat to society by staying and not upholding Danish values and customs (Rytter 2019: 683). The uprising of new nationalistic parties such as Nye Borgerlige and Stram Kurs underline the perception that there has been a shift in the broader Danish population towards a need for more restrictive immigration policy since it appears to be a matter of importance for people voting for the aforementioned parties. In addition to this, within recent years the two biggest parties – Venstre (Danish liberal party) and Socialdemokratiet (The Social Democrats) – have also engaged in the more restrictive rhetoric supporting a tightening of the field (The Economist 2019). This has resulted in several restrictions in Danish politics such as the so called “smykkelov”¹ [the jewelry law, own translation] (Dearden 2016), a change in the process of applying for family reunification² (Lov om ændring af udlændingeloven 2016), several reductions in financial support for refugees (Støjberg 2018/19, Haslund 2015) not to mention the *paradigm shift* as mentioned earlier. Since the *paradigm shift* has an important role to play in the understanding of the repatriation focus of the Syrian refugees, it will be explained further in the following section.

¹ The law makes it possible to confiscate jewelry or cash from refugees to pay for the asylum process.

² Changed from being possible after the first year to after three years (Law no. 102 from 3.2.2016) – see bibliography.

The paradigm shift

The *paradigm shift* is a way of referring to a collection of law changes that was implemented in February 2019 by the former liberal government with Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen with support from a majority of the parliament (Støjberg 2018/19). However, it was initially suggested by the nationalist political party, Dansk Folkeparti (Danish Peoples' Party, own translation). The *paradigm shift* and the legal changes it entailed are a continuation of previous laws passed in 2015 on temporary residency by Minister of Justice at the time, Mette Frederiksen from the democratic government at the time, just as we currently see the present democratic government further continuing the strict immigration focus built on the *paradigm shift* implemented by the liberal government in 2019.

Overall the *paradigm shift* consists of measures put in place to hinder permanent citizenship of people not perceived as ethnically Danish, however this might be defined. It could also be described as follows which builds on a quote from a member of the Danish Peoples' Party - Peter Skårup: "*It means that we are turning the whole policy in this area from what it focuses on today – integration, to focus on repatriation instead.*" (Ingvorsen 2019).

The law changes were effectuated 1st of March 2019³ and consist of changes in several different laws here among Udlændingeloven [The Aliens Consolidation Act], Integrationsloven [The Law on Integration, own translation], Lov om aktiv socialpolitik [The Law on Active Social Politics, own translation], Repatrieringsloven [The Law on Repatriation, own translation] and den kommunale og regionale valglov [the Law on Municipal and Regional Elections, own translation] (Støjberg 2018/19).

The changes can be considered as a game changer – especially to the new focus on temporality in relation to the Alien Consolidation Acts residence permits for refugees, as previously described. The main rule in relation to the residence permits for refugees and family reunifications is that the permits should be revoked or at least not prolonged whenever possible (unless it is in direct violation of international commitments) (Ingvorsen 2019). Further the responsible minister's power was increased by being able to put a limit to the family reunifications if decided necessary (Ingvorsen 2019). Also, the name of the financial support to refugees were changed from *integration program and integration support* [integrationsprogram og integrationsydelse, own translation] to *self-sufficiency and repatriation support and transitional support* [selvforsørgelses- og hjemrejseydelse and overgangsydelse, own translation] hereby making it explicit that the

³ Some of the changes has been implemented ongoing and therefor after the 1st of March.

authorities are obligated to send the refugees home when possible. In addition, it is made explicit that the refugees have to support themselves as long as they are in Denmark. At the same time the amount of financial support given was reduced and the municipal responsibility of providing permanent housing was changed to providing temporary housing only. Also the so called “possibility of voluntarily repatriation”⁴ was strengthened with a further focus on communicating this to the refugees (Ingvorsen 2019).

Civil up-rise

During the beginning of 2021 the decision and effectuation of the repatriation of Syrian refugees to the Damascus province seemingly had an effect on certain groups within the Danish society seeing as an up rise began from local citizens claiming that the affected refugees should not be sent back. Several digital proposals were written by the civil society and shared by the citizens to achieve the goal of 50.000 signatures making it obligatory for the political parties to discuss it in the parliament (Agerup et al. 2021, Stendahl et al. 2021, Jakobsen 2021). In relation to this, a filter for profile pictures on Facebook was created with the statement “STOP SENDING HOME THE SYRIAN REFUGEES” along with several live demonstrations to illustrate support to the refugees affected. Local NGO departments also joined the cause creating campaigns against the decision on sending back Syrian refugees to the Damascus province as well as posting money in demonstrations to support the refugees and the Danes supporting the cause (Amnesty International Denmark 2021). Among people showing their support to the Syrian refugees a perception of Damascus as being unsafe is uttered. This perception is in opposition to what the Danish authorities have assessed and decided.

2. Research Method

Data collecting

This dissertation is based on a variety of collected data. Some serve as preliminary data, other serve as primary data. Qualitative material serves as the main data for the analysis.

First and foremost desk research has been applied to gather background information on the subject of repatriation, integration, inclusion, policies and research relating to refugees and immigrants. The desk research is supported by my own experience related to working with and studying refugees and migrants on and off during the past 10 years. Through studies, internships and working

⁴ When refugees are offered an amount of money to leave Denmark.

experience as an employee at two asylum centers, I have gained a base of knowledge on and an increasing interest in the subject which combined has been further developed with this dissertation. All of this together with three virtual, qualitative interviews functions as the preliminary research for the project. The preliminary interviews were conducted to get information on refugees' life in Denmark and thereby narrowing down a focus for further research. The preliminary interviews do not answer the research question, but contribute to nuancing the overall picture of being affected by repatriation.

Furthermore, four qualitative interviews have been conducted in order to get a deeper and more elaborated insight into the identified subjects and themes of interest, primarily relating to the politically focus towards the returning of Syrian refugees and how this affects the people interviewed. These interviews function as the primary data for answering the research question and will be at the center of the analysis.

The informants

As mentioned earlier, this dissertation is based on different data here among seven conducted interviews – three preliminary and four in-depth with a more specific focus. For the sake of clarity the informants are described as groups. The preliminary interviews represent the first and second group of informants. The in-depth interviews represent the third group of informants. This section will shortly introduce the informants and briefly account for their relevance in participating in this project. This is done with the purpose of creating transparency in order to provide an understanding of the demographics within the chosen target group as well as making it clear what the informants' contributions offer to the analysis.

In the following each of the informants are given alias' in order to secure their anonymity as will be elaborated in the paragraph about ethical considerations.

The first group of informants was found among my acquaintances. In the end of each interview a question would always be "Can you recommend someone else I can talk to about this topic?". This often led to the informant recommending another informant. Due to this personal recommendation a basic trust seemed to be present from the beginning of the contact with each informant. It seemed as if the personal recommendation contributed to endorsing both the project and me as a researcher and in addition making the intent with the project clear. This has presumably resulted in good conditions for in-depth data as described by (Spradley 1979: 44).

The persons interviewed can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of two refugees, Abdel and Hamza, which both fled from Syria even though Syria is not their country of origin. They respectively have a Palestinian and Kurdish background which means that in spite of their refugee status from Syria they are not directly affected by the current focus on returns since they are to be considered stateless refugees. This influences their situations since they do not have a nation to be sent back to. Abdel and Hamza were interviewed in the initial part of the project as preliminary research prior to the before mentioned narrowing of the target group. They were interviewed to gather information and to find out what a possible focus for this dissertation could be. Abdel contributed with insights by telling his own story and opinions and gave information about his personal experiences in relation to becoming a part of the Danish society when being different than the people born and raised in Denmark. Furthermore, he put forward some points about the municipal system that facilitated his process of becoming part of the Danish society. He mentions different challenges that became clear to him and talks about different processes of inclusion and exclusion.

Hamza contributed with insights on how he had become a part of the Danish society elaborating on insights on a skeptical view or attitude that he and his friends met in the meeting with the Danish society and what this resulted in subsequently. Points will be elaborated in the analysis later on where relevant quotes will be used in order to emphasize and back points from other primary informants, however on a general level.

The second group consists of only one person, Paula, and was also conducted in the preliminary research phase of the project. Paula is a case manager at a Danish municipality and has several years of experience in the field of managing refugees' cases. She contributed with knowledge on cases, proceedings, practices and organizational culture within the municipality. In addition, she gives examples of consequences for refugees as a result of the political focus on repatriation.

The third group consists of the actual target group; the Syrian refugees affected directly or indirectly by the current political focus on repatriation. The informants consist of three women (Lareen, Nimra, Niar) and one man (Aden). Their ages are between 33 and 45 years old. They live in different parts of Denmark ranging from Copenhagen, Fyn and North Zealand.

Lareen works at a factory, Naima currently works as a test-person at a Covid-19 center and has an educational background in International Law, Haya has experience as a medicinal laboratory technologist from Syria but works with healthcare as a *social and sundhedshjælper*. Aden is part of

an organization that council and guide refugees in relation to their cases with the Danish immigration.

Some of the informants see themselves as religious, but in different ways and to different extends, others do not consider themselves religious. Thus, the religious aspect and perspective has not been assigned any importance or focus in this specific dissertation since it does not appear as a common factor among the informants and they do not explicitly mention it as an explicit aspect in relation to the research question.

The informants appear different in relation to age, background and occupation thus representing a relatively diverse target group. Some have crosscutting interests and some have experienced similar situations in their daily lives in Denmark. A common denominator is that they have the same ethnic background and therefore all directly or indirectly experience consequences of the current political rhetoric and perspective.

Interview guide

The interview guide is created as a semi-structured instrument, a form of checklist for which questions needed to be touched upon in order to get sufficient relevant information for answering the research question. However, the interviews themselves (especially the first ones functioning as preliminary research) were conducted as unstructured conversations starting with some quantitative questions in relation to background information about the interviewee and then moving forward with grand-tour questions as described by (Spradley 1979: 49) in order to get the interviewees to talk as much and freely as possible about their life and experiences. This approach was implemented in order to create a space for trustful conversation with a smooth flow not being disturbed or disrupted by the interview guide. In practice it meant that one relevant answer emerged in extension of the former enriching the collection of information necessary to answer the research question. During the end of the interview I consulted the interview guide and asked the few remaining questions – if any were left – that had not been touched upon already.

3. Ethical considerations

In this section various ethical considerations will be presented. Since the target group consists mainly of people in vulnerable situations due to the fact that they are at risk of being deported, ethical considerations are necessary in relation to protecting their personal information and their answers in the interviews. Furthermore, it is necessary with reflections on how to not add to their vulnerability or creating potential re-trauma in relation to their past experience with fleeing.

Protection of data

Conducting qualitative interviews entails some necessary safety considerations. As an example the virtual interview must be carried out on a platform where the interviewee's information is safe and not in danger of being used by a third party. For this reason I chose to do the interviews through the two-way encrypted application, Signal. This ensures that no one has access to the information as it is seen with other platforms such as Skype, Facebook-messenger, Zoom or Teams.

Also the safe storage of the data after the interview has been important. The data was kept on a computer containing anti-virus programs and with a need of a password for entering. Later the data was kept on an external hard drive physically placed in a small safe, all to ensure the data from third parties.

Anonymity

Even though most of the informants did not mind publication with their full name, the choice of concealing their identity has been made to ensure that information given is not used against any of the participants at any time in relation to their current or future asylum cases. In light of the current focus on repatriating Syrian refugees it has been found important that the informants' participation in this dissertation is not something that in any way will influence their cases in any form - especially negatively – hence the anonymity. It is impossible to predict what happens in the future and therefore it might seem harmless to contribute to this kind of research in the present, but there is a risk that it could have an unfortunate impact later on that could not be foreseen. Thus, the dissertation will present the informants with assigned aliases instead of their real names.

Professional boundaries

The informants have fled their countries for various reasons, but mainly with the purpose of getting to a place where they can be safe. They have experienced a lot during their journeys, but seeing as the purpose with the dissertation is to get an insight into their experiences in Denmark as well as the impact of being at risk of deportation, it has been deemed irrelevant to ask about their past journeys. In addition, there is a potential risk of re-traumatizing if informants start talking about past experiences in relation to their journey. Thus, in order to protect the informants' mental health, it has been deemed important not to dig into what happened before they came to Denmark. Especially because I, as a researcher, do not have the psychological competences to help the informants back from unpleasant thoughts and feelings should they appear during the interview.

Furthermore, every informant has been presented the opportunity to pull back their consent. This is a standing possibility meaning that they can take back their consent at any time during the process.

In addition, throughout every interview it has been pointed out that they are not in any way obliged to answer specific questions if they do not feel comfortable with it. Then they have the opportunity to go on to the next question instead or completely terminate the interview.

Also, several informants have mentioned that certain points or topics should preferably not be used in the dissertation. Thus, they have been granted the chance to speak “off the record” so that specific information is not being implemented in the dissertation.

Help my friend!

As preparation for the interview with Haya, she was texted a short description of the project and a question if she wanted to help with the project. She answered yes, but immediately texted back that one of her friends was in bigger need of help than herself seeing as the friend was about to be send back to Syria. Haya implied that it would be better to help her friend instead. Possibly because of a misunderstanding of the original text sent from me to her, she thought that I was a journalist, a lawyer or something third that could help her friend with her current case. Unfortunately, I were to let her know that I would really be happy to help if I could, but that I was not in a position to do so since I was only looking for information and help for data collecting of this dissertation. This was an important lesson learned since all future messages to possible informants about the project was triple checked and proofread by a third person to avoid similar situations and misunderstandings and thereby ensuring not to aspire to hope with solving current asylum cases.

Trust

Before the actual interviews a basic contact between the informant and me has taken place in order to establish a basic trust as well as a common understanding of the purpose with the interview.

Texting and/or telephone calls have been made with the informants beforehand with a presentation of the project as well as me as a researcher. However, in times of pandemic with national restrictions it is difficult to get the same relation as would be the case with face-to-face contact, thus creating a space for misunderstandings. This will be elaborated in the chapter about limitations.

The interviews have started with a basic small talk with the purpose of making the informants feel comfortable. In addition to provide the opportunity to terminate the interview before it starts if the informants regret.

Limitations

Covid-19

It is almost inevitable not to be affected by a global pandemic in one way or another when gathering data, meeting with your project counselor, interviewing people, sparring with student colleagues etc. In the following I will describe some of the choices made to clarify the underlying thoughts as well as specific ethical dilemmas, thereby making the research process more transparent.

It has been challenging to conduct qualitative interviews in a physical presence in time of a pandemic due to the assembly ban encouraging everyone not to meet with other people than the closest family or friends. Hence, the interviews have been conducted virtually. The interviews were carried out in my own home through the connection via Signal, making it more convenient for both me and presumably the informant since there was no need for transport to a meeting point (Lo Lacono 2016: 7). A virtually conducted interview can contribute to a less formal setting since the distance between the interviewee and the interviewer is a physical screen possibly making it less nerve wrecking for persons that do not know each other since you can “hide” behind the screen (Lo Lacono 2016: 11). On the other hand, being placed far from each other only able to see a small part of the person sitting across from you, can have the unfortunate effect that specific points or subtle signs and meanings can get “lost in translation” due to a bad internet connection making it difficult to read body language and micro-expressions (Lo Lacono 2016: 12).

Finding informants

As part of this dissertation it has been challenging to find relevant informants. As a beginning my own network has been screened for relevant candidates and contact has been made. This created a platform for further contact to an extended network. The Covid-19 pandemic made it impossible to physically reach out to relevant informants in local places. Thus, contact had to be made via phone, mail or other digital means.

Furthermore, the current situation regarding repatriation of Syrian refugees made the timing fortunate for the focus of this dissertation seeing as the media began directing their attention towards the matter. This made it easier to find informants since the subject suddenly became relevant as part of the public debate presumably making it more interesting for informants to talk to a student writing a dissertation on the subject. Thereby, it was possible to get in contact with people who were affected by the ongoing repatriation. However, it also meant that certain people were busy fighting for their chance to stay in Denmark thereby being unable to help with this

dissertation. In conclusion, the current situation both opened and closed doors to relevant informants.

Limitations during interviews

Since I do not speak or understand Arabic I had to choose English or Danish speakers for the interviews, as I did not want to use an interpreter seeing as data could be lost in the translation process. Also due to ethical considerations since a third party should not have access to potentially personal or vulnerable insight to the informants' lives in a time where people risk being deported. I am aware that this choice automatically had an impact on my target group since the interviewees can be considered to be resourceful and educated compared to if I had talked to other Syrians. This was a deliberate choice so the data would be more precise and reliable, but at the same time it hinders a broad selection of data from other levels of society.

When challenges occurred during transcribing in relation to hearing what was said (could be due to lacks in the internet connection or a difficult accent, noise in the background etc.) I only transcribed what I was sure about hearing, thereby minimizing the risk of misunderstandings and misinterpretation of quotes which could result in wrong analysis. This meant that some of the data was put aside since I could not be sure that I understood certain sentences rightfully. I have chosen only to use sentences that I am sure of the meaning of.

Another challenge emerged during one of the interviews with Lareen. The interview with her was completed in two parts at two different times. During the first part she was on a public train where a lot of noise interfered with the clarity of the sound. In addition, the other passengers on the train could overhear the conversation which created a dilemma in relation to sensitive information shared publicly in a train. However, Lareen herself was okay with this and wished to continue the interview. Although Lareen insisted on completing the interview during the train ride, it might have had an influence on her answers since she could choose to give less compromising answers when the other passengers were listening. At the beginning of the conversation, I made it clear to Lareen that I might ask sensitive questions that required sensitive answers that she would maybe prefer that no one else should hear and I suggested that we could do it at another more convenient time. As mentioned, it was okay for her and she wished to continue with the interview.

The noise from the train and the other passengers made it necessary to ask Lareen to repeat some answers thereby interrupting her flow risking to loose important data that she was about to give.

Due to this and due to the lack of battery on Lareen's phone, we agreed on continuing the rest of the

interview another day. To ensure correct data after an interview with a great deal of noise and interruptions, I chose to write down as much as possible from my memory right after the interview to mitigate challenges with sound later on when transcribing.

Delimitations

Wording

Throughout the interview with the first three informants, Abdel, Hamza and Paula, there was an ongoing talk about the political focus on sending refugees back to their country of origin during which the Danish word *hjemsendelse* was used several times. *Hjemsendelse* translates directly into home-sending. However, it came to my attention that this is an unfortunate wording since it contributes to reproducing a discourse or a framing that the informant is not at home here in Denmark. This connotation allows very limited or no room at all for the informant to consider Denmark as home. Instead, it would have been more accurate and neutral to use the word *tilbagesendelse* which directly translates to back-sending or sending back. An awareness of this important point became clear during the transcription of Hamza's interview where Hamza himself uses the word back-sending instead of home-sending, thereby, the most accurate wording applying to Hamza and his situation appears to be *tilbagesendelse*. It would have been beneficial to have picked up on it in the actual interview situation, because by not being aware of this specific wording, thus not adapting the language during the interview, a discourse was unfortunately automatically reproduced implicitly stating that Denmark is not his home. This was not intended and it became a focus point in later interviews and corrected in the following interview guides.

Target Group

This dissertation aims to investigate how the political focus on repatriation affect Syrian refugees in Denmark. Syrian refugees have been chosen as the central target group for two reasons. Firstly, a specific nationality helps narrowing down the project so it becomes more reliable seeing as the participants become more comparable due to national similarities. However, being from the same country does not make people alike; other factors such as gender, education, etc. also have their relevance, but nationality is none the less still a common denominator to an extent.

Secondly, there is currently a great media focus on Syrian refugees being returned to the province of Damascus because of the Danish authorities' decision that this province is now safe to return to. However, more and more Syrian refugees in Denmark are stepping forward telling their story about why it is not safe for them to return to Damascus in spite of the Danish authorities assessment of the region.

Only one of the informants, Lareen, had at the time of the first interview received a letter from the authorities that she had to leave the country and travel back to the Damascus region. This made it possible for me to hear how Lareen is directly affected by the political decision in a very tangible manner.

4. Theoretical framework

In the following chapter I will present the theoretical framework for this dissertation. It consists of two theories respectively Maslow's *hierarchy of needs* (Maslow 1954) and Wæver's *securitization theory* (Wæver 1993).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Abraham Maslow has coined the hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1943) which, in his own words, is "*A Theory of Human Motivation*" (Maslow 1943: 370). The theory consists of a hierarchy with five overall needs to be fulfilled if a person, or an "organism" as Maslow calls it, is to be fully satisfied (Maslow 1943: 370). However, achieving full satisfaction appears impossible since one will always strive to achieve more – especially when it comes to self-actualization (Maslow 1954: 46).

Motivation emerges in the attempt to satisfy certain needs (Maslow 1954: 37). Motivation is to be perceived as an ongoing dynamic process which is ever changing, because a person will always feel both comfort and discomfort within certain needs (Maslow 1954: 57) and therefore a person is motivated to strive for more or for something different (Maslow 1954: 53). Maslow (1943) describes a tendency towards one need having to be fulfilled before a person can and will try to move up to or obtain the next need in the hierarchy (Maslow 1943: 375). This is to be understood as if a person will put its energy and focus into fulfilling needs that are perceived as relevant or important. If certain needs are experienced as unfulfilled the person will find itself in a state of continuously trying to satisfy the current missing need (Køppe 2011: 480).

The first group of needs I will touch upon is the physiological needs. These needs represent what is necessary for the body to function and to be in balance or, as Maslow describes it, to be "homeostatic" (Maslow 1943: 372). Homeostasis is the body's self-regulating mechanism which makes sure that the body gets what it needs. It is the ability to feel hunger and thirst (Maslow 1943: 372), but vitamins or things alike can also be added to the physiological needs (Køppe 2011: 480). According to the hierarchy of needs, when the physiological needs are generally met one might tend to seek to fulfil the next set of needs – the safety needs. These needs are met if a person does not feel endangered by anything such as "*wild animals, extremes of temperature, criminals, assaults*

and murder, tyranny, etc.” (Maslow 1943: 379), but in general feel safe. When finding oneself in a secure situation with limited threats and concerns one has the potential of generally feeling safe, thereby having the safety needs fulfilled. This is typically – on a general level – the case in societies like Denmark with a high level of social security and high degree of order (Maslow 1954: 41). Feeling safe and secure might inspire the next set of needs to be met – the love needs (Maslow 1943: 180). These needs are described as “*the love and affection and belongingness needs*” (Maslow 1943: 180). They are connected to being in meaningful relations and entail both to love and be loved by others (Maslow 1943: 181). These needs apply different levels, thus accounting for family relations, sexual relations, societal relations covering for instance colleagues, neighbors or other social groups (Maslow 1954: 44).

In the fourth level of the hierarchy we find the esteem needs. Maslow divides these needs into two groups. The first group consists of “[...] *the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for confidence in the face of the world and for independence and freedom.*” (Maslow 1943: 381). The other group covers “... *the desire for reputation or prestige (defining it as respect or esteem from other people), recognition, attention, importance or appreciation*” (Maslow 1943: 382).

At the top of the hierarchy Maslow puts the need for self-actualization. This need is met when a person has “*become everything that one is capable of becoming*” (Maslow 1943: 382) or, said in another way, when one's full potential is met.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is applied in this project to understand how the Syrian refugees navigate and manage certain needs in their daily lives – how they strive to satisfy certain needs that are important to them influence choices they make and actions they take. The theory can contribute to understanding how motivation arises and how it might be challenged in a complex situation where a lot is at stake and things can suddenly be turned upside down.

Securitization theory

Securitization is a security theory coined by Ole Wæver (Wæver 1993). It entails taking a step back and looking at security from a different perspective than the more classical perceptions of security which often stem from a military point of view. This military standpoint of the term typically includes “*assumptions that security is a goal to be maximized*” (Wæver 1993: 8). By abandoning such assumptions and instead widening or turning the perception of security upside down one can find “*potentially more useful ways of conceptualize the problems being addressed*” (Wæver 1993: 8). The theory of securitization built on the understanding that certain situations are presented as a

problem by a given actor through speech acts. It will in many cases have a political focus or a political motivation and will typically be presented as a problem to be addressed in an urgent manner. Thus, the actor seeks to legitimize the use of extraordinary measures to deal with the allegedly existential threat presented (Wæver in YouTube video 2014: min. 3:18). The theory of securitization especially seeks to understand the underlying processes to the presentation of a problem and why it is framed as an existential threat. It does so by asking counter questions such as – “*why do you call this a security issue? What are the implications of doing this – or if not doing it?*” (Wæver 1999 in Wæver 2011: 468). In a video on YouTube from 2014 Wæver describes the theory as follows in his own words:

“*Securitization is a situation where a referent object depicts an existential threat and [the securitizing actor ed.] justifies to the relevant audience the use of extraordinary measures [...]*”. (Wæver in YouTube video 2014: min. 3:18)

In the quote, some of the key concepts in the theory are mentioned. The first is the *referent object* – what must be protected. An example of a referent object could be the earth in the light of carbon emissions into the atmosphere creating climate changes. In this case, the referent object is the earth which must be saved for the survival of mankind, thereby legitimizing potential extraordinary measures to be applied. Other, more typically, examples of referent objects are the state and the society. Here, Wæver (1993) and his colleagues distinguish between state security and societal security. Both terms make it a point to upkeep the state or the society, but “*State security has sovereignty as its ultimate criterion, and societal security has identity.*” (Wæver 1993: 15).

The second key concept is the *existential threat* itself. The threat must, as the key concept imply in its own wording, be of existential character (or at least framed that way) since this is a necessity if the audience or the receivers of the message if one will, are to accept it. By making the threat an existential matter, an actor can claim priority and urgency on the handling of the threat which legitimizes extraordinary measures (Wæver in YouTube video 2014: min. 6:40). All this leads to the third key concept – the *audience*. It is important that the audience accepts the existential threat in order for the threat to gain relevance and attention. Wæver describes how the audience was only of little importance previously in earlier versions of the theory, but has now developed into maybe one of the most important aspects (Wæver in YouTube video 2014: min. 4:05). This is because the audience has the power so to speak to make an existential threat relevant or not. If the audience does not find the existential threat relevant or of particular importance, they can doom the threat to

be non-existing or not relevant, thereby making extraordinary measures irrelevant so that they cannot be legitimized (Wæver in YouTube video 2014: min. 5:14).

Lastly, a fourth concept is the *securitizing actor*. A securitizing actor is the person, the group or the organization that puts forward a point that something is an existential threat (Wæver in YouTube video 2014: min. 4:05). Following the previously mentioned example of saving the earth from climate changes, a securitizing actor could be Greenpeace or other similar organizations stating that the climate changes are an existential threat that has to be dealt with now thereby justifying extraordinary measures in form of illegal protests etc. Another example could be the Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, during the covid-19 pandemic stating that all Danish mink had to be terminated to hinder the spread of covid-19 mutations in society. In this case, Mette Frederiksen is the securitizing actor, Covid-19 is the existential threat and the termination of mink is an extraordinary measure taken to protect the Danish population who in praxis become the audience.

The theory of securitization will be applied in the second part of the analysis chapter. The theory contributes to explaining how the Syrian refugees are affected by the societal context they are a part of and what implications it might have for their motivation to integrate or to contribute to the Danish society. The political focus on repatriation is part of the societal context which the Syrian refugees take part in and the target group for this dissertation is in direct relation to repatriation seeing as they risk deportation. Securitization presents an explanation to some of the dynamics revolving repatriation and the people affected by it which will all be elaborated in the second chapter of the analysis.

5. Analysis

This chapter covers the analysis of the dissertation. The analysis will be based on the conducted interviews from which specific examples in the form of quotes from the Syrian refugees themselves will be implemented and unfolded. The quotes will be analyzed through Maslow's motivational theory (Maslow 1943) and Wæver's securitization theory (Wæver: 1993). Maslow has been deemed relevant since the informants talked about various needs. Maslow can provide an understanding of why the Syrian refugees put their attention towards specific needs that they experience as important for their daily life. In addition how their level of motivation impacts their actions and the choices they make in regards to themselves as well as the societal context they take part in. Securitization is included in the analysis to help explain how societal processes, such as repatriation, affect the Syrian refugees' motivation. Thus, securitization functions as an explanation to why acts are taken

and choices made by the informants. This entails a two-level analysis where I acknowledge the Syrian refugees as carriers of their own internal motivation, and at the same time taking into account that their motivation is affected by the societal context they are a part of.

In need of needs?

According to Maslow a person's motivation occurs in the attempt to satisfy certain needs. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Maslow (1943) describes five different needs which people strive to satisfy. This attempt to satisfy needs promotes motivation. The needs are *the physiological needs, the safety needs, the love needs, the esteem needs and the need for self-actualization* (Maslow 1943: 372). The needs are arranged in a hierarchy in the sense that if some needs are not satisfied, then they require focus and attention (Maslow 1954: 51). This would be the case with hunger for instance. If a person feels hunger when experiencing famine, that person puts his attention towards finding food and water in the attempt to satisfy his need. Thus, the person would experience difficulty focusing on other needs such as social interaction or self-actualizing (Maslow 1954: 37). This would also be the case in a state of war (Maslow 1954: 37) where one is fleeing to get to safety which is applicable for the Syrian refugees in this dissertation. They fled an insecure and unstable situation in Syria in order to improve their need for safety, but now that they are in Denmark, a picture is painted that they still feel unsafe – just in a different way and because of different things than in Syria. Haya underlines this point by making the following statement where she is referring to Maslow. She is talking about how she herself and people she knows experience an uncertainty in their living situation in Denmark and how it in some cases has consequences for the mental health: "... many have become mentally ill and are in treatment for it, all because of the uncertainty here in Denmark." (Interview with Haya 2021: min.13:12-13:20). When becoming mentally ill and needing treatment it can take away the energy and the focus on other needs (Maslow 1954: 37). Thus, one might be challenged in looking for a job and keeping it, in investing fully in family relations or maybe even in taking care of oneself. The latter is highlighted by the following quote from Haya:

"[...] the problem is that when you are told that you can go to a nice place, but after two years you have to go back to a horrible place, then you cannot live and be happy when you have only one year or so left in the nice place. You get scared when you go to sleep and you wake up thinking that it is time to leave or close to leaving time, where you then have to return to the horrible."

(Interview with Haya 2021: min. 0:00,0 - 42:35,7)

Haya emphasizes that having mental distress about being returned to a country of war makes it difficult to take proper care of one self. It affects the sleep and the well-being. She becomes unhappy when worrying about having to leave a safe place and return to an unsafe situation. She follows up by describing her own needs further:

“If I were to analyze my own needs then I lack the social needs, we lack safety while we are in Denmark.” (Interview with Haya 2021: min. 0:00,0 - 42:35,7).

Haya emphasizes that living in fear of repatriation affects her social needs and her safety needs. According to Maslow, this would entail that she would be motivated to strive for handling these lacks in needs thereby feeling motivated to strive for fulfilling them. If this is the case, Haya would not have the energy to strive for fulfilling the need for esteem or self-actualization. As for the people she knows who now suffer from mental illness due to the distress of an uncertain situation, they now have to spend their time getting treatment and focusing on getting better. For herself in particular, she states:

“When one says repatriation, it is like a monster to me. Repatriation is a monster for us [other Syrian refugees ed.] because you are returning to the unknown, but we [do ed.] know that it is terrible when Assad is in place. [...] It is like that for me, for everyone. I need to hang in there, be strong and in balance, but in reality I am very scared inside. I am very scared.”

(Interview with Haya 2021: min 0:00,0 - 42:35)

In this quote she makes it clear that she needs to hang in there. She is trying to cope by putting her energy into being strong so that she can hold on for as long as needed. In addition, she mentions fear. For her, fear becomes the overall way of expressing her concern – her fear of the “*monster*” which represents being returned by the authorities.

Naima adds on to the point about fear. She shares the same thoughts. As part of the interview with Naima, we talked about how some of the resident permits assigned to Syrian refugees are being revoked as part of the government’s repatriation strategy. She describes how she and people in her network fears to be returned:

“I know people who have been rejected, those peoples worst nightmare is to be sent back, my worst nightmare is to be sent back, because we ran away for a reason, so this decision [the authoritative decision ed.] is racist, it is hypocritical, insane and it is inhuman in all ways. Syrian people are still getting killed and are going in prison for the same reasons [as before ed.], and Damascus is not safe.” (Interview with Naima 2021: min. 00:00-06:45).

This statement from Naima along with the quote from Haya about fear and safety can be related to what Maslow (1943) defines as safety needs. Naima makes it very clear that her “[...] *worst nightmare is to be sent back* [...]” since it is not safe for her to return to the Damascus province in Syria. Here it becomes visible that fear plays an important role in understanding why Syrian refugees cannot travel back. The fear derives from having ones residence permit revoked since this in the end entails travelling back to Bashar al-Assad’s Syria, the Syria she once fled from – if not ending up with fewer rights in a deportation center in an indefinite time. From Naima’s quote we can deduct that she does not agree with the authoritative decision that the Damascus province is safe to return to. She uses some rather big words to describe her feelings about the situation such as “inhuman” and “insane”. She thereby makes it clear that a lot is at stake for her if she is to be returned which is underlined by the following quote about fear. She fears a possible return in the future with very tangible consequences which she describes as follows:

“[...] fear. That is the first thing, you are scared because you are gonna go back to the things that you ran away from, so that is fear of getting arrested - of getting killed, of getting breaked, of losing you future, there is no future if you go back” (Interview with Naima 2021: 6:46-21:23).

The political focus on repatriation becomes both incomprehensible and frustrating for the informants. Here, the political focus on repatriation is perceived as a threat to their existence fearing that they are killed or tortured if they are sent back. This entails a serious degree of insecurity while being a Syrian refugee in Denmark since they are not secured from having their permits revoked and possibly being returned to the Syrian regime, thereby living in a state of fear and worry. According to Maslow this could mean that they put their energy into doing something about this fear making it difficult to focus on other things such as personal relations or finding a job and engage fully in it (Maslow 1954: 38). This point becomes very clear in the interview with Lareen who has actually received a letter of return. Lareen is so far the only one of the informants who

actually received a letter stating that her residence permit is being revoked. During our conversation we talked about motivation in a broader sense. Lareen explained that she does not feel motivated to either work or study due to the fact that she received the letter from the authorities saying that she has to be sent back to Syria. She describes how it makes her feel unmotivated because she does not have the energy to invest or engage in the Danish society when she knows that she is being forced to leave:

“I came under pressure [when receiving the letter ed.] and I do not feel like doing anything. Like a depression. And you just want to... [interrupts herself ed.] don’t feel like going to work or continue with my study or go outside because you do not have any hope or motivation to do anything.[...] right now I do not have any motivation or strength to go to work or to study.”

(Interview with Lareen 2021: min. 6:57-15:27)

Lareen’s statement underlines one of Maslow’s (1943) points that if a person does not feel safe, one does simply not have the motivation or the possibility to care or strive for anything else before the safety issue is satisfied or dealt with (Maslow 1943: 379). In Lareen’s case it is the safety needs that are being compromised to a degree where she finds herself in situation where it is hard for her to focus on any other needs. She is not motivated to do anything because her safety is being compromised. She describes how she has no hope and that she is so affected of the risk of being sent back that she almost feels depressed. According to Maslow (1943) you would place her in the very bottom of the hierarchy of needs, where almost only the physiological needs are satisfied. This because she has expressed not feeling safe or secure, but at the same time she does not feel being appreciated or recognized by people in the first described arena, which made her shift to another. Although this does not mean that she does not have other needs, such as belongingness or love needs satisfied in other arenas.

During this part of the conversation I ask if Lareen knows any examples of how other Syrian refugees react being in the same or similar situation are reacting, to which Lareen answered:

“Many people completely stop going to work. Your whole life is destroyed, they just want to stay home and do nothing.” (Interview with Lareen 2021: min. 6:57-15:27). This demotivation seems to strike people hard but seems to be followed by strong emotions as well. The peculiar situation that Lareen and other Syrian refugees find themselves in at the moment entails the feeling of indifference and anger towards the system or even the feeling of a whole country having turned

their back on them. Several examples of this were given during the different conversations, one of them came from Naima:

“We [Naima and the refugee organization that she is volunteering at] know people who won the case and we know people that did not, but you have people that decided to drop class. And you also have people who decide “why should I do volunteer work?”, “why should I help?”, “why should I smile to Danish people every day?” - I know a guy who said “I am angry with them” [ed. the Danes] [...] who said “I do not wanna smile to them anymore, because they want to kick me out, they want me to get killed” (Interview with Naima 2021: min. 6:46-21:23).

Here, the frustration really becomes visible where the whole society has disappointed the person mentioned in the quote and it becomes a matter of anger. This example emphasizes once again that it is difficult to find motivation for work and studies when one's situation and future is unknown and insecure. The Syrian refugees affected simply do not know what is going to happen or whether or not they can feel safe in the nearby future which influences their motivation for engaging in society, in social relations and likewise. Although the interviewed Syrians can be presumed to live in general safety in their everyday lives in Denmark seeing as they are not in immediate danger of being killed, arrested or tortured, they still experience the overall fear of the “*monster*” that is coming to get them as real – the monster being the governmental focus on repatriation returning them to an unknown and unsafe place with no future, as they see it. Haya, in addition, describes in one of the previous quotes that she fears the unknown – that she does not know what will happen to her if she is returned to Damascus. The unknown is for Maslow something that creates obstacles in satisfying one's needs (Maslow 1954: 40). Haya even goes as far as stating that the feeling of safety has never really been satisfied in Denmark:

“[...] but the safety need that we fled to achieve, we have not achieved it in Denmark because we are threatened from the first minute when a resident permit is given and you say to us “it is possible to send you back if [the conditions ed.] becomes better””

(Interview with Haya 2021: min. 26:35-31:55)

Here, Haya is referring to the previously described legal change which states that the condition in the country of origin only has to become partly better for the authorities to be able to return refugees

(as part of the temporary status of 7.3). Taking the fear described into consideration there seems to be very far from living as a person who “[...] *is largely satisfied in his safety needs*” (Maslow 1943: 378-379) and therefore it can be said that Naima and Haya currently have their safety needs as active motivators as Maslow describes it (Maslow 1943: 378-379). Therefore, you might say that the safety needs for Haya and Naima – and likely other Syrian refugees – are not met, which, according to Maslow (1943), makes it difficult, however not impossible, for Naima and Haya to strive for satisfying other needs. According to Maslow, this means that they seek to find a way to fulfill the missing safety needs – they are motivated for doing so and put their energy into doing something about their safety situation. This is the case when Haya describes how she prepares herself for a potential return by taking an education that can help her provide for herself when back in Syria:

“[...] I thought I should take a new education that I could get a job with if something unexpected were to happen such as being sent home for example or something like that – then maybe I would be able to get a job...” (Interview with Haya 2021: min. 51:20-54:07).

In this case, it becomes clear that Haya feels motivated to act and do something to secure herself a bit if returned to Syria. She considers ways of qualifying herself for a potential job by taking a relevant education. By doing so it can be argued that she tries to take some control over a situation that she otherwise only has little control over in the sense that she does not decide herself when or how she goes back.

Adding to this point, Maslow (1943) describes how *“Other broader aspects of the attempt to seek safety and stability in the world are seen in the very common preference for familiar rather than unfamiliar things, or for the known rather than the unknown.”* (Maslow 1943: 379). This statement can also be related to the previous quote from Haya about only being sure of returning to the unknown. She feels uncertain about what might happen to her if returned to Damascus. The consequences of return are unknown for her making it of little preference to her. It is not desirable for her to return to Damascus as things are at the moment, because it might entail serious consequences for her – consequences that she cannot foresee and therefore it is unknown for her making her insecure of her future in Damascus. This can further be related to what Naima said about having no future in Damascus because the situation is unsafe. In summary, a lot of things are unknown for both Haya and Naima about what will happen to them if they are returned to

Damascus, but they both know that it will not be safe for them to stay there. Therefore, it is an undesirable situation for them both to live with the fear of being deported to an unpredictable future – a future that does not exist for them as they describe it.

Another aspect of the known or the familiar can be related to similarities are common features. Maslow's statement about people having a preference for the known and the familiar can be interpreted as if being in an unfamiliar situation can be uncomfortable, intimidating or maybe even insecure. Thus, it can be assumed that people strive to seek the comfort in the well-known or in the familiar (Maslow 1943: 379). An example of seeking this comfort (or stability as Maslow calls it), came forward as part of the conversation with Lareen. The conversation was about how she was met by unwelcoming messages during internships she participated in as part of the integration process into society. She explains how being a part of a system that does not appreciate you makes you automatically look for recognition and security in other arenas:

"If you feel welcome in society, then I would integrate a lot more, but if you always get messages about you being unwelcome then I look for recognition [anerkendelse ed.] from a group of people that are in the same position as me, and then you get a troubled society and ghettos because we lack recognition from the other side. We are humans and it is decided that we shall look for recognition and security [tryghed ed.] and feel that there are someone that has the same culture and language [...]" (Interview with Lareen 2021: min. 8:12,3 - 9:58)

The quote emphasizes that Lareen seeks familiarity in groups of people that are in the same situation as her, has the same culture and language. She describes how she feels unwelcome in certain situations and how it makes her want to withdraw from them and engage in something that is more familiar – more comfortable – for her. The unwelcoming messages could be something that makes the internships a situation where she feels out of place thereby feeling uncomfortable thus creating a need for her to seek something more familiar in order to satisfy her need for recognition and comfort. Her statement can be seen as if she prefers to be in situations that are more familiar and thereby comfortable for her than participating in internships where she feels unaccepted. This unacceptance and feeling of being unwelcome might even add to the uncertainty of being deported. If she feels like her situation and her stay in Denmark might be threatened by the risk of being deported, experiencing people being unwelcoming towards her might confirm her concerns. Maslow describes mankind's attempt to satisfy certain needs in a given order, but exceptions can be

made – especially in cases that are not states of emergency (Maslow 1954: 51). It means that some needs can lead to the satisfaction of other needs – maybe latent needs (Maslow 1954: 54). For example the strive for self-actualization can lead to the satisfaction of love needs through social interaction or networking for instance. Another example is when hunger might actually be a sign of social deprivation – a feeling of loneliness (Maslow 1954: 36). Throughout the analysis I have so far presented examples of how the informants try to fulfill certain needs that they find important to them and how this is connected to their motivation. Seeking familiar networks might be a way for Lareen of minimizing the lack of uncertainty in her insecure situation of not knowing whether she has her permits revoked or not. In other words, she might seek out these familiar arenas with people she can more easily relate to and vice versa in order to manage a feeling of being unsafe due to concerns about her situation in Denmark. It might be a way for her to handle her situation as it is. In addition, something especially interesting about this quote is that she touches on the issue of not being welcomed by the society and therefor seeking arenas where she is appreciated. This can be related to what Maslow (1943) calls the esteem needs (Maslow 1943: 181). These needs are divided into two groups, respectively desires that take departure in one self and desires that are given from others to you. Maslow's examples of the first group are desire for “[...] *strengths, for achievement, for adequacy, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom.*” (Maslow 1943: 181), and the second group are described as desire for “[...] *reputation or prestige, [...] recognition, attention, importance or appreciation.*” (Maslow 1943: 181). In the previous quote from Lareen, she mentions recognition directly and that she does not get this from the first arena since she gets unwelcoming messages, so she moves on to a different arena to get the recognition she wishes for. When she receives unwelcoming messages it could be presumed that she does not feel appreciated by others in the arena or that she feels unimportant. It could therefore be said that she has active motivation for getting the esteem needs satisfied, which could explain why she seeks out other arenas with likeminded people who she has more in common with and who might understand her better. This can be seen as a way of trying to satisfy certain needs.

This point can be linked to a quote from Naima that I will present in a bit. As previously mentioned, Naima is doing voluntary work with an organization that aids vulnerable refugees, here among Syrian refugees living in Denmark. When asked if she could describe which reactions she sees from the refugees as a consequence of the political focus on repatriation, she uses words such as “*fear, anger*”, “*uncertainty*”, “*sadness*”, “*disappointment*” and “*lack of trust*” (Interview with Naima 2021: min. 6:46-21:23). This adds to the picture that Syrian refugees feel scared and experience a

lot of fear regarding their future life. Naima has through her voluntary work been in contact with many different people in different situations. Although she finds herself in a different situation than Lareen, seeing she is not from the Damascus province, she still fears that she could get a letter of deportation in the future, thus, to some degree sharing the fears with the people she meets in her voluntary work:

“I helped many people in my life, so I really hope that if worst case they decide to kick me out people will stand up for me. I think so far I am not scared, not personally scared, - it is existing, [because ed.] I don’t have a job, but first of all I am not from Damascus, but they did actually kick people out because they had an address in Damascus before they came, and I am one of them, but I am thinking, as I told you, I have a strong case, I have a Danish husband and a Danish daughter under 18 [...]” (Interview with Naima 2021: min. 6:46-21:23).

This quote illustrates how Syrian refugees in relation to the current political situation in Denmark can almost never be sure of their own future. It can be seen as an example of how Syrian refugees currently are somehow not safe from the authoritative system. Naima explains that even if she thinks she has a very strong case, it might not be enough to make her stay. This can be seen as a way of convincing herself that she has a good chance of staying in Denmark. The fact that she tries to defend her case can be interpreted as if she feels some uncertainty that she tries to calm by reassuring herself that her situation should be alright in regards to her staying in Denmark. According to Maslow, being in an insecure situation, such as the ones described by the informants, should promote a kind of motivation to strive for change or for something better or more preferable (Maslow 1954: 38). However, as describes throughout the analysis, it is very complex when feeling unsafe in a place that might otherwise seem safe. This is related to the previous point about a society like Denmark being safe with social security and stable overall situation. Nonetheless, some refugees feel that they are trapped in a system that keeps them in uncertainty and they experience difficulties in living their motivation as preferred or as needed. The analysis so far shows that motivation is affected in many ways and to many extents ranging from trying to secure a future by making sure you are qualified for a job to feeling hopeless and therefore being demotivated for taking part in society, thus quitting your job or your studies. When Lareen was asked about examples of reactions to the political decisions in Denmark the following conversation took place:

Larren: *“There are a lot right now trying to find a way to travel to Canada or another country. Yeah, they try to find a solution to their situation. Even if their resident permit is not revoked, they want to find a solution because they do not feel that they have a future here.”*

Interviewer: *“When you say that they do not feel they have any future here, what makes them feel like that?”*

Lareen: *“Because they look at other people who work and study and who does not have a secure [sikker ed.] future, so they feel they can lose everything in a blink of an eye. And they have lost everything once, so it is not easy to lose that again. They feel threatened, so they want to save what they can.”* (Interview with Lareen 2021: min 6:57-15:27)

This part of the interview represents motivation for searching for alternatives to a currently insecure situation. Lareen mentions that some people she knows are trying to get to other countries where they might have a better chance of being safe and have a future. Thus, in that kind of case, motivation occurs and presents itself as the will to act – as the will to actively change ones situation to something better and more preferable.

In relation to this, Aden talked about how he initially felt a great deal of motivation for learning the Danish language and thereby taking part in society. He, on the other hand, also describes how he felt so pressured that it was all too much for him. This is a case of motivation to act that is broken and turns into a form of demotivation. During my conversation with Aden, he described how there was a simultaneous focus on employment (often through internships in companies) and language learning during his integration process. He explained that it is a lot to juggle, but that he was motivated for it in the beginning:

“For me, I even had motivation to learn the language and find the work, but I felt at one point the big pressure and suddenly I fell down, I went down. I cannot with my illness and my health situation, it is very hard to go to school [language school ed.] and to go to internships. I do not have even time for that. (Interview with Aden 2021: min. 52:18- 56:43).

It should be mentioned that when Aden talks about not having the time for language school and internships, it is because he is in dialysis for several hours, several days a week due to kidney

disease. He explained that he felt the “*big pressure*” from society which made him fall down. If this is metaphorically speaking or if he is talking about a real fall as part of his decease is not clear, but the important thing here is that it all became too much for him which resulted in a decrease in motivation since he uses the word *had* to describe his former motivation.

In this section of the analysis it has become apparent that Syrian refugees in a time of repatriation experience certain needs as more important than others. They find a way to prioritize what is of greatest urgency to them and act upon it in different manners and extents. It has become clear that it is very complex trying to feel safe in a situation that is uncertain offering an unknown future. A common denominator is fear – fear of being deported to the unknown where there is basically no hope for a future. This lack of hope means for some that they feel demotivated to engage in the Danish society. For others, it means that they are motivated to trying to secure themselves as much as possible – for instance through education in order to enhance job security or by searching for safer locations. Thus, it can be said that the Syrian refugees are facing various opportunities for action. However, the opportunities might not be particularly desirable, thereby creating a paradox – a paradox of possibilities. On the one hand, the refugees are in a safe place in Denmark where they can work, study, socialize etc. On the other hand, they are only here on borrowed time, thus knowing that they stay here will come to an end in a matter of time. In the following, I will turn to describe the concept “Paradox of possibilities” which covers an understanding that the system, here represented by the state and the municipalities, presents a variety of possibilities founded in Danish and international law, but when it comes down to the implementation of the possibilities towards its target group – the refugees – it becomes a “paradox” since the implementation (or lack thereof) can result in fewer rights and fewer societal possibilities. The “possibilities” are provided through the municipal integration process and are mandated by the integration law, hence this will be the next step of the analysis – to elaborate on some of the possibilities offered and at the same time analyze where these possibilities become paradoxes.

Paradox of possibilities

As mentioned, Syrian refugees are in Denmark on limited time and they meet certain demands they need to live up to and at the same time certain offers that they can benefit from. When getting asylum in Denmark, whether it is on grounds of §7.1, §7.2 or §7.3 in the Alien (Consolidation) Act, it is for a temporary period only (Aliens Consolidation Act 2019: §7). This is ratified by the

contract *Residence and self-sufficiency declaration* signed by the refugees in the beginning of their residency in Denmark (Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet 2019). The declaration is a to-pager which list various points about what is forbidden in Denmark and what the person signing it has to live up to in relation to their stay in Denmark (Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet 2019). It is, so to say, a requirement for the resident permit that this contract is understood and signed (Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet 2019). All of this means, that refugees know from the beginning that they are in Denmark only for a limited time. In the previous part of the analysis it has become clear that some of the Syrian refugees accept that they at some point have to return to Syria. However, what they express having a hard time understanding and accepting is that it has to happen now at a time where the situation in Damascus is still unsafe and insecure for them. Naima explains:

“[...] why should we give [to ed.] a country that does not want to give. I mean, there is a contract that we signed ... We have an integration contract, we signed the contract that we are going to get integrated, learn the language - we did our part of that contract, but they did not do their part of beskyttelse [protection ed.], of securing us...” (Interview with Naima 2021: min. 6:46-21:23)

To Haya it is also incomprehensible with the current repatriation, because she also sees Damascus as a place that is still unsafe, getting even worse:

”So I think, that when my kids are ready and our country is safe and secure, then I have many things in my country that I look forward to going back to, but the country has experienced a very terrible situation, it gets worse and worse and worse [...]”
(Interview with Haya 2021: min. 0:00,0-42:35)

Thus, they do not understand why or how the Danish authorities have deemed the Damascus province safe to return to. This creates a paradox. A paradox because the Syrian refugees sign a paper that coerces them to take part in the Danish society, to invest in it, while they are offered protection, but at the same time the Danish authorities are telling them that their protection is in danger of being revoked even though they still feel the need for protection.. The paradox consists of many different aspects. One aspect is that the Syrian refugees have been offered protection, but now it is taken away from them even though the situation in Damascus has hardly changed. As described in a former chapter, several international organizations disagree with the current repatriation to the Damascus province and their recommendation is to change the current repatriation focus for the

refugees. Some of the critique of the decision to return Syrian refugees to the Damascus province is based on the article 33 in the refugee convention from 1951 which states: *“No Contracting State shall expel or return (“refouler”) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”* (The Refugee Convention 1951, article 33). The Syrian refugees themselves also describe how Damascus it still not safe. They mention killings, arrests and torture as some of the things they risk facing if or when returned to Damascus. It is not for me to assess or judge whether or not the informants are at risk of being arrested, killed or tortured. Neither is it the purpose of this dissertation to investigate this matter. The purpose is to understand how it affects the informants when living with a daily concern that they might be deported to a place where they would feel unsafe. A place, where they do not see any changes that make it safer than it was when they fled. The paradox is, that they have been offered protection in Denmark, because it was assessed that they needed it. Now, that they do not see or experience any changes in Damascus, they feel that their safety need has not changed, but they are still at risk of being returned. As the analysis has shown so far, for some of the informants it leads to demotivation in relation to taking part in society. This is the case when Naima asks why she should give to a country that does not give to her. Also, it is the case when Lareen, as previously mentioned, says that:

“If you feel welcome in society, then I would integrate a lot more” (Interview with Lareen 2021: min. 8:12 - 9:58).

This leads to the next aspect of the paradox of possibilities that focuses on the paradox of integrating when you are told to leave. This is a paradox that emerges in the opposites between integration and repatriation – between being coerced to invest in a society that you are forced to leave behind. When talking about integration in a Danish context, the responsibility of integration is put on the refugees themselves. This is mentioned in the Danish Integration law (IA§1). The municipality offers ways of integration by providing guidance, internships, language courses, jobs etcetera, but the ultimate responsibility for becoming integrated is put on the refugees themselves. This is visible in the Danish Integration Act:

“The purpose of the Act is to ensure that newly arrived foreigners have the opportunity to utilize their abilities and resources in order to become self-employed [selverhvervende ed.] and actively participate in and contribute to Danish society on an equal footing with other citizens in

accordance with fundamental values and norms in Danish community. This must be done through an effort that:

1) is based on the foreigners responsibility for his own integration,

2) contributes to ensuring that newly arrived foreigners have the opportunity to participate on an equal footing with other citizens in society's political, economic, employment, social, religious and cultural life,

3) contributes to newly arrived foreigners becoming self-sufficient as soon as possible through employment, and

4) gives the individual foreigner an understanding of the basic values and norms of Danish society.” (IA §1)

When reading the first paragraph of the Danish Integration Act it describes how foreigners must be offered an opportunity to participate in society and explains that this must be done through employment. Trying to get refugees into the labor market is seen as the overall focus of the integration policy or, as the European Union writes on its website: “*The [Danish ed.] Government believes that the labour market is the surest path to integration.*” (Ec.europa.ec). This point becomes visible by looking at the first paragraph of the Danish Integration Act where the word employment or self-employed is mentioned in two out of four bullets along with being mentioned in the second line in beginning of the paragraph. However, as it appears from Lareens previous quote, taking responsibility for one’s own integration is challenged when you know that you have to leave at some point. She explains that she would integrate more if she felt more welcome in Denmark. The welcoming feeling can be seen as challenged during a time of repatriation. When the political focus is on returning refugees and the Danish state makes it clear from the very beginning, then it is hard to pull yourself up and invest in society, thereby you are challenged in taking responsibility for your own integration. In addition, Naima explains in the previous quote that she feels like she has lived up to her end of the deal – meaning the *Residence and self-sufficiency declaration* – but the Danish state has not. She then asks why she should do more for the Danish society when she does not get what she was promised – security. In this case, integration is seen as a tradeoff. The refugee contributes to the Danish society in return for protection. It is clear from the presented quotes that a lot of feelings are in play when talking about integration in relation to repatriation. Words such as inhuman, insane, anger, disappointment and likewise have been presented in quotes previously on

the analysis. When integration is seen as a tradeoff for protection, it raises the question of expectations. What is expected from the other party at the other end of the deal? Disappointment and anger might relate to expectations not being met. This can be seen in relation to the following quote from Haya:

"I have experience for 15 years as a bio-analyst. You can use me here [in Denmark ed.]."

(Interview with Haya 2021: min. 43:46-46:43)

Haya is currently working as a SOSU-assistant. She had to undergo education all over again when she arrived in Denmark, because she could not get a job with her initial education from Syria. This could lead to being disappointed when having competencies ready to implement in society, but not being given the opportunity. This in spite of the fact that the Danish Integration Act states that it should be the case *"that newly arrived foreigners have the opportunity to utilize their abilities and resources"* (IA §1).

However, expectations from the refugees are one thing. The Danish state also has expectations. During my conversation with Aden, who is a leading part of an organization that aids refugees living in Denmark, we talked about the Danish integration system. More specifically, I asked him about what kind of expectations the municipalities have for the refugees when being in the integration system, to which he answered:

"The expectation is only to work and leave the Jobcenter. Whatever the work - even if you are a doctor, if you are an engineer - they [the Jobcenter ed.] only have work in cleaning. [...] but refugees feel fear, and they [the municipality ed.] put more pressure on them. And they [the refugees ed.] fear them [the municipality ed.] actually, that they will stop your integrationydelse [financial support ed.], stop your money, that they will not give you money."

(Interview with Aden 2021: min. 58:15-1:01:07)

What is interesting in Aden's words is that, in his experience, highly educated Syrian refugees are put in cleaning jobs instead of being given the *"opportunity to utilize their abilities and resources"* as described in the first paragraph of the Danish Integration Act (IA §1). That highly educated refugees are not given the opportunity to apply their education, their competencies, their qualifications in relevant jobs has happened before and is therefore not a new phenomenon. In the

following, Naima also describes her experiences with her case manager in the municipality who did not take her professional competencies into consideration when dealing with her case:

“I had an older man in kommunen [ed. the municipality] who decided that I should work in a cleaning company, and I said to him “but I have a degree from Syria”. [...] I was already planning on having my masters here and I said to him “I prefer to actually do something with [my ed.] education, so if you can help me to get my Syrian education accepted in Denmark?”. And he said “no, no we have to...” [interrupts herself ed.] because in the Danish system I am a number - he has to send me to work and get to the next one, they are underfunded, they don’t have time so he has to get rid of me. [...] So at least I got a job with my degree without his help and I did not go to supermarket or a cleaning job.” (Interview with Naima 2021: min. 36:57- 49:47)

This is an interesting example because it goes against what is written in §1 of the Integration Act, since the case manager, the man on the ground representing the current municipality and the Danish system, does not give *“[...] the opportunity to utilize their abilities and resources in order to become self-employed and actively participate in and contribute to Danish society on an equal footing with other citizens”* (IA §1). The relation between a case worker from the municipality and a refugee cannot be perceived as equal, since the case worker have the possibility to cut or stop the financial support to the refugee which is also underlined by the fear that former quote from Aden. Thus, another paradox becomes visible through this part of the analysis. A paradox, where the refugees receive financial support in order for them to have a chance in society, but at the same time the financial support is experienced as a tool of punishment. As mentioned, Aden describes how some refugees fear getting cut in financial support. Thus, it can be perceived that they feel a threat of being punished financially if not meeting certain expectations or requirements. In this perspective, the help also functions as something that creates fear thereby causing distress.

This section has covered the headline “Paradox of possibilities”. The analysis show, that certain possibilities and offers from the Danish state become something that causes fear and distress among refugees. This might lead to demotivation for the refugees to take part in society or have the consequence that they take actions in accordance to the need for safety thus focusing their energy on themselves, their families or their next of kin thereby not having energy to focusing on contributing to society. This means, that in some cases, the opportunities create obstacles for the

refugees to live up to the things that society requires from them. Thus, a paradox occurs, where the refugees are offered protection and the chance to contribute to society with their qualifications, but at the same time they are being met with a clarification that they have to leave and that they have to do certain things in order to be assigned the protection that they are offered.

So far, the analysis have shed a light on the refugees themselves as well as the context they participate in. The context will be further analyzed in the following where societal processes and dynamics surrounding repatriation will be looked at through the perspective of securitization by Wæver (1993).

Political speech acts

As previously described, the rhetoric towards refugees has changed over the past years. In the part of the analysis regarding the paradox of possibilities, it was examined how some refugees experience their protection status in Denmark as a tradeoff – as if they have to do certain things in order to gain the protection they were promised. This can be put in context with a “us-and-them” terminology. In this case it would be the “them” who need protection and “us” who are providing the protection. The perspective of protection in Denmark as a tradeoff as well as “us” and “them” are terms or concepts that go along with the theory of securitization. According to Wæver (YouTube video 2014):

“[...] the whole argument of securitization theory is to say – you pay a very high price if you want to deal with something in a security role. It is always a tradeoff – you gain something by calling something a security issue – typically you gain urgency, priority, focus, ability to act and so on, but you pay a price in terms of freezing it mentally as something given, by de-democratizing – you are saying “this is a necessity, this is something that we can’t discuss”, by creating an kind of us-them construction where the problem is out there and we are the solution and so on.” (Wæver in YouTube video 2014: min. 7:18).

Wæver mentions that a high price is paid in relation to securitization. In this specific dissertation, this becomes applicable to both the refugees as well as the Danish society. The refugees themselves describe how they are paying a price in relation to integration, protection and repatriation. A price of their well-being and their motivation as previously accounted for in the analysis. According to Wæver’s quote, the Danish society pays a price in relation to division regarding “us” and “them” as well as creating de-democratizing processes. However, the latter will not be a central point for this part of the analysis.

Because of the high price that potentially is paid when securitizing an issue it becomes relevant to look for situations or speech acts, if one will, where issues are securitized. By “de-democratizing”, as Wæver describes (Wæver in YouTube video 2014: min. 7:18), the power of the decision is then taken away from the population and the “elite”, as Wæver (1993) calls them, are then legitimized to use extraordinary measures (Wæver in YouTube video 2014: min. 6:40) potentially “*freezing it mentally as something given*”, thereby making a new truth to act upon, which in normal cases not would be given or maybe even considered right ([7:18] in YouTube video from 2014). In the following, I will analyze speech acts from politicians through the eyes of securitization theory to find respectively the referent object, the audience, the existential threat and the securitizing actor. By doing so, it becomes visible if an issue is securitized and how.

During a tv-debate as part of the election in 2019, Pernille Vermund from the nationalist party *Nye Borgerlige*, said the following:

“It is not better at all [the integration into the Danish society ed.]. It is worse year by year. We can see the same pattern in all of the western countries. The more people coming from Muslim countries, the worse it gets ... We have a responsibility to take care of Denmark, and I am not sorry to say, Stig, [member of the party Kristendemokraterne ed.] but it almost sounds like you are running [opstillet ed.] for a refugee party. This is Denmark and we have a responsibility to take care of the society that generations have built before us [...]” (Ritzau 2019)

If we see this quote through the eyes of securitization, it becomes clear that the securitizing actor is Pernille Vermund herself, since she is the one performing the speech act. The referent object, the thing that needs to be protected, is the Danish society and the existential threat comes across as the Muslim people. What is interesting in the second part of the quote is that people from Muslim countries and refugees are equated, thereby implicitly stating that those two groups of people are connected or maybe even the same. By doing this, Pernille Vermund puts forward an understanding that Muslims and refugees are to be perceived alike even though you can be a refugee, even from middle eastern countries, without being a Muslim and vice versa. The audience in the speech act can be identified as the “we” which can be understood as everyone wanting to take care of Denmark or simply just the Danish population.

In addition, Pernille Vermund is emphasizing that the more people with Muslim background in Denmark, the worse the chance of integration gets. Her statement is part of the public debate and is put forward in the media. According to Lareen, the media play a role in shaping public opinions.

This becomes clear through her answer to the question of whether or not she often encounters a negative attitude towards her. She answers as follows:

“Yes, after the political talk in the media you can feel that people become more and more afraid of engaging or talking to you or to be open towards you. They always hear bad news about refugees and if something positive happens they [the media ed.] hide it, but if something negative happens then they mention it. The media affect people to be more negative in relation to accepting us [the refugees ed].” (Interview with Lareen 2021: min. 15:28-21:54)

According to the quote from Lareen it can be understood as if the media has a part in the perception of refugees. When a politician like Pernille Vermund gets her opinions published in the media, this becomes a way for her of presenting certain speech acts that she apparently wishes to convince other people of. The political scene and the media are both part of the context that the informants for this dissertation participate in. Both the media and the politicians can be said to represent societal institutions that has an impact on the lives of refugees. This point is underlined by the abovementioned quote from Lareen where she describes that some people fear her simply because she is a refugee. When Pernille Vermund mentions a responsibility to take care of the Denmark that generations before us have built, it can on the other hand be perceived as if she is saying that, according to her quote, Muslims are a threat to the Danish society. This point can be assumed to represent certain societal dynamics that currently takes place based on a more global situation. Pernille Vermund, at least, applies her point to all western countries. Thereby, she makes it clear that she has looked to other countries and applies their experiences to a Danish context. Thus, Syrian refugees in Denmark are affected by global societal dynamics. Lareen talks about acceptance. How she experiences that it is harder for her to get acceptance when statements like Pernille Vermund’s is put forward in the media. This can be a symptom of an “us-and-them” culture where the western countries are put as opposites to Muslim countries.

In addition to the point about an “us-and-them” culture, Martin Henriksen, spokesperson for matters regarding immigrants and values [udlændinge- og værdiordfører] for the nationalist party Dansk Folkeparti, also puts forward a point about people with a Muslim background. He has said that there are *“[...] persons with Muslim background that are doing well, certainly there are. But this do not change, that there are challenges so massive, that we cannot be satisfied. We have to see the society as an organism that needs to be coherent. And this makes repatriation of refugees necessary if we*

continuously are to pass on a safe [trygt ed.] and coherent Denmark to our descendants.”
(Henriksen 2019)

If we look at this quote through the lens of securitization, Martin Henriksen can be perceived as the securitizing actor, since he is the one performing the speech act. The existential threat seems to be the refugees, because they pose a threat to the safe and coherent society which can be perceived as the referent object. Hence, the solution is to continue to repatriate refugees. Just as the previous quote by Pernille Vermund, being a refugee is connected to being Muslim even though it is fully possible to be a refugee without being a Muslim and vice versa. The audience, and thereby the ones that Martin Henriksen is trying to convince about the existential threat and possibly the use of extraordinary measures to eliminate this threat, are persons that agree with the statement that refugees pose an existential threat towards a safe and coherent Denmark, but it could also be the Danish citizens in general.

According to Martin Henriksen, there are massive challenges with refugees in Denmark. He points out that the refugees are an obstacle to a coherent and safe Denmark. Thus, he is adding to the “us-and-them” culture making it clear that refugees need to leave Denmark in order for the Danish society to survive. Therefore, he implies that the solution to the matter is repatriation of refugees. If refugees are returned to their country of origin, the Danish society is then safe from the existential threat that Martin Henriksen believes the refugees to be. However, the informants for this dissertation do not see themselves as posing a threat to the Danish society. According to the previous parts of the analysis, they express how they can see themselves contributing to society, but at the same time they describe how they meet obstacles in fulfilling their potential. Many of the previous quotes from the informants have presented how they feel about repatriation and how it affects their needs, emotions and actions. Naima once again puts words to her feelings when met with a hard rhetoric with a focus on repatriation:

“You are not worth to have a good life, you are not worth to live here ... so I understand when people decide to drop out of school, when they decide to drop their job, when people decide not to smile anymore.” (Interview with Naima 2021: min. 6:46-21:23)

I have previously shown that the some of the interviewed Syrian refugees experience difficulties in satisfying specific needs. According to Maslow (1943), especially the safety needs are difficult to satisfy because of outside factors such as the politically decided repatriation strategy. One is simply

at risk of losing everything by being returned to Syria or sent to a deportation center in Denmark if ones residence permit is revoked. As previously mentioned, a hardened rhetoric towards refugees has emerged on the basis of past global events resulting in certain national political actions (Kjær 2020). This hardened rhetoric becomes very visible in the current political life in the parliament and in the media in Denmark which is explicit in the abovementioned quotes. Furthermore, it becomes clear in the following quote from Rasmus Stoklund, a politician from the current governmental party (the Social Democrats), that the government has adopted such a hardened rhetoric through the past years to keep themselves in the center of power within Danish politics. The following is from an interview with Rasmus Stoklund from the newspaper Information. The journalist asks Rasmus Stoklund if a strict immigration policy is necessary for the Social Democrats to stay relevant, to which Rasmus Stoklund answers:

“Yes, that is an essential prerequisite [...] otherwise we should pack our stuff together [and leave ed.][Ellers kan vi godt pakke sammen ed.]”. (Abrahamsen 2020).

The quote from Rasmus Stoklund says something about the importance of a strict immigration policy since if the Social Democrats did not uphold such a strict policy then the party would not be of relevance anymore.

Rasmus Stoklund, as a public representative from the party, shares the same opinion as Pernille Vermund and Martin Henriksen in relation to people from Muslim countries causing problems in the Danish society:

“We have to be honest about that certain problems are linked to Islam and the culture that comes with it. Everything cannot be made into questions about that the financial supports are too low and that the tone in the public debate are too harsh. There are also a personal responsibility that people has to claim. This applies to warriors from Syria [syrienskrigere ed.], criminal immigrants and persons that are on the financial support for years” (Bruhn 2021).

And he continues further down in the article:

“Value relativism [værdirelativism] I cannot accept. Democracy is better than dictatorship. Equality [ligestilling ed.] is better than the opposite. And it is better with religions that has gone through a reformation and can adapt itself to the free world.” (Bruhn 2021).

It becomes clear that Islam and the culture that come with it cause problems in Denmark, according to Rasmus Stoklund. If we look at these quotes through the securitization lens, then Rasmus Stoklund can be considered as the securitizing actor, since he is doing the speech act. The referent objects are the better free democracy with equality and the existential threat becomes everything that threatens it – more specifically “*warriors from Syria [syrienskrigere ed.], criminal immigrants and persons that are on financial support for years*” (Bruhn 2021). The audience can be perceived as the Danish population that he wishes to convince about taking this issue seriously.

What is especially interesting and worth noticing is the last two sentences of the quote. Here, Rasmus Stoklund mentions three different characteristics regarding people that, according to him, do not deserve to be in Denmark. The characteristics vary from doing criminal actions to receiving financial support. By mentioning the three characteristics in the same sentence, it could be perceived as if he is implying that there is no difference between criminal actions and receiving financial support. Apparently, neither of these characteristics deserves to be or stay in Denmark and therefore these people have to be returned to their country of origin. In this way, the reader might get the impression that there is an equal sign between “*criminal immigrants and persons that are on the financial support for years*” (Bruhn 2021) – that they are the same. This can create an understanding of people, such as the refugees that experience difficulties finding a job or who might be too sick to work, just as Aden interviewed for this dissertation, are criminals as well. Rasmus Stoklund continues in the second quote from the same part of the article by saying that “*Democracy is better than dictatorship.*” (Bruhn 2021) thereby applying that non-westerners come from dictatorships (Bruhn 2021). When saying that “[...] *religions that has gone through a reformation and can adapt itself to the free world.*” He implicitly says that Islam is one of those religions that cannot adapt and therefore does not deserve the “*free world*” (Bruhn 2021). Further by using a term as the “*free world*” he implies that places outside the free world are not free. All together this way of describing people, religion and cultures shapes and understanding of an *us-them* construction that risk freezing this understanding mentally as the only true truth, all as described earlier by Wæver (Wæver in YouTube video 2014: min. 7:18).

An example of the way things can become mentally frozen was brought forward by Hamza who was considered criminal by his classmates even before they knew him or even met him. Hamza was interviewed as part of the preliminary data collecting. Even though he is a Kurd from Syria and therefore not consider himself as Syrian, as the other interviewed did, his example can still be used since people from his class did not know which nationality he was.

Hamza: “[...] They [Hamza’s friends ed.] were very tired of all the news-stories that only focuses on the criminals even though there is a lot that are not criminals. There are a lot of us young [people ed.] that becomes tired of people looking at you as if you are a criminal even though you are not.” (Interview with Hamza 2021: min. 23:10)

Filipe: “Is it something you experience often? [Being seen as a criminal ed.]”

Hamza: “Sometimes. When I started at my school, there were a lot of my classmates that thought that I was a criminal, but after having spoken to me, they don’t look at me that way.” (Interview with Hamza 2021: min. 24:10)

Here, it becomes clear that Hamza’s classmates had prejudice against him thinking he was a criminal even though they had never spoken to him before. This can be seen as an indication that certain statements presented in the media has an impact on how refugees are perceived. It can be seen as a sign that refugees have been assigned a certain reputation even before their fellow students, colleagues and likewise get to know them. Something must be the base for this perception of refugees. Thus, it appears that certain speech acts, such as the ones presented above from different politicians, actually have convinced some of the audience of their message. This point can be underlined by a research done by Mandag Morgen. According to their research, 17 percent of the asked Danes agree with the statement that Muslim immigrants should be returned to their country of origin (Rosendahl et al. 2019). 17 percent account for people completely agreeing with the statement. If you include people who partially agree with the statement, the percentage rises to 28. From this, it seems that many people in the Danish society has been convinced by the securitizing actors – in this dissertation, being the politicians presented in the analysis. According to the abovementioned part of the analysis it can be put forward that some politicians, through the media, paint a picture of refugees in a certain way and that it influences the Danish public view on the refugees. Thus, it can be seen as if the societal process of implementing and carrying out repatriation has an impact on the Syrian refugees on many levels. This is the case with the example from Hamza. It is also the case in the following quote from Naima. She describes how she also experienced a prepositioned perception in her meeting with a colleague at her work. In the quote, she presents a case about how she made a serious effort to learn the Danish language. It appears as if she feels proud of herself for her achievement, but she describes how she is met by surprise regarding the fact that she herself should have been able to learn Danish that well. The assumption is that she must have had great help from her Danish husband. In the end, it can be perceived as if

she feels a bit disappointed that her efforts are not recognized. Her example represents a complexity in being a refugee in Denmark – a complexity that can also be perceived as present in the previous examples throughout the analysis. Naima describes her meeting with a prepositioned assumption as follows:

"[...] he said "Ohh that is why she speaks good Danish, because her Danish husband teach her every day". And I was like noo, he didnt, I probably asked him to correct my homework a couple of times, and we speak english in the house [...] I spent hours and months studying, reading novels in Danish so I improved my language and listening to music... I learned how to sing "giv mig Danmark tilbage ligesom i de gamle dage" - I had to learn that song - teach my mouth to move with the same rythm as the language, because it is hard and then he said "yeah she only know good Danish because her husband taught her" ". (Interview with Naima 2021: min. 21:23-36:57)

6. Conclusion

This dissertation has aimed to answer the following research question:

How does the Danish political focus on repatriation affect Syrian refugees in Denmark?

- And how does the focus on repatriation impact the Syrian refugees' motivation for integration into the Danish society?

The political focus on repatriation has been analyzed through the theory of securitization. Political statements from three different politicians have been examined. The three politicians represent three different parties – respectively Nye Borgerlige, Dansk Folkeparti and the Social Democrats. All three parties are in favor of the focus on repatriation. The first two representing the right wing, the last representing the current governmental party. Common denominators occur across all three statements. These are aspects such as repatriation, “them-and-us” terminology and an equal sign between having a Muslim background and being a refugee. In addition, refugees are mentioned in the same sentence as criminals and terrorists, leaving an impression that there might be no difference between being a refugee and a criminal – or receiving financial support and doing criminal actions. Furthermore, it becomes clear through the statements that Muslim countries are put in opposition to the western countries. Thus, it can be perceived as if there is a negative connotation in being from a Muslim country seeing as it is important to protect the western world and the norms and values represented here. This entails the understanding that repatriation is

perceived as the solution to an existential threat to the Danish society. The western world seemingly needs protection from the Muslim countries and people living there. All this is according to the political statements presented in the analysis. The analysis has uncovered, that this kind of rhetoric in relation to repatriation has an impact on the Syrian refugees in several different ways. The informants provide examples of being perceived as criminals, as poorly educated, not belonging, not being competent or qualified well enough to get jobs that they are actually educated to take. This leaves poor opportunities for using their competencies and resources in the way that the Integration Act otherwise offer. This leads to an uncovering of the paradox of possibilities that the Syrian refugees encounter. In the analysis it becomes apparent that the Integration Act offers the Syrian refugees various opportunities. Hereamong, the opportunity to put their competencies and resources to use in the Danish society. However, the informants describe how they have met different obstacles in relation to this. For instance, that their educational level is not deemed high enough for the Danish standards. This was the case for Haya, that is educated as a medicinal laboratory technologist and has 15 years of experience, but she has to start over and take a new education as a social- and health assistant. Thus, the offers presented in the Integration Act become a paradox seeing as the informants are provided the chance to put their experience and knowledge to use for the Danish society, but certain societal processes interfere with this. This kind of situation has the potential of creating demotivation. The analysis has uncovered more examples of situations where the informants have found themselves in a cross field of motivation, hope, fear, frustration, incomprehension and likewise in order to satisfy their needs and at the same time trying to live up to the requirements from the Danish state. The analysis have shown, that the informants in some way have the desire and the will to take part in the Danish society, but being met by an unwelcoming attitude, by a paradox between requirements and offers, by prepositioned assumptions they experience obstacles in finding and up keeping their motivation for investing in society. The informants express that they feel insecure in Denmark, because they are uncertain of their future seeing as they risk being returned to Damascus – a place that they deem unsafe. Thus, their motivation is primarily on satisfying their safety needs, but due to various societal factors it becomes challenging and they end up prioritizing actions to increase their feeling of safety as well as actions to enhance their chances of creating a more stable situation for themselves in the future. The informants explain how they have felt hopelessness, demotivation, fear and anger in relation to the political focus on repatriation which means that are at risk of having to leave Denmark, and

everything they have built here, behind or at risk of ending up in a deportation center for an unknown period of time.

Throughout the analysis, a complexity becomes clear in relation to the informants' lives in Denmark as well as their motivation to invest in and contribute to the Danish society. Some of them describe how they have an interest in taking part in society, but that they also face obstacles in doing so. For instance by being met by unwelcoming attitudes or prepositions that they are criminals or not particular intelligent or work interested. All this has an impact on how motivated they feel about contributing to society.

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