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Hello, and welcome to the podcast Challenging Nordic Innocence, which is a series of conversations

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that critically challenge narratives presenting the Nordic region as particularly good or

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innocent.

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During the course of these episodes, we will try to get a better grip on some of the things

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that lie at the heart of the regime of goodness, as the Norwegian scholars Nina Vitosek and

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Terry Twitch have so clearly termed it.

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And so the podcast approaches this regime of goodness in two ways.

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The first way concerns how the internal story, what we might call Nordic exceptionalism,

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prevails.

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These narratives persist despite being increasingly problematized in academic circles by grassroots

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movements and NGOs.

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In this light, it remains paradoxical that during the last four decades, a specific neoliberal

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agenda has not only dismantled some institutions that perhaps lay ground for a more egalitarian

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society, but also that these institutions have consistently and increasingly been attacking

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has increasingly and consistently attacking these marginalized groups.

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So these modes of discrimination have gone from causing outrage to being institutionalized.

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And so the convivial hegemonic narrative of a welfare utopia persists.

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The second theme we are interested in exploring is the Nordic region in relation to and in

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the world, how affluence and consistent othering have obscured questions about the sources

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of wealth, how that was obtained, and what structures of exploitation and oppression

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the region is a part of.

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Furthermore, how it pertains to the image of the Nordic region as a particularly innocent

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region of the world.

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So we are interested in these narratives from a historical and contemporary perspective,

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as the Nordics are, of course, not isolated or outside of the oppressive systems.

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As such, we seek to disentangle the myths of a Nordic innocence and try to develop a

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discussion that includes accountability, complicity, and responsibility.

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So overall, these episodes approach the Nordic region from a justice perspective.

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How can we think of social, spatial, and environmental justice within the Nordic region, as well

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as the Nordic region in a global perspective?

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And how do we challenge these narratives of a Nordic innocence and goodness from a justice

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perspective?

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So today, I would like to welcome two representatives of Almen Modstand, which is a Danish organization.

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And we have Jean Thierry and Tobias Gregory with us.

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And of course, my name is Sebastian, and I am joined by with my co-host, Anders.

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Hello.

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So just without, you know, further ado, I would just hand the microphone over to you,

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Tobias and Jean, to sort of give a little explanation about your organization and the

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work that you do.

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Thank you.

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And I guess an introduction would be in order to start with.

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And so actually, I work for Almen Modstand.

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I work as a, I guess you'd call it, renters' representative or a legal counsel for Almen

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Modstand amongst others, where I help residents in the so-called targeted or development areas

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with everything from rehousing to small claims, etc.

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And also do a lot of mobilization and help the board, local board to understand what

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is actually going on.

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And then introducing Jean.

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Yes, I'm an inhabitant of Bispeparken, which has been on the middle list of the government.

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There are three official lists, if you can say so.

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And then there are some other lists that they put the housing areas on.

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And I'm a leader of the inhabitants board there.

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And we will get back to how the inhabitants democracy works, because it's actually our

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kind of housing is exceptional.

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And yeah, in the world, actually, the Danish Almen housing, non-profit housing.

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And I'm also a member of the city council of Copenhagen.

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Yes.

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And a member of the Red Green Alliance, which is now the biggest party in

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Copenhagen.

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For the first time ever, it has been social democratic in 120 years or something.

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And then my education, I'm an economist.

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And yes, of course, I'm also active.

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I'm active as an inhabitant in Almen Modstand.

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All right.

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Thank you.

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Maybe for our listeners who are not from Denmark, could you talk a little bit about what Almen

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housing or general housing is and what is particular about that model in Denmark?

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It's the, it's the inhabitants democracy.

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In principle, we who are the tenants and buyers is actually also tenant and inhabitant in

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one of the big housing areas, even though his (Administrator) role in Almen Modstand is as someone working

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for us.

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It is, yeah, in principle, we decide everything.

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We who live there.

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And it's also non-profit in the sense that there is no profit on the rent.

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And it's for everyone.

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And that's a big, big difference from the social housing in other countries, because you can

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live in our homes, our apartments.

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Despite your income, you can earn as much money and as little money as, yeah, as you

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can.

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You can still live in Almen housing, the general non-profit housing in Denmark.

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And we also have this housing social obligations, which is both that municipality gets what

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is in principle one fourth of the apartments to distribute to people who are in special

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needs.

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They are still inhabitants, tenants and part of the democracy, etc., etc.

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So it's an equal level as everyone else living there.

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But that's a special approach for people with special needs.

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And also housing social obligations is also the housing social work, especially in the

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big housing areas, helping young people and also all ages about education, jobs, etc.

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And it's a major success.

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It has been, I mean, tremendous how much progress has been made.

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If you look at all the big areas, actually, all the listed areas are all below the original

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criteria of how big a percentage of the inhabitants that has been, what you say, sentenced for

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crime or something like that, especially youth crime has been on a constant and vast diminishing.

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And education levels, especially amongst youth, has been skyrocketing.

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And it's the majority now who gets an education, even if your parents don't have an education.

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And that's something totally different.

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The social and heritage is.

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Yeah, it doesn't exist that way anymore.

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It's not the general.

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So it's a major success that way, because I say because of how egalitarian and how democratic

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this form of housing is in principle and non-profit.

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Yeah, yeah, no, it's been a great success, even though it's partially state or government mandated

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the social housing, but only deemed in areas that need it.

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What else can we say?

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It's associative, meaning that the resident democracy is actually founded in constitutional law.

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By this meaning that it's somewhat protected and is the reverse system of many other places.

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So where a lot of other places have maybe some form of non-profit or social housing in Denmark,

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it's actually on the same level as any other kind of housing associative or unionized,

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some would say, meaning that the decisions, as I mentioned, is made by the resident,

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is all owned by the residents.

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So when you pay your deposit or when you pay your rent, it's based on a balanced fee.

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It's based on the cost of living there and the cost of keeping it up to date and renovating it, etc.

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So even though a lot of the work is volunteer, especially at the different housing departments where we both live,

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it can be a massive load of work and it's something that you have to engage in a lot more.

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Just to refer to why we're here, I guess, is that I think that the Ghetto legislation itself, for example,

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can only be done or has only been executed due to the fact that it can be a lot of work or a lot of stress

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to be a volunteer of all, right?

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If, for example, your housing association is not necessarily democracy friendly.

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And that seems to be troublesome in many places or has been taken advantage of in this case.

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Yeah, and you can say that a democracy and the common ownership can develop into something like

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the novel Animal Farm from George Orwell, where the pigs take over the power and that happens a lot.

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And that has been part of this institutionalized system and that is also something that is a part of our struggle.

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It's not only against the state, it's also against the forces and the powers in the housing association.

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Yeah, it's a different issue than many places, right?

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Because, I mean, when you sit on a boat or a central boat, you're paid for it and you're paid,

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what is it called, housing or a restop, renovation fees as well and construction projects.

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You are paid some money for this.

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So, meaning that the more you build, for example, the more you actually gain from it,

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sitting on the central boat, et cetera.

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So, some resident might actually abuse this.

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Others, well, the CEO and others, project managers also gain from this, right?

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So, there's incentive against listening to what the wishes of the individual or of the individual housing department actually is, sometimes.

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Yeah.

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I was thinking, Sebastian, you can also just interrupt me if there's,

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but I was thinking, because you just mentioned the ghetto legislation,

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I think that's why we actually wanted to do this podcast in the first place.

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So, this legislation is from 2018, as far as I remember,

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and it has some pretty dramatic implications for the general housing sector in Denmark.

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So, I was wondering if you could talk a little bit to that,

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and then we can also, that will also lead into the discussion about what Almen Modstand is as an organization, I guess.

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Yeah. Yes, of course.

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So, we only have an hour, which is going to be a brief walkthrough, basically, right?

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So, back already, I mean, 2010, 2011, even before that,

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there was a notion or a point of, I don't know if it was a scare tactic necessarily,

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or it was just jealousy or whatever, because a lot of these non-profit and general housing associations have very good value,

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have very good locations, obviously, right?

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So, back then, they already in 2010 or 11, I think, was made the first ghetto lists,

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saying these areas are problematic, we experience some kind of derogation or social trouble,

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regardless of whether it was gang related, regardless of whether it was employment or whatever.

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They made these lists already back then.

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That all led up to the legislative changes that was implemented in 2018.

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So, basically, what this was, was expropriated, in my opinion.

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The main factor is still, of course, the lists, many of them exist nowadays.

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But what it generally said was that if your housing association or your department has been on this list for more than five years,

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which is, I guess you would say, I think it's called the ghetto list, it's called something else,

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but back then, if you've been consecutively on this one for five years, some interference and engagement has to be made.

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It was not necessarily a social institution, it was not necessarily this that should happen.

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But the only parameter that was basically set for this was that the amount of general housing or non-profit housing

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has to be reduced to 40% of what it is now in a specific area.

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This area is not necessarily bound to a department, but to an arbitrary area pointed out by the government or the

municipality together with the housing association.

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Meaning, basically, gerrymandering it, if these terms make sense.

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And it should also be mentioned that it's actually the so-called general family housing, which is very strange,

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because in that sense, family means that everybody can live there.

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So they want to diminish the percentage of housing where everybody can live,

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to make it more mixed in the area and more balanced. And that makes absolutely no sense.

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The only logic is that actually you can have general housing for students and for old people,

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and also care homes that can actually be on the other side.

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So you can change or you can build new or something like that.

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It's a detail, but it still perhaps gives an idea of how stupid and how arbitrary these ideas are.

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And the foundation for this is that the housing that everybody can live in,

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and where you politically can decide who can live there on the criteria,

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like for some years you can make conditions that you have to earn a certain amount of money,

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or you have to have education, etc. And you should not be sentenced for any crime or something like that,

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to mix up who lives there. And other times you do it the other way around,

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to keep the balance both socially and in the area.

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And you say that kind of housing, we should have less of that to make it more balanced.

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Yes, what you're talking about is flexible criteria, which is something part of this,

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but not entirely what was made in 2018.

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But the point of the matter is, it's general housing, it's family housing that has to be reduced.

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And this is done by five parameters actually.

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One of them is being what is the crime rate, it has to be three times, I think it is, the national average.

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And then there's income, which has to be at least 60% of the local or the regional average.

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55% of the regional average at least.

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And then there is employment, same goes for this. That's actually local, I think, and not only regional.

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I think it's national. No, it's fixed, actually.

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Yeah, it's fixed.

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It's a very large number, which also includes people who are unable to work.

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And you should not have more than 40% of that very broad definition of unemployment.

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Yes, your unemployment includes people who are retired before time or on social benefits and everything,

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or are sick, for example. But it doesn't include people who are pensioners and people below the age of 15, right?

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And not in education. And then what else was I saying?

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I was saying employment, income, crime.

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Education.

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Education, yeah. So the educational level has to be elementary school or ninth grade or above.

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Above.

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Yeah.

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So you have to have some kind of high school level.

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Exactly. Yeah. So that means that you need to have more than the basic school.

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The problem with this, for example, is that if you come from a different country, if you're not from Denmark originally,

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or you're educated elsewhere, you have to get this recognized by the government.

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This is not necessarily done by default.

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And then you register as not having an education, even though you might actually have a lot of education or a higher form of education.

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So this accounts negatively in the statistics.

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Also, your education won't count before you turn to the age of 30.

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For whatever reason, I don't know, but that's how it is.

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And the last parameter is probably the most invasive.

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That's the one which is also discussed a lot about discrimination or racism.

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So no more than 50 percent of the area can be non-Western.

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This basically means anything non-white, I would argue, or non-European, with very few exceptions.

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It's a very broad term, but it's defined as if everybody is not from these areas or from the EU, well, then it can be called a ghetto, regardless of what scholars say to this.

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Because calling something a ghetto or calling something a parallel society means that people live in a certain way or live to a certain standard by a large extent or by a large margin.

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So even saying a country would not necessarily be far enough or culturally specific enough to call it a parallel society.

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But in this broad term, and this is also what is being contested against the ministry, against the government.

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And you can say that it's very much defined on the EU and then Anglo-Saxon countries colonized in America and Australia and New Zealand.

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And Japan.

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And Japan. And then, of course, some of the small Western European countries and the EEA countries, including Norway, Switzerland.

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But actually, the Eastern Europe is not considered Western. Portugal is considered Western, but Brazil, having the same language and is situated much west of Portugal, is non-Western.

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Yeah, all of South America is non-Western for some reason.

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Yeah, yeah. But it's... So some might say that it might be a bit racist.

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And as far as I know, it's actually unique for Denmark. That's a different kind of exceptionalism.

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One thing I would like to mention about education, about this, that it only counts between 30 years and 64 years old.

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We mentioned before that young people are getting lots and lots of education in Denmark.

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And especially in the big non-profit housing areas, which means that if they had actually lowered the age where you could be counted in, in the education criteria, no area would be on the list.

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Even if you went down to 18 years. No, no, of course, they could be on the list, but no area would be on the wrong side of the criteria.

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Yeah, because the young people get so much education now.

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Yeah, actually, I have a story to that, because from one of the areas, a family I've engaged or helped out.

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So one of their children is a doctor, but they're originally from a non-Western country.

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So before, because she was a doctor before the age of 30, she actually counted negatively in the statistics, simply because of being non-Western, even though she was working as a doctor in Denmark.

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Educated in Denmark. So this way you can say that it's kind of wicked or crooked to a negative extent or to paint a narrative in my opinion.

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Also crime counts from 15 and upwards.

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Yeah, yeah, you can. Yeah, then you can count in if you if you commit crimes.

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Of course.

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And young people still, even though it has been much lower, then it's more young people.

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And you could even look at an area where there's much more young people in percentage.

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And you could say that just because of that, statistically, they would actually get on the list compared to a national average of very elderly areas and other kinds of the countries.

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Yeah, but they have, if we haven't mentioned it, they have changed the criteria over time because the areas work people living there work themselves out, educate themselves out of these criteria.

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So they have been changing them over time.

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Since 18.

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So they could keep the areas in lists and they have even made a new list in 21.

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Prevention list, which means that it's a list.

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So where you can put areas to avoid that they get into a list.

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It doesn't have any effect other than they're you're being surveilled, basically, or overview.

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Right. So in order to engage or execute a development plan, which is, well, minimizing the amount of general housing, well, the brain you do that is when you fulfill two of these or extend two of these criteria together with the criteria for non-Westerners or discrimination.

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So that means that if you're not foreigners living in an area and two of the criteria are overstepped, then you are on the list.

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And if you can continue to be on this list, you will then execute a development plan.

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A development plan is basically an infrastructure plan to change the area and to minimize the amount of general housing.

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It does not necessarily include the demolishing or sale or reinvention of the housing.

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And the problem here is, as I said, as we said, you can change it into anything other than non-profit housing, meaning it can still be rental apartments that you build or that you sell off to.

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They just have to make a profit.

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It can also be owners apartments with some criteria.

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It can also be part of ownership.

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It doesn't really matter as long as it's just not general housing anymore.

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For everyone.

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It can be for specific groups.

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Yeah.

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So just to maybe summarize.

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So if you fulfill these three criteria, the one on non-Western and two other criteria for a certain period of time, then the state can expropriate up to 40% of the housing units.

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No, 60%.

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60%.

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But only.

26:18.560 --> 26:24.560

They're not necessarily expropriating, but they have to or they are.

26:24.560 --> 26:34.560

The legislation says that the housing association together with the city council has to come up and execute a development plan.

26:34.560 --> 26:40.560

If the housing association then refuses, it's done between the state and the city council.

26:40.560 --> 26:44.560

If the city council refuses, then it would be expropriated.

26:44.560 --> 27:02.560

So it's not necessarily expropriation by definition, but because the legislation was made in a way that there's no way around it, I would argue to still call it expropriated since you are forced to diminish the amount of housing.

27:02.560 --> 27:10.560

You're forced to actually let go of, I would say, material or housing, right?

27:10.560 --> 27:11.560

Property.

27:11.560 --> 27:18.560

So you're forced to convert up to 60% of the existing housing to other forms of housing.

27:18.560 --> 27:24.560

Or you can also build new or get someone to build new house.

27:24.560 --> 27:30.560

In principle, you could do what we have proposed in many areas to build lots of used housing.

27:30.560 --> 27:38.560

And also a little for elderly people that could still be general non-profit housing, democracy, etc.

27:39.560 --> 28:03.560

But there have also been other interests in it, like the economic interests in many places, especially in the big cities, that they wanted to capitalize either the buildings like in Monchengladbach or the areas like in Zimbia and other places also.

28:04.560 --> 28:06.560

So, yeah.

28:06.560 --> 28:15.560

Also, of course, they could build capitalized housing instead of selling out or demolishing.

28:15.560 --> 28:22.560

But in some areas, in smaller towns or cities, you cannot sell anything.

28:22.560 --> 28:25.560

No one wants to buy anything.

28:25.560 --> 28:29.560

So you have to demolish or do something.

28:30.560 --> 28:39.560

It's a big risk and it's a big load on both residents and housing associations, regardless of whether they wanted to actively speak for this or against this.

28:39.560 --> 28:47.560

Because it interferes with the association itself, but also very much the individual.

28:47.560 --> 28:51.560

So you also ask what Almen Modstand is.

28:51.560 --> 28:58.560

It's a grassroots movement consisting of nerds like me and Jean, who knows a lot about housing.

28:59.560 --> 29:02.560

And who has been...

29:02.560 --> 29:04.560

Well, both of us live there.

29:04.560 --> 29:08.560

It doesn't require us to live there, but it's activism.

29:08.560 --> 29:10.560

So it's speaking up against this.

29:10.560 --> 29:15.560

It's calling out the faulty behavior.

29:15.560 --> 29:22.560

And it's basically fundraising to mobilize against any...

29:22.560 --> 29:27.560

Well, I guess I won't call it necessarily swindle or fraudulent behavior.

29:27.560 --> 29:32.560

But these private investors profiteering and advocating for this.

29:32.560 --> 29:41.560

And the lobbyism also in housing association to promote the concept of Ghetto legislation and Blended by.

29:41.560 --> 29:44.560

Basically to say that this is the future, this is the way to go.

29:44.560 --> 29:47.560

And by this giving up a lot of rights.

29:47.560 --> 29:58.560

So we're funding a lot of different things and trying to aid, mobilizing politically a bit, juridically.

29:58.560 --> 30:03.560

This is done separately mainly from renters association and lawyers.

30:03.560 --> 30:05.560

Because it's in court.

30:06.560 --> 30:11.560

But other than that, I think all that an activist follow up.

30:11.560 --> 30:12.560

Jean?

30:12.560 --> 30:16.560

Yeah, the court cases is of course also something.

30:16.560 --> 30:26.560

Those people denying to move away and also against the whole legislation.

30:27.560 --> 30:36.560

And then of course organizing and forming, trying to take over power in the housing associations.

30:36.560 --> 30:37.560

Which is very necessary.

30:37.560 --> 30:44.560

All that we who live there and actually wants to keep each other's homes can take over.

30:44.560 --> 30:50.560

And change the culture and the way it works.

30:50.560 --> 30:52.560

Yeah, probably.

30:52.560 --> 30:53.560

It's also very important.

30:53.560 --> 30:57.560

It's a part-time volunteer business.

30:57.560 --> 31:07.560

So from a renter's perspective it's impossible to keep up with a complete administration and a CEO fighting to tear down your house.

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So in order to aid this, we try to engage actively.

31:13.560 --> 31:18.560

We try to advocate but also advise as much as we can.

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And try to make things that we can publicize and actually share with residents all over.

31:26.560 --> 31:31.560

Because it's simply too vast a subject to just be aware of.

31:31.560 --> 31:40.560

Or to actually know enough about as an individual resident who might do something entirely different for work.

31:41.560 --> 31:46.560

So you're up against a big monster player basically.

31:46.560 --> 31:53.560

Yeah, and you can say Almen Modstand is a campaign, a movement where everybody can

31:53.560 --> 32:03.560

And as long as you do something that is in accordance with our principles, you can do whatever in your local area together with your neighbors.

32:03.560 --> 32:06.560

It's Almen Modstand.

32:06.560 --> 32:14.560

We also have the original association or what you might say that's actually a support association for this movement.

32:14.560 --> 32:22.560

So that can... Yeah, the support association can employ people etc.

32:23.560 --> 32:36.560

But Almen Modstand as such is a movement and a campaign and something that everybody can just say, I'm Almen Modstand.

32:36.560 --> 32:38.560

So...

32:38.560 --> 32:40.560

Sebastian, go ahead.

32:40.560 --> 32:45.560

So I have like a bunch of questions. I'm just going to start with one thing.

32:46.560 --> 32:57.560

As you sort of really nicely paint a picture of how there are different systems of evaluation at play.

32:57.560 --> 33:03.560

Where you have like a bureaucratic system that really is dependent on a large part of statistics.

33:03.560 --> 33:15.560

And some what you define as arbitrary ways of, let's say, carrying out politics that ultimately have like this coercive force.

33:15.560 --> 33:21.560

And which does not really reflect the experiences from the people who actually live there.

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And you're also talking about how to sort of operate within a legal system.

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So I guess my two questions is...

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Because my two questions is that...

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Can you take us a little bit through some of the political motivations for having this law?

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I mean, you know, you have like some things that seems rather harsh.

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But also very racist.

33:53.560 --> 34:02.560

Why would a nice and convivial place like Scandinavia, why would they put those kind of practices into play?

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And the other thing that I would be interested in is...

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How does... Do you have like... Do you feel you have success in court?

34:13.560 --> 34:18.560

Thinking about the powerful antagonists you are fighting.

34:18.560 --> 34:22.560

I mean, corporations, politicians and so on.

34:22.560 --> 34:24.560

So my first thing is...

34:24.560 --> 34:29.560

Can you tell me a little bit about the political motivations for having like this against the law?

34:29.560 --> 34:33.560

And who is perhaps... Who have conceived it or who is behind it?

34:33.560 --> 34:39.560

And how does this struggle function within sort of like a legal system?

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Can I say one thing?

34:42.560 --> 34:45.560

So, well, there is the legislation itself.

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There's a lot of preamble to this.

34:48.560 --> 34:51.560

Or not a lot, actually. That's the problem.

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But the notion that the then housing minister made...

34:55.560 --> 35:04.560

Was that he saw that all general housing should be abolished.

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Simply because his notion is that you have to make a profit somehow.

35:08.560 --> 35:14.560

And you need to make a profit of housing as well.

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So he wanted it all to be abolished.

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And that was literally his statement when the legislation came through as well.

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He was very happy about it.

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Beforehand, I mean, it was thought out already back...

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Two, three prime ministers back, basically.

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As I said, 2010, 11 or something when it first engaged.

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But also before that.

35:34.560 --> 35:41.560

So it was a scapegoat or a scare tactic from a lot of right-wing politicians, in my opinion.

35:41.560 --> 35:46.560

To say this is going bad among others because of immigration.

35:46.560 --> 35:49.560

This is going bad because of lack of education.

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So the mundane or the moderate person would then be more inclined to say...

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That's not good. We have to do something about it.

35:56.560 --> 36:02.560

And then somehow without any prejudice or without any scientific reason...

36:02.560 --> 36:09.560

A weird notion of mixed housing or mixed areas came to light.

36:09.560 --> 36:13.560

I think he's originally a film producer or something.

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He's not an architect.

36:15.560 --> 36:19.560

But the fact that different kinds of housing would then engage and make it better.

36:19.560 --> 36:23.560

Sort of saying that it would enrich an area.

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Or that wealth sort of transmits to the next person.

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When you move more wealthy people into an area.

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Which there's no grounds or basics for saying.

36:34.560 --> 36:42.560

The only other place that we could look to back then was the Netherlands or Holland.

36:42.560 --> 36:49.560

Where basically they by accident abolished their sort of social and non-profit housing.

36:49.560 --> 36:52.560

Because they forgot to actually protect it.

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And then somebody complained to the EU and it was voted against the government.

36:57.560 --> 37:02.560

Meaning that some non-profit housing has to take a profit now in Holland.

37:02.560 --> 37:05.560

To live up to competitive standards.

37:05.560 --> 37:07.560

Because it was unfair competition.

37:07.560 --> 37:09.560

That was the only notion.

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And now we know that it's a complete train wreck.

37:11.560 --> 37:15.560

Down there and amongst other places.

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In the Netherlands they're selling out non-profit housing.

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To build new much more expensive non-profit housing.

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So you can say that they eat themselves up over time.

37:29.560 --> 37:31.560

Because they get less and less.

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At some point 87% of the housing in Amsterdam was that kind of non-profit housing.

37:42.560 --> 37:46.560

Which is different than the Danish general housing.

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But still some kind of non-profit housing.

37:49.560 --> 37:51.560

It's not anymore.

37:52.560 --> 38:01.560

And it has at some point been seen as something that we should also have in Denmark.

38:01.560 --> 38:05.560

But nobody talks about that anymore.

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But all of this has a lot to do with the so-called system change in 2001.

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When the right wing took over power together with the extreme right wing.

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And racism was a very important part of this.

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And in some way it might sound totally insane.

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But the racism is kind of the sugar on the pill of capitalization.

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Which is in this legislation.

38:41.560 --> 38:46.560

And the G (Ghetto) word. I never use the actual word.

38:46.560 --> 38:48.560

But it's like kind of other words.

38:48.560 --> 38:58.560

This G word is also putting some kind of racist label on this legislation.

38:58.560 --> 39:01.560

Even though it...

39:02.560 --> 39:07.560

Of course there should be one of the...

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The criteria is 50% so-called non-Western.

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But you can still have 49.9% people who have been living...

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All their ancestors have been living in Denmark for many generations.

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And they will still be hit by this.

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Yeah. And you can also still be considered non-Western even though you're third generation.

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Which is crazy to me.

39:38.560 --> 39:42.560

But also it's deflected from European legislation.

39:42.560 --> 39:49.560

And it's spoken out against this saying that the word that you don't use, the ghetto.

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It cannot be defined as such.

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Which is also why the legislation is called parallel society I assume.

39:55.560 --> 40:00.560

But it's not living up to the standards of what you would call a ghetto.

40:00.560 --> 40:03.560

By any means. Far from it.

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Which is why it's so problematic.

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Not necessarily to use the word but to align it with such.

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Because it is literally just another housing area.

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You wouldn't know it if you weren't told it many times.

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These so-called ghetto areas or development areas.

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Actually our big general non-profit housing areas is the mixed city that they talk about.

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Yeah.

40:33.560 --> 40:40.560

We are the most mixed and people, despite anything, even if people are so-called non-Western,

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they will come from many different backgrounds.

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Many of them will be born and raised in Denmark.

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Many of them will be from many, many, many different countries and different areas and religions etc.

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So we are actually also permanently campaigning we are the mixed city.

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Also because if you have the different kinds of ownership forms in the same area,

41:06.560 --> 41:08.560

it makes a lot of problems.

41:08.560 --> 41:15.560

Because some people are living there to earn a profit on their self-owning house or apartment.

41:15.560 --> 41:21.560

So they have different interests than people who are thinking of the whole area and the neighbors.

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And cannot make a profit.

41:24.560 --> 41:31.560

And some have a private landlord so they cannot decide anything themselves.

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And then it's a capital fund company that sits on some of the seats etc.

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So you cannot... I have not heard of a successful so-called mixed ownership area.

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But I have heard lots of comments about it.

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Yeah, but the limit is right of everyone when you do it like that.

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Because there is specific rights associated to what form of housing you have, right?

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So you also asked about what goes on in court.

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I'm paralegal, I can't go to court just yet.

42:00.560 --> 42:07.560

But I do prep a lot of cases and I do prep a lot of smaller claims.

42:07.560 --> 42:13.560

So basically the local committees and tribunals that's where I send the cases that I have.

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So what goes on?

42:15.560 --> 42:17.560

Well, there's objection cases.

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Objection against termination of one's contract.

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And how is this going?

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Given the fact that this has never really been a thing before.

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It's very much up in the air what is going on and how it's going.

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What we can say is that in all rules they're inclined to go to put a verdict against the renters and against the residents, right?

42:41.560 --> 42:51.560

So they've done that a few times without any notion really or without any sort of reasoning other than they knew that they were going to be terminated.

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Yeah, but is it still rightful, right?

42:53.560 --> 42:56.560

And how should they then be offered something else?

42:56.560 --> 43:03.560

Here in Copenhagen there is only one place to align with and that's in Mjolnerparken.

43:03.560 --> 43:09.560

Those cases have just been to court and they will have a verdict in I think it's February.

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So we actually don't know the outcome of individual objections.

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Objections is something that we advise in of something that we not encourage to necessarily.

43:22.560 --> 43:32.560

But we at least make sure that it's possible and that it can be funded not by the individual resident but by a legal fund instead, right?

43:33.560 --> 43:37.560

So this is taking place hopefully more and more places, more is to come.

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But we don't really know which direction it will go.

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Other cases are against the one you've probably heard of and that you can read a lot more about if you go to Open Society Justice Initiative site.

43:51.560 --> 43:56.560

It's the case of Mjølnerparken against the government of Denmark, against the housing ministry.

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Right now that case is going to the European Court of Justice because it has formulated questions of discrimination and direct and indirect discrimination.

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So it relates to the EU legislation that we've signed in Denmark.

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The treaties signed which is for free movement and discrimination and all of this.

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I don't know how much I should explain about this given that you sit in Norway or in the Norwegian University.

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But I assume that you know that we have international treaties bound to the EU.

44:40.560 --> 44:56.560

And that's what is being... When there's question to supranational matters and it's unanswered in any kind of situation, it has to be brought forward to the European Court for answers.

44:56.560 --> 45:01.560

So this is currently waiting and it's probably set in the spring here.

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So then after this the High Court will then have a verdict or judge by the definition coming from the EU Court of Justice.

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They say EC, EU, CJ I think or something. I can't remember the English translation.

45:17.560 --> 45:22.560

But we don't necessarily know which direction it goes.

45:23.560 --> 45:37.560

I think it's a pretty good case because previously the Commission of the EU and Institute of Human Rights etc. have spoken out against this and said that well you cannot call something non-Western.

45:37.560 --> 45:49.560

It's too broad a term and it's not near enough to be discriminatory yet it is too broad to be an actual valid form of parameter.

45:49.560 --> 45:55.560

So it's very much up in well what can be said what cannot be said.

45:55.560 --> 46:11.560

All I can say is that the government has barred the decision to make it in front of the EU Court of Justice three times and was then turned down at the end by the Western High Court or Eastern High Court.

46:12.560 --> 46:28.560

So that is now happening. There's one case that's actually waiting for the UK's many or so before they go to Supreme Court or similar which is from Northern Zealand or from Helsinki or what's it called?

46:29.560 --> 46:46.560

So one of the judges in this case actually spoke out and said this that he could not make a decision based on the fact that it was not explained whether non-Western was too broad a term or it was a valid definition.

46:46.560 --> 46:51.560

So they were also talking about the discrimination of the case.

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So it has been brought forward before. So everything is saying that well I think that it's going in the right direction but not necessarily in all progress.

47:01.560 --> 47:03.560

There's a lot more than just this.

47:04.560 --> 47:16.560

Yeah in that specific area they could actually just let the apartments be empty when people move because people are moving around.

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That's normal that 7% moves in a year or something like that in a housing area in any kind of house apartments you have.

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But they instead chose to show people out.

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So then that's also because by letting the apartments be empty they would be below 1,000 inhabitants.

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That's also a criteria behind the criteria.

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It has to be non-profit general housing and the area has to be more than 1,000 inhabitants.

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That's also part of what has happened to Mjolnerparken.

47:55.560 --> 48:00.560

That's the only thing that the important thing that has happened to Mjolnerparken.

48:00.560 --> 48:14.560

Because they have moved so many people away, temporary or permanently, they are below 1,000 and then they are not characterized as a so-called society.

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But in reality they just deported people.

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So it's not a success even though the Lord Mayor of Copenhagen claims it.

48:23.560 --> 48:39.560

Can I just ask also because I think so what you have described already now I think is that there is like this racist logic and this capitalist logic behind the attack on general non-profit housing in Denmark.

48:40.560 --> 48:55.560

And one question I have about that is do you see this as the racist discourse as an excuse for trying to undermine the foundation of general housing?

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Or how do you see the relation between the racism on one hand and the wish to capitalize on some of these general housing areas?

49:06.560 --> 49:08.560

So that's one question.

49:08.560 --> 49:19.560

And then the second question I had actually was I heard a radio show also about even because of all these court cases and all this uncertainty about what will happen to these areas.

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In one way even if the cases are won in court it has already taken such a huge toll on a lot of residents in these general housing areas.

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So they move away anyways because they are like I cannot deal with this uncertainty anymore.

49:34.560 --> 49:37.560

And also the personal cost for people who live in these areas.

49:37.560 --> 49:40.560

I was wondering if you could speak to those two things.

49:40.560 --> 49:52.560

Yeah I would say that there's a lot to this about racism as the excuse of the capitalization.

49:52.560 --> 50:01.560

Of course some are very racist, some are very capitalistic and then some are mixed about that from the politicians.

50:02.560 --> 50:13.560

But also and the interest behind but also this that we 20 about 20% of housing in Denmark is general non-profit housing.

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I mean fully but it also means that 80% is not.

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So you can make some of the 80% living in other kinds of housing believe that there's something wrong about us 1.2 million living in housing.

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So that's also part of the problem actually.

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And you see that general non-profit housing I mean fully is a much bigger success.

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Also having very large areas that have never been on any kind of lists in the suburbs of Copenhagen where you have a large percentage of non-profit housing.

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Our kind of non-profit housing 40% up to 65%.

50:58.560 --> 51:00.560

That works better.

51:00.560 --> 51:09.560

We work where it doesn't function as good as well when you have a low percentage in the municipality.

51:09.560 --> 51:13.560

Yeah no that's actually not something.

51:13.560 --> 51:17.560

To me yes there's the racism, there's the displacement, there's everything of this.

51:17.560 --> 51:22.560

So is that the main factor or notion behind all this?

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I think to a degree it is.

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It depends on who you ask as I also mentioned.

51:27.560 --> 51:43.560

But to me the biggest or the largest problem that will persevere regardless of whether the legislation is deemed unlawful or unconstitutional is still the question of the right to gather or the right to associate.

51:43.560 --> 51:49.560

So unionizing an association is founded in many constitutional laws including Danish right.

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And to me this is a direct attack on this associative right or unionizing right because you go in and you dictate how we can actually live and how we can actually act and how we can associate to one another.

52:05.560 --> 52:16.560

So we are not free to associate or to unionize how we do, how we want to which is actually non-constitutional.

52:16.560 --> 52:25.560

Not many think of this and this is sort of an exterior or an outlet or a lead factor of the whole legislation.

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But to me talking about rights and talking about justice this is my greatest concern because when you look at what they're doing in Sweden, what they're doing in Finland which is much more invasive or maybe much more invasive right.

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The problem that persists is the main factor is that it's dictation of one's everyday life or one's freedom of movement, freedom of association.

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Just much more invasive there.

52:55.560 --> 53:00.560

So it's sort of they are doing the same thing just taking it even further that we have in Denmark.

53:01.560 --> 53:15.560

And I think that it's a problematic way of sort of pushing this through under the carpet or underlining the main narrative which is discrimination and racism.

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Because that is very blatant. I mean they do not even deny it right.

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And a lot of extreme right wingers play into this.

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Yeah but also actually it has been some kind of a reason or an official reason to do this that you had social problems in some of the areas.

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But as the social problems have diminished so much, very little is talked about that now.

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Actually even though sometimes you see the pre-judge even in newspaper articles.

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But it has diminished a lot because these kind of social problems have diminished.

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Now it's only because there is a law so we have to do this and that and we have to destroy this.

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And also when you talk about climate and environment it's also completely insane to destroy buildings.

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And the normal principle in Denmark now is that we have to preserve the buildings, have to use them for new purposes instead of destroying the buildings and build up new ones in concrete.

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It's very much concrete used as a building material in Denmark.

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But this legislation is doing the exact opposite.

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In our house we are in the same housing association where we are fighting against demolition of 42 one level row houses that are extremely perfect.

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You couldn't imagine a more perfect place to live if you have disabilities.

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And the vast majority of people living there have at least one family member with disabilities.

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So they have a parking space outside, they have a small terrace in the front so you can sit there and enjoy the local life.

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And you have a garden on the other side and you have natural light from big windows that are hidden.

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And big rooms, big bathrooms, everything is perfect if you have this kind of disability.

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They just want to destroy it anyway.

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They are saying that it is not incorporated well in the area even though it's all drawn by Stinaela Rasmussen which is one of the founding fathers of modern city planning, right?

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Especially in Denmark.

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And it's even decided in the highest assembly in our housing association that they should be preserved or that we should work to preserve it.

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Even though the majority of the board is working to demolish them and the administration and the highest manager, director, what you call it.

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And it's completely insane.

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And they are handing in some municipality plans of destroying the buildings that have actually been decided in the association that should be preserved.

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And they have even tried to claim us as criminals because we are breaking up the dialogue with the municipality.

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It's so important.

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The police has said no, no, there's no nothing in that.

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But the notion of that is that you are fighting against big administrations that either don't want to admit to faulted behavior or mistakes.

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But they do have, well, all the residents' money behind them.

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So the problem is that if you are just one resident or one association or one department, it's a big and larger administration that you are fighting against.

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And they have all the tools necessary and can abuse them as they want, right?

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You asked another question as well, and I've forgotten what that was about.

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Well, that was more about the toll on residents.

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But I can see the time is running.

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So I was wondering, Sebastian, do you have any other questions that you want to ask?

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I have one thread that I want to sort of pick up on.

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And that was just you made comparisons with Finland and Sweden, which you say have like a more intervening politics, housing politics than we have in Denmark.

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But I was just wondering, because as I see this, there's both sort of like the local struggle, perhaps a regional struggle, a national struggle.

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But then perhaps also a more sort of like the Nordic region struggle.

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Like, do you draw or learn from each other's experiences?

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Do you also have like similar initiatives in other countries?

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Do you talk with them and so on?

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Yeah, partially.

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I speak to a few, mainly researchers, actually.

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But the main, I haven't really, in Finland, I've only heard this or been told and read a bit into it through journalists.

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In Sweden, I speak to a few researchers and associations as well.

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Problem or the difference is in Sweden that they have the reverse system.

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So you sort of associate and unionize yourself as residence board, right?

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From, it's called Hyresgäst-föreningen, I think, or something like that.

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It has a name, we can look it up.

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So you register here and then you have an association.

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So in Sweden, there's a lot more active engagement because you have to sign up for it instead of being the default right.

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Not necessarily that one way or another is better, but it means that the resistance or struggle is that only about 9% of housing associations,

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private and non-profit or capitalizing and non-profit in Denmark is unionized, where I think is almost 40% in Sweden.

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So there's a big difference.

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And the difference is mainly that they register themselves, right?

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So we don't have a lot of, I want to try and internationalize it.

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There's a movement in Germany as well, where we have a few contacts.

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But because it is so specific or so far ahead in Denmark, I think it's a lot of it is them talk, speaking to us about what have we done and what do we want to do more than it's us reaching out at the moment.

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Yeah, and it's more like social housing in Sweden, for example.

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We have some contact with people who are active there, but it's completely different because they don't have the access to actually decide things and to make the budget and take money for local initiatives or local culture houses or something like that.

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We can actually do that because we are the association and we are the local areas.

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And if we agree on something in our local areas, we can do it.

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But this thing to take over the entire associations is a bigger struggle.

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And to associate this, there is one notion that's important because then we can speak about the amount of displacement, we can speak about the toll that it take on the individual as well, which is very large and very invasive and not really bettering any situation so that you're not getting out of the list by displacing people.

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They are just worse off.

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So what happens in Sweden is one of the researchers, he's or associations, he called it Renovreg, meaning that they renovate to destroy basically so that they reestablish the same housing just in the worst condition or make it faulty or put in bad installations or whatever.

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So they literally try to force people out this way where they literally raise the rent and by worsening the situation because it's a different standard now.

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It has been modernized.

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This can be done every fifth year or something.

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It's insane.

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So that's also a lot of it what's happening in Denmark.

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That's a great similarity that they're destroying and displacing people's lives by saying that they're trying to better the situation and renovating.

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But in turn, the opposite is happening and construction and remodeling projects are far behind schedule and over costly.

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Yeah, and they're also doing that in private rent and also some of the very big capital funds try to take over some other kind of housing association that is based on people buying a share of the entire house, etc.

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So it's not the general housing and it's not non-profit, but it's locally governed by the inhabitants in some kind of association.

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But many of them have economic problems and then they're taken over by a capital fund that promised that they can keep the low rent.

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But then they try to make everything possible to get people out of their homes by a different kind of harassment of building, making lots of noise all the time, etc.

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But, oh, now I forgot something else.

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Yeah, in Gjellerup, when you talk about colonization, I think it's always an interesting story to tell that they have destroyed many blocks.

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They were starting in the west of Aarhus, the second largest city in Copenhagen, or in Denmark, I'm sorry.

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They had made so-called pioneer houses, which is like the European colonization of North America.

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And they had made Danish famous author's names on the streets, also because there was a very nice park for the children, very big area to play.

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And also housing, big housing blocks, etc. They have destroyed and they made some kind of ugly buildings for municipality and something else and private rent and parking space, parking house for cars.

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And this street named after Karen Blixen, which is not only a famous Danish writer, author, but also a colonizer of Africa.

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So you can really be sure now we are colonizing this housing area.

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And I think that sort of really wraps the whole thing up.

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By drawing in colonialism, I can think about new ways of gentrifying, not by optimizing things, but actually by downgrading them about discrimination towards disabled peoples.

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So there's so much in there. I mean, we should have like several more podcasts about this topic, because there's so many things to unpack.

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Unfortunately, we don't have that much time. Do you have anything you want to say, Anders?

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No.

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Okay, but I think that sort of concludes this session.

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And thank you so much for joining and really sort of bumping us with a lot of information and a lot of thoughts and so

on.

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It was really, really nice that you wanted to come and share your experiences and give us so many details.

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It was very, very informative.

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And yeah, so thank you very much to you both.

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Thank you.