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Danish Desires for Externalization and Non-Integration

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Introduction

This paper assesses with the Danish Frederiksen-government's legislative proposal to externalize asylum processing and refugee obligations from Danish territory. A challenge with this task is the absence of much information in the proposal. Several crucial questions remain unanswerable, including: Where the extra-territorial facilities are to be located; who has responsibility for them; which authorities Denmark will collaborate with; which standards the asylum processing will be exported to; the domestic or geopolitical context of the host country; how the hosts will treat minorities, and many more. This illustrates a circular justification in the proposed legislation: It posits that the policy will be in accordance with Danish international obligations and human rights standards, simply because *if* the Danish government decides to externalize asylum processing and refugees' stay *then* it will be because it is in compliance with international obligations and human rights. At the current stage, such circular guarantees remain utterly hypothetical. Still, an analysis of the proposal helps to ascertain the rationale of policy-makers, allow for contextualization of the policy drive, and also adds the case study of current Danish politics to the existing literature on externalization. In what follows, I first explain the components of the proposed policy in more detail. Second, I introduce, define and reflect upon the concept of externalization, as a conceptual framework for understanding the Danish policy development. Third, after this, I turn back to consider the debates, framings and discussions, which have surrounded this particular externalization policy as it has evolved through both Danish and international contexts. Finally, I end up with some concluding remarks.

The Danish proposal for externalization

On February 4th, 2021, the Social Democrat Frederiksen-government sent out a legislative proposal for public consultations from a range of stakeholders, public agencies and civil society actors and organizations. It was accompanied by a legal note prepared by a Task Force working

to realize the externalization of Danish asylum obligations, under the Ministry of Immigration and Integration. The consultation process was set to last one month. The proposal aims at shutting down Danish authorities' processing of asylum claims, and granting of stay for refugees, on Danish territory. Instead, these will be exported abroad to extraterritorial facilities in one or several unnamed and thus hypothetical countries. According to the legislative proposal, people filing asylum applications in Denmark should undergo an accelerated procedure assessing their "transferability" to the extra-territorial, where the host country is allegedly required to act in accordance with certain rights standard. These are derived from a decidedly minimalistic reading of the 1951 Refugee Convention.¹ Two models are proposed, where the facilities are placed either under the responsibility of Danish or under the host country's authority with Danish government officials expressing a preference for the latter model.

The proposal envisions a significant upscaling of incarceration and detention of asylum seekers as early as possible in their processes, for the purpose of ensuring asylum seekers' "transferability" to some form of processing facilities or camps located outside Europe. The extraterritorial facilities will not allow for successful asylum applicants to travel to Denmark, nor would people be allowed to file asylum applications at these facilities. If such a facility is located in Country X, then it won't be possible for people to show up at the camp in Country X and apply for asylum on Danish territory. And whether people get asylum or not, they are to remain in Country X. In the words of the proposal:

Through such a transfer to a third country, an asylum application originally launched in Denmark will no longer lead to a residency permit in Denmark. The model is therefore built on a presupposition that Denmark would not offer protection in cases where foreigners are granted asylum after due processing of asylum applications in the third country. The protection will, on the contrary, be granted by the third country in question. If the applicant's asylum application is refused, it will similarly be the third country in question, who will ensure the return of the person.²

¹ The proposal mentions some possible exceptions, such as the right to privacy and family life, seriously ill foreigners, Dublin transfers, as well as other poorly defined "groups of foreigners," which can be exempted due to "resource or other factual considerations." Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration 2021: 11.

² Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration 2021: 5.

According to the proposal, the processing facilities are to be constructed after an “agreement or equivalent arrangement with a third country” requiring that country to act in accordance with certain obligations.³ It is not possible to say anything substantial about the concrete rights and obligations of the plans because of their hypothetical character. But with its vision of halting spontaneous refugee movement through a large-scale, transnational system of migration control, such a legislation clearly would have vast implications for the Danish refugee protection policies.

Understanding Externalization

The legislative proposal can be understood as an instance of border externalization. This concept can be defined as processes whereby actors complement policies to control migration across their territorial boundaries with initiatives for extraterritorial control through other public or private agencies than their own.⁴ The above definition is derived from just about two decades of research into externalization processes. We can refer to this literature via the shorthand *externalization studies*. From the perspective of the externalizing actor or state, the policy works through a preventive logic, so that people’s ability to arrive on a territory where they can exercise the right to apply for asylum is pre-empted. Although externalization studies typically concern relations between countries from the global north and south, such policies are also pursued in north-north and south-south relations. For instance, the EU’s Dublin Regulation effectively transforms countries such as Greece, Italy and Spain into the externalized border guards of the North-Western member states.

But with the Danish proposal, this logic seems to be coupled with an intention to empty the country’s protection system of content in Denmark, by exporting it to another location. But it is worth noting that while the current legislative proposal constitutes a fundamental break with the Danish and most other countries’ asylum system, Danish migration control policies already rely on the externalization of border control. This happens for instance through Frontex operations in the Union’s border regions as well as via bilateral agreements with countries like Ghana and Tunisia. Indeed, such forms of externalized control are far from new. Horrific examples continue to occur across regions like the Maghreb and Sahel, and in countries like

³ Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration 2021: 10.

⁴ Lemberg-Pedersen, “*Effective protection or effective combat?*”; Moreno-Lax and Lemberg-Pedersen, “*Border-induced displacement.*”

Libya, Morocco, Niger, Algeria, and outside Europe also in Australia's Pacific Solution, which involved camps on Nauru and Papa New Guinea. The legality, functionality and issues of accountability of externalization for human rights has been dealt with extensively in the research literature.⁵ Some analyses have dealt with the contentious discussions between EU Member States about the locations of such migrant camps.⁶ Other works have dealt with the political cross-fertilization of ideas between geographical regions such as Australia, USA and Europe.⁷ Externalization is often portrayed as the *decoupling* and *export* of border policing beyond the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. However, the particular Danish policy envisioned would in fact *multiply* the levels of border control. The addition of an extraterritorial layer of control outside Denmark will not serve its purpose unless it is tied to a domestic system that upscales both the incarceration and deportation of asylum seekers. This particular externalization proposal would therefore more accurately *double down* on territorial migration controls.

Irregularity, economic incentives and issue-linkages in externalization

There has been close to no engagement from the Danish government side with the body of research in externalization studies. Instead, after 2017, it contracted a small consultancy firm Migration Management Advice (MMA) to conduct a media campaign, write pieces in the Social Democrats member magazine, perform talks and presentations of the proposal, and publish comments in national media outlets. This led to a peculiarly cyclical ecosystem where the party's politicians would refer to comments from the consultancy firm as proof of independent expert support of their externalization policy. Here, it will not be possible to accurately relate the proposal to all possible points of relevance in the burgeoning externalization literature. But we can focus on three such points: The creation of border-induced displacement, the link between externalization and markets for border control, and the role of issue-linkages and policy transfers.

⁵ cf. Gammeltoft-Hansen, "Access to Asylum"; Bialasiewicz, "Off-shoring and out-sourcing the border of Europe"; Casas-Cortes et al., "Riding routes and itinerant borders"; Moreno-Lax, "Accessing Asylum in Europe."

⁶ Noll, "Visions of the exceptional"; Hansen, "EU migration policy in the post-Amsterdam era"; Lemberg-Pedersen, "Losing the right to have rights."

⁷ Hyndman, and Mountz, "Another brick in the wall?"; Mussi and Feith Tan, "Comparing Cooperation on Migration Control."

First off, externalization seems to facilitate irregular forms of displacement. For years, a large number of reports have linked the policy to undocumented existence, reliance on smugglers, massive rights violations⁸ and what I have elsewhere called border-induced displacement.⁹ Briefly, this concept denotes how states' control policies are not just reactive responses to displacement. They are also engines of their own distinct and dangerous forms of (re)displacement. If realized, the Danish proposal could facilitate such movements, in the form of the reliance on smugglers, the administrative transfers to detention facilities in third countries, and the extraterritorial mobility control over exercised there.

Second, externalization studies have also dealt with the kinds of incentives that this policy drive creates when it comes to border security and the militarization of migration control. A lot of control and surveillance equipment is necessary in order to realize the goals of pre-emptive migration control and containment of potential asylum seekers. Here, an important literature examines the contractual regimes underpinning such infrastructures, and how such political economies map onto European policies imposing control on and outside European territory.¹⁰ Of course, markets of border control are not always equivalent to spheres of externalization. States and organizations typically reap numerous contracts for control technologies within states' own territories. But externalization constitutes a troublesome corner of such industrial relations because it requires engagement with the military and security sectors of so-called third countries. Often these are already involved domestic repression, rights violations, population and minority persecution and violent control of migrants. When these institutions are turned into lucrative export markets for European and other military, security and ICT sectors, this can escalate cycles of violence, abuse and exploitation. A particularly damaging dynamic is the way in which many arms companies do not just export border infrastructure, but also conventional weapons. Such actors thereby derive profit not just from the original causes of displacement, but also from states subsequent control of the displaced through surveillance and control technologies. The way in which lucrative economic incentives are increasingly weaved

⁸ cf. Human Rights Watch, *"Pushed Back, Pushed Around"*; Amnesty International, *"The human rights risks of external migration policies"*; Carrera et al., *"Offshoring asylum and migration."*

⁹ Lemberg-Pedersen, *"Forcing Flows of Migrants"*; Lemberg-Pedersen, *"Effective protection or effective combat?"*; see also Moreno-Lax and Lemberg-Pedersen, *"Border-induced displacement."*

¹⁰ Lemberg-Pedersen, *"Private security companies and the European borderscapes"*; Kumar, *"Securing through Technology"*; Baird, *"Interest groups and strategic constructivism"*; Lemberg-Pedersen et al., *"The political economy of entry governance"*; Salas-Lopez and Godenau, *"In private hands?"*

into the fabric of externalized control also highlight predictable challenges with accountability and lacking political desires to investigate such violations. As such, the policy is associated with great risks for populations and migrants alike.

While the current Danish proposal is both significantly underdetermined and may also not be realized other measures could follow such a track. Thus, alongside its Austrian counterpart, the Danish government already announced a partnership on border security with Tunisian security forces in early 2020.¹¹ Awareness of the political economy of border control help clarify that any political vision of extraterritorial pre-emption, containment and deportation, will require material infrastructures and contractual relations and associated economic incentives. This point is often lost on national politicians who talk of upscaled control regimes through generic and state-centric analogies which blur the political-diplomatic, contractual, and legal implications of policy.

Regarding the third point, an emergent part of the literature on externalization arrangements concerns issue-linkages and policy transfers reflecting the diplomatic relations necessary to enact this kind of policy.¹² Existing arrangements illustrate that externalized control policies are often linked to other issues, such as economic compensation (demanded by Gaddafi from the EU in 2010), visa liberalisation and membership (demanded by Turkey after the controversial EU-Turkey Statement). In the case of Morocco, Spain and the EU, the issues have been fisheries agreements as well as the Moroccan colonial occupation of Western Sahara. Even though the latter flies in the face of the EUs own policy, it has been tacitly accepted by the union, because of Morocco's strategic role in migration control. From European states' perspective it has also often revolved around the conditional transfer of development aid, if non-European states align themselves with restrictive European migration policies. Externalization is thus not an isolated policy venue.

It is impossible to flesh out the political venues affected by the Danish proposal, as the legislation is void of candidate countries and thus of crucial contexts. But at a general level,

¹¹ Ministry of Immigration and Integration. 2020. Danmark og Østrig vil stoppe migrantstrøm, før den når EU [Denmark and Austria will stop migration flow before it reaches the EU]. Available at: <https://uim.dk/nyheder/danmark-og-ostrig-vil-stoppe-migrantstrom-for-den-nar-eu>.

¹² cf. Cassarino, "Beyond the criminalization of migration."

any international arrangement transfers political and often also financial capital between the transactional partners. The case of Turkey illustrates how the EU abruptly changed its own policy by categorizing the country as a safe for returns. This is not to say that externalization deals are situations where passive and humanitarian European states are blackmailed by unscrupulous non-European ones. Although a standard narrative in European media, it is important to acknowledge that European countries are often initiating such arrangements, and that the *quid pro quo* between externalization partners follows from how European governments seem willing to avoid asylum seekers *at any cost*. These risks also hover over the Danish government's externalization plans. Finally, while it is clear that much literature has operationalized the concept of externalization for critical inquiry, it is worth noting its inherent risk of Western-, Euro- or state-centrism.¹³ This may lead to flawed assumptions of a particular directionality in such policies, for instance from Denmark of Europe outwards. But the implications of externalization arrangements often run both ways. In what follows, the proposal will be analyzed through four claims asserted by the Frederiksen-government and the criticisms these have faced.

Tracing the Danish policy drive: Innovation or recycling?

A first claim has been that the externalization proposal is a ground-breaking and innovative fix for a broken global asylum system. In fact, however, the rationale is anything but new. Both in short-term Danish politics, and in the longer span of (failed) Northern European initiatives. Thus, in 2014, the Danish People's Party suggested that all Syrian asylum seekers should be immediately deported to camps in Uganda, which they claimed, could serve as a region of origin for them. The same year, the Liberal Alliance party presented a vision of carving out "small pieces of Denmark" in Lebanon and Jordan to which all war refugees should be sent.¹⁴ None of these initiatives were realized.

But already back in 1986, the Danish Schlüter-government proposed the creation of extraterritorial "processing centres" during a session in the UN's Third Committee. Here, however, the idea was fiercely rejected as unsolidaric, and calls were made for countries from

¹³ El Qadim, "Postcolonial Challenges to Migration Control."

¹⁴ Gjertsen, M. N., & Kaae, M. (2014, October 8). Liberal alliance: Afvis alle krigsflygtninge. [Liberal Alliance: Reject all war refugees]. Jyllandsposten. Retrieved from <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE7093609/Liberal-Alliance-Afvis-alle-krigsflygtninge/>.

the global North to exhibit genuine solidarity instead. In 1993-5 the Dutch minister Aad Kosto then revived the idea. During intergovernmental consultations he suggested extraterritorial “reception centres,” and explicitly referred to the US Guantanamo Bay camp as a model to be replicated. These calls to rally his counterparts were, however, in vain. Then, in 2002-3, the British Blair-government, seconded by its Danish and Dutch counterparts, launched a large campaign for “regional protection areas” and “transit processing zones” in Eastern Europe and North Africa. This took place during the incredibly contentious run-up to the American invasion of Iraq, where the three countries controversially abandoned the German and French, stance, in favor of the American Bush II-government. The externalization proposal was coupled with the invasion and the need for an “interventionist” foreign policy, but Blair had miscalculated, and faced a barrage of criticism from other European countries, humanitarian organizations and the European Parliament, whereafter the initiative quickly collapsed.¹⁵

Subsequent discussions have revolved around “EU reception centres” and whether these should be located within or outside the Union, and in 2018, the Council of Ministers issued a press release with a vision of “regional disembarkation platforms” in North Africa to which all boat migrants should be administratively deported.¹⁶ However, this press release was, surprisingly, presented without previous consultations or negotiations with African states. Moreover, it was never followed up with concrete measures, and seemed to run counter to the views of the European Commission, who has repeatedly emphasized that asylum obligations should not be exported outside European territory. The fact that the Council consists of the Justice and Home Affairs ministers and civil servants of the Member States lends itself to an interpretation where the press release reflects a continuing European desire to reap political capital of externalization visions in the domestic politics of some Member States. As such, the policy is thus far from innovative, but rather represents a decade-long dream recycled by political and civil servant-networks from some Northern European countries. But while a small group of countries have pursued the idea, thus far many more European countries have rejected it as lacking realism and pragmatism.

The humanitarianization of externalization policy

¹⁵ Noll, “*Visions of the exceptional*”; Hansen, “*EU migration policy in the post-Amsterdam era*”; Lemberg-Pedersen, “*Losing the right to have rights*”; Lemberg-Pedersen, “*Effective protection or effective combat?*”

¹⁶ Lemberg-Pedersen, “*Manufacturing displacement*.”

Another claim is that the envisioned policy is humanitarian, since it can disrupt the cynical and deadly Mediterranean smuggling networks, and offer good living standards in the so-called third countries. Partnerships with named host countries, the EU and the UNHCR were repeatedly referenced in order to accentuate the proposal's humanitarian flavour. Several points can be discussed when assessing this claim.

First, the notion that the tragic deaths of migrants can be disrupted by preventing people from reaching the Mediterranean is of course peculiar, and possibly reflects the Frederiksen-government's lacking engagement with existing research literature on the complex linkages between displacement, border control and smuggling dynamics. After all, according to several analysis of fatality data and the measurement of unsafe migration, many more migrants lose their lives before they ever reach the Mediterranean, which is also more monitored relative to practices of state authorities in f.i. North Africa.¹⁷ Authorities lacking will to record migrant deaths is inextricably linked to the kinds of securitized and militarized control regimes pursued through the aforementioned externalization measures, and the ripple effects of border-induced displacement they create through regions.

Second, a certain trajectory is observable when comparing early and later Social Democrat campaign discourses. In 2016, the party's politician Peter Hummelgård Thomsen referred to the idea as a vision of "enormous refugee cities with hospitals, schools, universities, farms and companies."¹⁸ However, quickly confronted with the lacking realism of identifying willing hosts for such grand-scale projects, his colleague, Henrik Sass Larsen, shortly after toned down ambitions, talking instead to massive "asylum camps" operated in partnership with the EU and the UNHCR. He specifically referred to Libya or Algeria as prospective hosts. Unfortunately for the campaign, both the UNHCR and the EU refused to be drafted into the lofty Danish visions.¹⁹ Accordingly, in early 2018, the vision was downscaled once more, to concern the more welcome-sounding "reception centres" in North Africa. However, a string of countries,

¹⁷ Singleton, Laczko and Black, "Measuring unsafe migration": IOM, "Fatal Journeys."

¹⁸ Hummelgaard, P. 6.1.2016. Nej, vi socialdemokrater er ikke Dansk Folkeparti light. Politiken. [No, we Social Democrats are not Danish Peoples Party light]. Available at: <https://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/art5605975/Nej-vi-socialdemokrater-er-ikke-Dansk-Folkeparti-light>.

¹⁹ Damkjær, O. 2018. Tvivl om FN's rolle i socialdemokratisk asylforslag. [Doubt about the United Nation's role in Socialdemocratic asylum proposal]. Berlingske Tidende. Available at: <https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/tvivel-om-fns-rolle-i-socialdemokratisk-asylforslag>.

who were surprised to suddenly find themselves to be centre-pieces of a Social Democratic campaign across Denmark, spoke up against the idea in no uncertain terms. As would also be the case with the Council of Ministers' 2018 press statement of regional disembarkation platforms, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, Libya and Egypt refused the assigned host duties, and communicated in no uncertain terms that they found the plan undesirable, hypocritical and harmful.²⁰ . Put bluntly, every country named by various politicians has refused. It was after this point that the Social Democratic Party decided to stop naming specific host countries in their campaign. This is presumably also the reason why this crucial aspect of the externalization policy is absent from the legislative proposal. Still, the policy drive continued into early 2021, where the ambitions received another notch down, when Minister of Immigration and Integration, Mattias Tesfaye, explained that the goal was now to construct an experimental “mini-centre” in the – now unnamed – host country.²¹ The quick spiral of the externalization vision from “enormous refugee cities” to experimental “mini-centres” can be seen as testifying to the lacking cohesion between the political campaign and the reality of displacement contexts.

Third, the legislative proposal's openly stated intention to upscale incarceration of asylum seekers seems problematic given the Frederiksen-government's humanitarian appeals. This incarceration is to happen in two ways: First in Denmark, where pre-removal detention is to ensure quick and efficient “transfers” outside Danish territory. But it also features after such transfers, where third country authorities presumably are to *keep people in the facilities* during their case processing. And they would also be responsible for ensuring their deportation after asylum rejections. Such a policy measure seems to create powerful incentives for displaced people to avoid registering in the Danish asylum system altogether, both in its European and

²⁰ See f.i. Mansø, R.G. 6.2.2018. Tunesien vil ikke huse Mette Frederiksen's lejr. [Tunisia does not want to host Mette Frederiksen's camp]. dr.dk. Available at: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/tunesien-vil-ikke-huse-mette-frederiksen-lejr>; Ritzau. 7.2.2018. Marokko afviser S-forslag om dansk modtagecenter. [Morocco rejects Socialdemocratic proposal for a Danish reception centre]. Jyllandsposten. Available at: <https://jyllands-posten.dk/international/Afrika/ECE10288134/marokko-afviser-sforslag-om-dansk-modtagecenter/>.

²¹ Klarskov, K. 24.1.2021. Mattias Tesfaye er gået på jagt hos ”en god håndfuld” lande for at finde et sted til et modtagecenter for asylansøgere. Politiken. [Mattias Tesfaye has gone hunting after “a good handful” countries to find a place for a reception centre for asylum seekers]. Available at: <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8073671/Mattias-Tesfaye-er-g%C3%A5et-p%C3%A5-jagt-hos-%C2%BBen-god-h%C3%A5ndfuld%C2%AB-lande-for-at-finde-et-sted-til-et-modtagecenter-for-asylans%C3%B8gere>.

potentially extraterritorial manifestations. Already today, an increasing number of people targeted for returns in the Danish asylum system go underground in order to avoid the hopeless, controlled and surveilled existence in the new departure centres and -prisons such as Kærshovedgaard and Ellebæk. If all asylum seekers are to be processed through this system of despair, it seems likely that such escapes to irregularity in Denmark or elsewhere would only escalate. This could accelerate the expansion of irregular and precarious migrant populations forced to reside in the shadows of one of the world's richest countries. And given that this irregularity is already pervasive also in Europe's external border regions, the insertion of more extraterritorial structures of containment and deportation would appear not to lead to a more humane migration system, but instead to exacerbate the dynamics of precarity. This incentivization of irregular existence would of course be tantamount to the loss of the very ability of authorities to humanely manage migration, that the Danish government has used to justify its externalization proposal.

A fourth claim is that the policy will fix a broken and dysfunctional asylum system because it will deter asylum seekers from travelling to Denmark in the first place. Thus, according to this line of thinking, when people realize the dire prospects of being immediately deported to processing facilities outside Europe, they will make better choices (understood as the choice not to come to Denmark). However, this claim too faces multiple problems. This is connected to deep-seated assumptions about the effect of deterrence measures, which permeate Danish asylum politics. On this view, migrants' inability to reach Denmark safely, and the threat of automatic deportation to a third country if they do, is not understood as undermining the system of protection. Instead, it is seen as a clever way to minimize the number of people entering the Danish asylum system. As such, the administrative transfers to extraterritorial facilities can be seen as another stage of the deterrent effect desired also by the departure centres.

Underneath this deterrence logic we find an assumed relevance of the neoclassical push-pull model. This has been problematized in much migration studies,²² and it also becomes decidedly unnuanced and generic when applied to the transnational geographies, histories and political economies of (externalized) border control. This is illustrated by the externalization proposal's creation of incentives for people to avoid the Danish asylum system altogether, mirroring people's current choices to move underground to avoid the departure centres. Even if

²² cf. De Haas, "Migration transitions."

extraterritorial facilities and administrative transfers were set in motion, the quality of the accompanying statistical data would be fundamentally flawed.

Moreover, the combination of this deterrence logic with the government's humanitarian discourse also leads the proposal into nonsensical terrain. For it is puzzling that it actually seems to require people to travel to Danish territory in order to access the asylum processing in the unnamed third country. This is so because several of the government's ministers have been adamant that people would not be allowed to apply for asylum at the extraterritorial facilities, nor be resettled from these to Danish territory. This aspect appears paradoxical given the government's repeated emphasis on the humanitarian argument that people should avoid dangerous (smuggler) routes across the Mediterranean.

Conclusion

The Frederiksen-government's legislative proposal claims to address a broken asylum system that is increasingly dysfunctional. But organizations, researchers, scholars and activists have long argued that the system suffers from serious problems and is increasingly challenged. A crucial difference between these two discourses, however, is that the latter does not mean that its humanitarian rationale has seized to work. Such a claim would disregard the many tens of thousands of people who every year experience the benefits of receiving protection through asylum systems. It is possible both to acknowledge the humanitarian value of European countries' territorially based asylum systems, and shining a critical light on why the global asylum system is challenged and dysfunctional. But this requires looking at the systemic causes.

Arguably, a prime reason for the system's current challenges is states' turn towards deterrent and externalized migration control policies, including the systematic closure of legal escape and protection corridors between the world's poorest and richest countries. Until the mid-2000s, people could apply for asylum on Danish embassies. If the Frederiksen-government's goal really was "to undermine the business of the smugglers," and ensure safe migration routes, then reviving this idea seems an obvious candidate. But the proposal's political emphasis is more on avoiding than protecting asylum seekers in Denmark. And it assumes that hypothetical host countries can host many asylum seekers and refugees despite the fact that all countries proposed by Denmark and other European countries have rejected the plans. Externalization efforts do not take place in state-centric vacuums, but within political-economic contexts.

Despite a focus on the flawed push-pull logic and its incentives, the Danish government's lacking engagement and knowledge of research on externalization means that it disregards a series of systemic and political economic incentives that the policy would create in and beyond Europe. The likelihood that the policy will accelerate regional and commercial incentives for border militarization and irregular mobility, violations of migrant rights and domestic repression poses serious risks to long-term European and international solidarity when it comes to collaborating on mass displacement policies.

Recent postcolonial analysis of the political imaginary of European externalization efforts has examined its longer continuities and reoccurrence. It has been argued that contingent parallels exist between rationales as expressed in the Danish proposal, and those of colonial and imperial policies. Cases include nineteenth century extraterritorial projects related to the management of slave trade refugees "recaptured" during abolitionist naval interventions. The deeply racialized American and British societies deemed it undesirable to integrate the emancipated slaves, and instead pursued the externalization of their residence to so-called philanthropic colonies in Africa, such as Sierra Leona and Liberia.²³ The chasm between the proposal's deterrence logic and its humanitarianized discourse is aligned with the ongoing transformation of the Danish asylum system from one of protection to one of temporariness and deportation. The political desire to exhibit real deterrence effects of strongly symbolic initiatives is coupled with a claimed impossibility of receiving and integrating even low numbers of asylum seekers and refugees. But even if the externalized policy were to be realized in some form, the aforementioned risks of (un)intended side-effects and incentives, such as irregular mobility and precarious existence, would greatly undermine any ability to accurately monitor and evaluate its actual outcome. Any evaluation requires consistent criteria, and it can be argued that the externalization proposal is in fact opposite of an innovative and humanitarian break with a dysfunctional protection system. Rather, it seems a radical step in a decade-long process draining the Danish asylum system of its protection substance, instead turning it towards the goal of non-integration. The proposal can be seen as the attempt to *negate and outsource the reception and integration of refugees into society*.

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²³ Lemberg-Pedersen, "Manufacturing displacement."

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