

“You’ll own nothing. And you’ll be happy”:

Emotions and the Great Reset conspiracy theory in Denmark

Kasper Grotle Rasmussen, Center for American Studies, University of Southern Denmark,
Denmark
grotle@sdu.dk

Abstract

In November 2016, Danish member of Parliament Ida Auken wrote an oft-quoted article speculating about life in 2030 for the World Economic Forum (WEF) entitled: “Welcome to 2030. I own nothing, have no privacy, and life has never been better” (Auken, 2016). The WEF subsequently used this concept in a companion video coining the phrase “You’ll own nothing. And you’ll be happy.” While neither the article nor the video promoted the idea of dissolution of private ownership, they did invite reflections about a reform of capitalism. Housing, appliances, and even personal items could be rented instead of owned. Privacy, too, might change, as surveillance, for convenience and security, would be widespread.

During the COVID-19 pandemic three years later, these predictions became the focus of conspiracy theories. The WEF proposed using the pandemic for a “Great Reset” of capitalism to ensure fairer outcomes and the Great Reset conspiracy theory emerged following the launch of the WEF’s initiative in the summer of 2020. Conspiracy theorists in Europe and the United States alike claimed that a small elite was planning to use the pandemic as an excuse to control the global population by removing private ownership and by injecting them with dangerous “vaccines” to cure an elite-created “disease”. Emotions were at the core of this conspiracy theory, as expressions of fear, anger, and democratic disenfranchisement went hand-in-hand with optimism that the guilty would eventually receive their just punishment.

Taking Barbara Rosenwein’s concept of *emotional community* (held together by shared emotions and norms) as a starting point, this paper analyzes the development of the Great Reset theory in Denmark (2020-2023) by a growing conspiracist *milieu* (especially organizations such as Frihedslisten/Freedom List and JFK21), and how the conspiracy narrative was built through expressions of collective emotions on social media. The paper considers the underlying causes of these (constructed) emotions, their role in strategic

*“You’ll own nothing. And you’ll be happy”:
Emotions and the Great Reset conspiracy theory in Denmark*

mobilization, and how this Danish conspiratorial emotional community interacted with and was inspired by its Nordic, European and American counterparts.

Keywords

World Economic Forum, Great Reset conspiracy theory, emotional community, Denmark, social media

Bio

Dr. Kasper Grotle Rasmussen is associate professor of American history at the University of Southern Denmark (Denmark). He works on transatlantic conspiracy theories and U.S. foreign policy. He recently co-authored *Conspiracy Theories and the Nordic Countries* (Routledge, 2021)

ORCID-ID/Websites

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0565-7138>

<https://portal.findresearcher.sdu.dk/da/persons/grotle>