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Constructions of us, Constructions of them

The Asylum Debate in Norway: is the asylum seeker perceived as a
threat?

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ABSTRACT

According to the Norwegian Refugee Council, 59.5 million people in the world are displaced from their homes.¹ A large number of these are individuals fleeing war, conflict and prosecution, seeking to find safety for themselves and their families in a different country. However, the increasing reaction in many host countries, as part of a global trend, is that the migrants themselves are perceived and met as a security threat. This study focuses on the case of Norway, placed in the European context, but outside the European Union, to see whether securitisation is present also there. The theory of securitisation is used as a theoretical framework for the analysis of opinions and attitudes towards asylum seekers in Norway. Through analysis of media discourse, political rhetoric, and the place of other influential voices, securitisation of asylum seekers is considered in this context to be maintained through continuing state structures of routine. Additionally, the Norwegian welfare model, beneficial for citizens, has the perhaps unintentional consequence of building up under exclusion of the asylum seeker. This study shows that even in a country with strong socio-economic structures, the fear for consequences of migration are present, underlining the fact that securitisation and alienation of asylum seekers is a constructed choice.

¹ NRC “Annual Report 2015”

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