The Norwegian Self and the new Refugee Other: A discourse analysis of identity constructions in Norwegian media in September 2015 and March 2022

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Declaration

I, Therese Einarsson, hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

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I would like to express my gratitude to Stig Jarle Hansen. Thank you for your patience.

Dedicated to Noor and Eva.

Abstract

This thesis is a discourse analysis of the Norwegian media debates on refugees at two peak moments in Norwegian refugee history. The research is conducted through analysis of articles published in the paper versions of the three national Norwegian newspapers VG, Aftenposten, and Klassekampen in September 2015 and March 2022. Drawing upon Lene Hansen's *Security as practice: Discourse analysis and the Bosnian war* (2006), this thesis focuses on identity constructions and media representations of the Other in relation to the Self. The main analytical research question of the thesis is *What identity constructions are articulated in the Norwegian media debate on refugees, during September 2015 and March 2022?*

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

"And honestly, migration cannot be stopped. It has existed since the beginning of time, and it is going to continue[1]"
(Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the UN, *VG,* 18.09.2015).

September 2015 and March 2022 were two important moments in Norwegian, and European, history of refugee reception. Numbers of refugees arriving soared. In Norway, 2015 saw an unprecedented peak in numbers of asylum claims. By the end of 2015, Norway had received more than 31.000 claims for asylum in one single year, mainly from citizens of the Middle East, Central Asia and East Africa. In comparison, the year before had seen 11.000 claims and the year after saw 3.000. The peak in 2015 was followed by several years of low influx, until 2022 saw a new peak and even higher numbers than 2015. In the peak year of 2022, Norway received a total of more than 40.000 claims for asylum, which is the highest number ever received in a single year (UDI). Close to all of the claims were from citizens of Ukraine.

Refugees have long been a debated topic, both politically and in the media. Immigration is a field where policy and law often change and the situation in 2015 became the subject of heavy media reporting and political debates, in Norway as in the rest of Europe. A number of measures restricting access to Europe were put in place, among them the contested EU deal with Turkey. In Norway a 'package' of restrictive measures was negotiated and put into legal force[2]. In 2022, all refugees from Ukraine were granted collective protection in Norway. Official policy response came quickly, within days of the first arrivals of refugees from Ukraine. Across Europe, similar policies were adopted. The policy responses in 2015 and in 2022 were thus in stark contrast with each other.

This thesis adopts a discursive epistemology, with a poststructuralist analytical focus on the discursive construction of identity as both constitutive of and a product of

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[1] Og ærlig talt, migrasjonen kan ikke stoppes. Den har pågått siden tidenes begynnelse, og den kommer til å fortsette
[2] Innstramminger II

foreign policy. Official foreign policy discourse can be reproduced, challenged and formed by the media.

Much has been written about the 2015 refugee situation in Europe. Also, there has been much scholarly work on European media's representation of refugees (for example Georgiou and Zaborowski, 2017). Although some analyses do include Norwegian media, few have explored how the picture has changed since 2015. Now, a year into the next refugee peak, there is a unique opportunity to explore the media representations of 2015 in light of the media representations of 2022. This thesis will map out the dominant representations of refugees in Norwegian media in September 2015 and in March 2022

The main analytical research question of this thesis is *What identity constructions are articulated in the Norwegian media debate on refugees, during September 2015 and March 2022?*

In media, refugees are commonly constructed as 'the Other'. The analysis of this thesis will show that through the construction of some refugees in security terms, the Norwegian image of Self has appeared consistent with the policies of both 2015 and 2022.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: IDENTITY AND POLICY

Lene Hansen explains foreign policy discourse as the construction of identity, policy, and the link between them (2006, 52). This thesis draws upon her poststructuralist theory of the relationship between identity and policy, as articulated in her book *Security as practice – Discourse analysis and the Bosnian war* (2006). Her theoretical focus is on the importance of identity for foreign policy. Although Hansen focuses on foreign policy, her argument about the constitutive importance of identity is relevant to the study of policy debates more broadly. Her book draws upon Derrida's deconstruction, Kristeva's intertextuality, Foucault's account of the knowledge/power

nexus and Laclau and Mouffe's account on discourse and hegemony (2006, xvii). Hansen argues that poststructuralist discourse analysis, can be used to theorise the constitutive relationship between representations of identity and foreign policies as suggested by heads of states, governments, oppositional politicians, the media, and academics (2006, xvi). Drawing upon Hansen, this chapter will discuss the relationship between identity and policy, as well as the relevance of securitisation for this relationship and, ultimately, for the representations of refugees in Norwegian media.

2.1 Discourse analysis and the relationship between identity and policy

Identity is at the ontological and epistemological centre of poststructuralist discourse analysis. Hansen understands identity and policy as constituted through a "process of narrative adjustment" (Hansen 2006, xvi). Policies need a 'story', a narrative, of the problems and issues they are going to address. There needs to be a narrative of the places or the peoples involved (Hansen 2006, xvi). Policies are not situated and formulated in a vacuum. Policy makers need acceptance for the policies they formulate.

"The goal for foreign policy makers – as well as for other actors trying to influence foreign policy – is to present a foreign policy that appears legitimate and enforceable to its relevant audience" (Hansen 2006, 28).

Thus, policy makers and policies require identities and narratives that 'fit' with the proposed solutions. Policy and identity need to appear consistent with each other for the policy to appear logical. Identities, however, are not fixed, but continuously changed.

"Policies require identities, but identities do not exist as objective accounts of what people and places 'really are', but as continuously restated, negotiated, and reshaped subjects and objects" (Hansen 2006, xvi).

According to Hansen, policy and identity are linked through discourse (2006, 10). Discourses frame and give meaning to facts. Thus, different framings of given facts may compose different policies. Poststructuralism argues that through discourse, material factors and ideas are intertwined to the extent where they cannot be separated from one another. Policies are legitimised as logical or necessary through reference to identities. At the same time, identities are produced, reproduced and negotiated through policies (2006, 1). Representations of identity are the precondition for policy, while at the same time produced or reproduced through policy (2006, 10). Thus, identity and policy are conceptualised as ontologically interlinked (Hansen 2006, 17). They do not stand in a causal relationship with each other. Identity and policy are co-constitutive, not causal, and they cannot be understood in cause-effect terms (Buzan 2006, xii).

According to Hansen, the search for a stable link between identity and policy is at the centre of all political activity. Stability is when a policy is presented in a way that makes it seem legitimate to its relevant audience. The link between identity and policy, thus, needs to be constructed in a way that makes them appear consistent with each other (Hansen 2006, 28). Hansen argues that if there is an imbalance in the construction of the link between identity and policy, one of them will need to adjust (2006, 29). Politically contextualised discourse analysis, thus, seeks to uncover how discourses attempt to stabilise the link between policy and identity, and also whether or not these attempts are accepted or contested by other discourses. Discourses are never completely stable, however. Competing discourses destabilise each other and dominant constructions can be contested. They are constantly renegotiated (2006, 30).

The poststructuralist assumption is that identity is discursive, political and relational. It is constructed. There are no objective identities located in some "extra-discursive" realm (Hansen 2006, 6). Language, then, has an ontological significance because language gives meaning (Hansen 2006, 18).

In discourse analysis, knowledge and truth are considered to be constructed – produced and reproduced by the language we use. Representations of identities, ours

and others', are constructed, through words and context. Media, politicians and the general public constitute a discourse where underlying assumptions and 'common truths' can be detected. Poststructuralism adds to IR the understanding of language as power. Language is considered a field of social and political practice. There is no objective 'true meaning' beyond the linguistic representation to which one can refer (Shapiro 1981, 218 in Hansen 2006, 18).

According to Foucault, "in any society there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize, and constitute the social body and these relations of power cannot by themselves be established, consolidated, nor implemented without the production, accumulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subject to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (Foucault 1980, 93 in Ibrahim 2005, 164).

Truth is the creation of knowledge through discourse. This is the power-knowledge nexus. Social constructions, thus, have the power to influence opinions and enable policies and are therefore valuable to study. Poststructuralism's discursive ontology is deeply intertwined with its understanding of language as constitutive for what is brought into being (Hansen 2006, 17). Language is understood as ontologically productive. Following this, media can be deconstructed to detect what words are used, what is being focused on, what is *not* being focused on, what contexts subjects are positioned in and whose perspective is presented. In short, what identities are constructed.

By analysing news articles discussing refugees, a discourse analysis can tell us something about dominant underlying assumptions about refugees in Norway. By looking at two different periods of refugee influx, one can compare representations and explore differences. There will never be just one view out there, but by mapping the dominant representations in media at two different periods of time, one will be able to say something about consistencies and inconsistencies in the representations, as well as what is socially acceptable in the society.

2.2 The Self and the Other

Poststructuralism has a relational understanding of identity, meaning that identity is given through reference to something that it is not (Hansen 2006, 6). The analytical focus of this thesis, too, is on the relational construction of identity. Drawing upon Wæver (2002), Hansen argues that identities will always be constructed through processes of differentiation and linking (2006, 24). Following this, she also argues that

"the Self is constituted through the delineation of Others, and the Other can be articulated as superior, inferior, or equal. It might be constituted as threatening, but it might also be an ally, a stranger, or an underdeveloped subject in need of help" (2006, 76).

Acknowledging the link between politics and identity, as Hansen does, also means acknowledging the link between the construction of the Other and our understanding of Self (Hansen 2006, xx). Sometimes the Self is explicitly articulated. Other times it is not. It can also be implicit – the receiver of the message or the reader of the text is assumed to already know.

Traditionally, the field of IR has been concerned with the inside order and the outside anarchy. Security discourses have traditionally constructed a national Self facing radically different Others. Following Hansen's understanding, however, the Other is not necessarily threatening and radically different from the national Self. It might be, but drawing upon Campbell (1992), Hansen argues that constructions of identity can also exist as different *degrees* of 'Otherness' (Hansen 2006, 7).

2.3 Securitization and ontological security

The classical concept of security is defined as national security, focusing on military threats, the state and the political. The Copenhagen School, however, introduced a wider understanding of security. In 1998, Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde provided a new framework for understanding security in their book *Security: A new*

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framework for analysis. Security, they argue, is "a particular type of politics applicable to a wide range of issues" (1998, vii). With a wider understanding of security, a definition of what is or is not a security issue is needed. Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde define security issues as issues meeting certain criteria:

"They have to be staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind" (1998, 5).

Securitisation is a mechanism through which an issue is constructed as a security issue. Security, according to the Copenhagen School, is a speech act. Hansen rejects this view. The Copenhagen School also introduced, however, an intersubjective condition – a relevant audience must listen. Thus, the Copenhagen School also understands securitisation as a process of construction of meaning.

Holger Stritzel (2007) has developed this argument further. According to him, securitization is a co-constitutive process where securitising actors and relevant audiences constitute and re-constitute each other. Power, thus, is relational. It is the ability to influence the construction of meaning. Hansen explains it like this:

 "For problems or facts to become questions of security, they need therefore to be successfully constructed as such within political discourse" (2006, 33-34).

With the widening of the security concept, identity, too, became a possible security issue (Buzan et al. 1998). Hansen, drawing upon Campbell (1992), argues security to be an ontological necessity for the state, "not because the state has to be protected from external threats but because its identity depends on them" (2006, p. 34). The societal security of the Copenhagen School has its focus on the link between security and identity. This link has often been studied by other scholars with a focus on the construction of the Self and the Other, called *ontological security*. Ontological

security is, according to Mitzen (2006) not security of the body, but of the Self – the sense of who one is (Mitzen 2006, 344 in Gómez 2019, 25). Mitzen operates, like Hansen, with a subjective and relational understanding of the construction of identity.

As this section has shown, an issue becomes securitised when it is constituted as a threat to security. For the Copenhagen School, this happens when securitising actors articulate something as a security issue. For others, (Hansen 2006; Stritzel 2007) it is an intersubjective process between securitising actors and relevant audiences. Once securitised, however, the issue in question will remain a security issue until it is de-securitised, meaning that the situation is no longer constructed as a threat to security (Hansen 2006, p. 35). De-securitisation as a concept was originally introduced by Wæver, together with the concept of securitisation. He defined de-securitisation as "the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere" (Buzan et al. 1998, in Gómez 2019, 31). Hansen (2012) has developed the concept of de-securitisation further and discusses how securitised issues are intersubjectively deconstructed as security issues. She suggests several strategies for de-securitisation and one of them is *rearticulation*. According to Hansen, the rearticulation of a securitised issue refers to "fundamental transformations of the public sphere including a move out of the friend-enemy distinction" (Hansen 2012, 543 in Gómez 2019, 36).

2.4 The securitisation of refugees
In 1993, Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup and Pierre Lemaitre wrote *Identity, migration and the new security agenda in Europe,* arguing that national identity concerns were replacing military concerns in Europe. Societal security, they argued, had become the prism through which the new security agenda in Europe could best be understood. Maggie Ibrahim (2005) argues that with the widening of the concept of security, migration has been increasingly described in security terms since the end of the Cold War. This has been done through the linking of risk and threat to migrants (164, 167). Studying the securitising discourses on migrants and asylum seekers, she wrote that

"Our eyes are fed images of chaos in the South through the media's depiction of "disorder". Threat and insecurity are being redefined and broadened. Due to the assertions of international organizations, states, academics and journalists, migration has become synonymous with a new risk to the liberal world. This discourse has reached its pinnacle, normalizing the view that migrants are a threat" (Ibrahim 2005, 163).

The positioning of refugees in a security discourse is a negative representation, that often goes hand in hand with a restrictive policy. While the Copenhagen School explains securitisation in terms of 'emergency' and 'extraordinary measures', indicating the exception, restrictive measures have been in Europe for decades, articulated especially through the common immigration and asylum policy of the EU. The exception has become the new norm.

3. DATA AND METHOD

This thesis follows the methodology mapped out in Lene Hansen's *Security as Practice* (2006). It is a methodology for discourse analysis, rooted in poststructuralism. Hansen has an ontological conception of identity and policy as co-constitutive, and a discursive, non-causal epistemology. Language is understood to be relationally structured and ontologically productive. The analytical focus, thus, is on how identities and policies are articulated and how they are linked through discourse.

As mentioned in chapter 2, Hansen's discursive analytical approach is located the tradition of Foucault, Derrida, and Kristeva (Hansen 2006, xviii). Her departure from Derrida's deconstruction as anti-method is significant, though, as Hansen sets out to provide a structured and systematic methodology. For Hansen, methodology is "a way of communicating choices and strategies that all writing, deconstructivist and poststructuralist included, must make" (2006, xix).

The methodological starting point of the analysis of this thesis is to identify the articulated terms that indicate clear constructions of the Other and the Self in Norwegian news media. Identity, however, is rarely constructed in a single term or sign, but rather through multiple terms or signs within a larger system. This process of identity construction is, in the words of Hansen (and Wæver), a process of "linking and differentiation" (2006, 43). Once articulated terms are identified, then, an analysis of the process of linking and differentiation is the next step.

In order to analyse how identities are constructed through processes of linking and differentiation, Hansen suggests three dimensions of identity be analysed – the spatial, the temporal, and the ethical.

3.1 Three dimensions of identity: Spatial, temporal and ethical

Hansen argues for a systematic examination of identity constructions. To secure structure, she suggests three dimensions of identity to analyse. Space, time, and responsibility are concepts we can use to identify identity constructions in discourses.

"Spatiality, temporality, and ethicality are analytical lenses that bring out the important political substance of identity construction, not explicitly articulated signs" (Hansen 2006, 46).

Spatial identity is relationally constructed and focuses on where the Other and the Self are located in space. Spatial constructions of identity might be territorially bounded, such as 'Syria' or 'Ukraine', or they might be regional constructions, such as 'Europe'. Spatial identity, however, might also be articulated as abstract political spaces, such as 'women', 'the international community' or 'the people'. Often, spatial identity constructions are a combination of both the territorially bounded and the abstract political. "European", for example, is a spatial identity connected with the territorial boundaries of Europe, but it is also "a political subject in its own right" (Huntington 2004 in Hansen 2006, 47). Spatial identity constructions, however, always involve the construction of boundaries, and has historically centred on the construction of other states, regions and peoples (Hansen 2006, 47).

Temporal identity concerns where the Other and the Self are located in time. The focus is often on 'development', 'change', or 'progress'. The Other might be constructed as inferior, equal or superior to the Self. The Other might also be constructed as capable of transformation, capable of moving closer to the Self, or as unable to break with its identity and, thus, permanently located as different from the Self (Hansen 2006, 48-49).

Ethical identity places responsibility. The focus is often on the Self's responsibility, or non-responsibility, toward the Other. Ethical identity constructions, thus, involve moral force. When discourse articulates a responsibility to combat 'humanitarian disaster', for example, the issue is powerfully moved out of the realm of the strategic and, instead, placed in the 'higher grounds' of the 'morally good' (Hansen 2006, 50).

3.2 Research design

This thesis analyses media representations of the Norwegian Self and the refugee Other, along three dimensions of identity construction, at two different moments in time. The two moments are related by issue – the soaring influx of refugees to Norway in September 2015 and in March 2022. The analytical advantage of analysing more than one event, or moment in time, is that it allows for the identification of transformations or reproductions of identity constructions across time (Hansen 2006, 80).

3.3 Data collection

The analysis of this thesis is built on data from texts published in the paper version of the three national Norwegian newspapers VG, Aftenposten, and Klassekampen. The media archive ATEKST Retriever was used to collect data, identifying articles containing the term 'refugee', published during the two periods September 2015 and March 2022. The three chosen papers are all amongst the top ten biggest newspapers in Norway, and together they cover a broad political spectrum. While VG and Aftenposten are two of the biggest national newspapers and might say something about mainstream representations in Norwegian media, Klassekampen is chosen for the importance of acknowledging alternative representations.

The two moments in time, September 2015 and March 2022, were chosen as they were peak moments of asylum claims registered in Norway. Also, it is when numbers of published articles on refugees were at its peak. An analysis of the discourses in media during these two months, allows for the exploration of identity constructions, as articulated in the initial stages of refugee reception during two different crises.

A search in ATEKST Retriever, for articles containing the search word 'refugee*'[3]gives 766[4] hits for September 2015, and 411[5] hits for March 2022. Although the analysis of this thesis is based on articles on 'refugees' only, other search words were tried out in the process. Searches on 'migrant*' and 'asylum*'[6] indicate the same trend – more articles were published in September 2015 than in March 2022[7].

ATEKST Retriever also has an analytical tool, giving an overview, over time, over when numbers of hits were high and low. The analysis shows that numbers of articles published, containing the search word refugee*, rose dramatically in both September 2015 and March 2022, compared to the months and years before. As peak moments for media articles on refugees, they are interesting to study.

Although a total number of 1177 articles have been examined for the analysis of this thesis, not all texts containing the word refugee* have proven relevant for the research here. For example, an article might be mainly focusing on something else and only mention the word 'refugee' briefly.

3.4 From texts to basic discourses
After examining all articles in the material individually, basic discourses were established. Following Hansen's recommendations, the basic discourses were chosen for indicating the main structural positions in the media debate on refugees. Then, individual texts were revisited to identify the terms most frequently articulated, the

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[3] flyktning*
[4] Klassekampen: 300 articles, Aftenposten: 251 articles, VG: 215 articles
[5] Klassekampen: 187 articles, Aftenposten: 134 articles, VG: 90 articles
[6] asyl*
[7] The search word migrant* gives 120 hits for September 2015 and 23 for March 2022.
The search word asylum* gives 325 hits for September 2015 and 120 for March 2022.

relationship between the Self and the Other, the policies coupled with the different positions, as well as the spatial, temporal and ethical identity constructions (Hansen 2006, 52). According to Hansen, a policy discourse is "the construction of identity, policy, and the link between them" (2006, 51).

4. SEPTEMBER 2015: A BURDEN TO SHARE

In September 2015, refugees were to a great extent represented in humanitarian terms in Norwegian media. At the same time, however, they were also commonly referred to as a 'burden'. The concept of someone being a burden, immediately establishes a difference between the Self and the Other. When the Other is constructed as a burden, the Self is constructed as the one who has to carry the weight. The dichotomy indicates a spatial distance and radical difference. The Other is constructed as in need of help, the Self is constructed as the one in position to help.

"Norway will contribute to this joint effort, and in the burden sharing of the reception and settlement of refugees and asylum seekers, we will act in solidarity[8]" (Interview with Børge Brende, minister of foreign affairs, in *VG*, 04.09.2015)

The concept of 'burden sharing' also places responsibility. The countries called upon to share the burden were mainly the members of Schengen, the EU or Europe. Speaking of burden sharing indicates an acceptance of the responsibility as 'ours' to share. Speaking of burden sharing in Norway, thus, places the Self as part of a bigger, European, context.

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[8] Norge skal bidra i denne dugnaden, og i byrdefordelingen når det kommer til mottak og bosetting av flyktninger og asylsøkere skal vi være solidariske

Following the construction of refugees as a burden, they were also constructed as a threat to the Self, through media representations of a system collapsing under the pressure.

"Everyone cannot come to Norway. The Norwegian welfare society is not designed to handle many refugees, says Erna Solberg in a speech[9]" (Solbakk, *Aftenposten,* 30.09).

Media representations of a collapsing system concerned the Norwegian reception system as well as the welfare system, but also the larger European asylum system and the EU as a political entity as a whole. The focus was commonly on the failure of the system itself, or on the failure to protect the common borders.

"The refugee crisis has led to European countries disregarding the Schengen agreement and taking their own measures. The capacity for refugee reception is being blown up in country after country. The EU might disintegrate, fears Norwegian professor[10]" (Kampesæter and Ask, *Aftenposten,* 19.09.2015).

While the media discourse articulated refugees, as a group, as a burden, different degrees of burden or Otherness were also articulated. Media commonly referred to 'refugees and migrants', often placing responsibility with the 'migrants' for overloading the system, while not actually being in need of protection. This articulation pushed 'migrants' further from the Self, while at the same time moving the 'true' refugees closer to the Self. Both the Self and the refugees were threatened by the system being overloaded.

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[9] Alle kan ikke komme til Norge. Det norske velferdssamfunnet er ikke tilpasset mange flyktninger

[10] Flytkningkrisen har ført til at europeiske land tilsidesetter Schengen-avtalen og tar egne grep. Kapasiteten for å ta imot flyktninger sprenges i land etter land. Norsk professor frykter EU kan gå i oppløsning

"The challenge now is to get everyone through the asylum process. UDI are working to get through the asylum claims from Syrians, also as a joint effort during the weekends. But it is not only Syrians coming. One of the big tasks for Norwegian authorities will be filtering out those in need for protection[11]" (Olsen and Sætran, *Aftenposten*, 28.09.2015).

5. MARCH 2022: EUROPEAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN

In March 2022, the media discourse on refugees focused, again, on humanitarian terms. Representations focused on the refugees as European, women and children, who already have access to Europe and Norway. The focus on the refugees being European constructs a geographical closeness between the Self and the Other, but also a closeness in identity, as 'Europe' is more than a geographical place.

"Three weeks ago the 10th-grader was an ordinary boy in the capital of Ukraine. He was sitting watching the winter Olympics on TV[12]" (Stokke and Johansen, *Aftenposten*, 15.03.2015).

"The last week between 263 and 461 claims for asylum have been registered every day, mainly women and children[13]" (*Klassekampen,* 30.03.2022).

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[11]Nå blir utfordringen å få alle nye gjennom asylmøllen. UDI forsøker å ta unna søkerbunken fra syrere, blant annet gjennom dugnad i helgene. Men det er ikke bare syrere som kommer. En av de store prøvelsene for norske myndigheter blir å sortere ut de med behov for beskyttelse
[12] For tre uker siden var 10.-klassingen en vanlig gutt i Ukrainas hovedstad. Han satt og så på vinter-OL på TV
[13] Den siste veka er det registrert mellom 263 og 461 asylsøknader dagleg, i hovudsak kvinner og barn

The focus on the refugees as women and children constructed an understanding of them as 'worthy' refugees.

"It also helps a lot that those who are coming as refugees now are a group that the people embrace, women and children that are coming first. It is easy to relate to this group as worthy of help[14]" (Hallgren and Stokke, *Aftenposten,* 28.03.2022).

Furthermore, with the refugees having easy access to Europe, the process of spreading to different countries was constructed as a 'natural' process, rather than one of chaos and emergency.

"So far, the distribution of refugees from Ukraine has happened naturally, the high commissioner points out. He says that those that have arrived so far, are people with resources, networks and contacts in different countries. And that the refugees then travel on from Ukraine's neighbouring countries and spread out[15]" (Stoksvik and Skjetne, *VG,* 09.03.2022).

Neither the refugees nor the asylum institute itself are constructed as a threat.

"We are standing in the middle of the largest refugee disaster in Europe since World War II. And yet everything is astonishingly calm, friendly and organised[16]" (Johansen, *Aftenposten,* 06.03.2022).

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[14] Det hjelper også veldig at de som kommer som flyktninger nå er en gruppe som befolkningen omfavner, kvinner og barn som kommer først. Det er lett å forholde seg til gruppen som verdige trengende

[15] Så langt har fordelingen av flyktninger fra Ukraina skjedd naturlig, påpeker høykommissæren. Han sier de som har ankommet så langt, gjerne er mennesker som har ressurser, nettverk og kontakter i andre land. Og at flyktningene da reiser videre fra Ukrainas naboland og fordeler seg utover

[16] Vi står midt i Europas største flyktningkatastrofe siden andre verdenskrig. Likevel er alt forbløffende rolig, vennlig og organisert

"Norway can well accept 100.000 refugees or more, hold 70 percent of asked mayors[17]" (*Klassekampen,* 30.03.2022).

6. THE NORWEGIAN SELF

In both September 2015 and March 2022, the Norwegian Self was constructed as humanitarian, helping and welcoming. The voluntary humanitarian response claimed a lot of attention in the media. In 2015, articles drew historical lines, showing a tradition of humanitarianism. "Norwegian heroes[18]" (Nordby, *VG,* 04.09.2015) travelled to the borders of Greece to help refugees arriving at the Mediterranean sea, and were interviewed when they came back. In 2022, volunteers picked refugees up in Ukraine and brought them to safety in Norway. The joint voluntary efforts were praised in media. In 2015, however, the humanitarian construction of Self identity was coupled with frightening constructions of emergency and fear of collapsing under a burden that was too overwhelming for the system. Much of the media debate on refugees was centred around the question of how much of the responsibility should be ours. This debate created a dilemma for the Norwegian perception of Self. The Norwegian construction of Self, however, was upheld by a differentiation of 'refugees', on the one hand, and 'migrants' on the other hand, where 'migrants' were constructed as a threat, to both 'us' and the 'worthy' refugees. In 2022, there was no debate to speak of, it seemed to be a widely accepted 'common truth' that the reception and settlement of refugees was, indeed, our responsibility.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The two refugee crises of 2015 and 2022 were responded to with very different policies in Norway. The analysis of this thesis has shown that also media activity was different during the two crises, with close to twice as many articles on refugees being

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[17] Norge kan fint ta imot 100.000 flyktninger eller flere, mener 70 prosent av spurte ordførere
[18] Norske helter

published in September 2015 as in March 2022. Through the identification of identity constructions on the Norwegian Self and the refugee Other, along spatial, temporal and ethical dimensions, the analysis has shown different degrees of 'Otherness' assigned to different groups of refugees. The analysis also indicates refugees being constructed in terms of security in September 2015, in a way that they were not in March 2022. Furthermore, the Norwegian understanding of Self was threatened in September 2015, as the Self as humanitarian, helping and welcoming was perceived as in conflict with the securitised emergency at hands and the articulated need to protect European borders. According to Hansen, the search for a stable link between identity and policy is at the centre of all political activity. Stability is when a policy is presented in a way that makes it seem legitimate to its relevant audience. The analysis has shown stable links between the representation of the Self during both crises. Both moments showed media articulating constructions of the 'worthy' refugee, although in different ways. In September 2015, the debate called for restrictive measures but yet, appeared consistent with the Norwegian understanding of a humanitarian Self. This was possible through the process of differentiating between 'refugees', worthy of protection and 'migrants', responsible for destabilising the system and thus, constructed as a threat to both the Self and the worthy refugee Other.

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