Alien Citizens

A Sociological Thesis on the Re-Emergence of Citizenship Deprivation in Norway

Simon Roland Birkvad

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Department of Sociology and Human Geography

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Summary

Norway has joined a long list of states that have expanded citizenship deprivation powers in recent years. After decades of hibernation, states have passed new legislation or amended or reinforced existing laws to rid themselves of unwanted citizens. Suspects of terrorism and naturalization fraud are the main targets of this revival of citizenship deprivation. Naturalization fraud pertains to cases in which immigrants have acquired citizenship by application—*naturalized*—on false pretenses. If the state decides to strip the person of citizenship—*denaturalize*—deportation can follow. In 2016, the Norwegian government instructed the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration to prioritize cases of naturalization fraud. Targeting "citizenship cheaters" was one of several measures aimed at regaining border control at the height of the "refugee crisis." Subsequently, 500 cases were opened by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration.

This dissertation takes the government's decision to intensify citizenship revocation as its point of departure and follows the debates it engendered and some of the lives affected by it. It examines the state practice of citizenship deprivation from the state and subjects' point of view. To examine the state's perspective, I analyze parliamentary discussions over legislative proposals submitted by opposition parties seeking to tame the government's denaturalization powers. To explore the lived experiences of those affected by citizenship deprivation, I build on qualitative interviews with 28 individuals undergoing processes of denaturalization. Theoretically, the thesis mainly draws on concepts of exceptionalism, emotions, and interpellation. Analyzing parliamentary debates and qualitative interviews through these theoretical perspectives, the thesis poses two overarching research questions: What arguments did the Norwegian government articulate to justify the decision to revitalize citizenship deprivation in Parliament? How does the process of citizenship deprivation shape emotions, social relations, and subjectivities among those targeted?

Concerning the first research question, I find three different arguments. First, the government claimed that sanctioning naturalization fraud was important in protecting the moral integrity of the asylum system and the institution of citizenship itself. According to the government naturalization fraud was not only a breach of law, but also portrayed as a severe moral misconduct. Second, the government depicted targets of citizenship revocation as potential criminals and security threats to justify the decision to initiate—and perpetuate—the tightened denaturalization practice. Such criminalizing discourse functioned to keep the possibility of citizenship deprivation indefinitely open, placing naturalized citizens in a permanently precarious position before the law.

Third, the government depoliticized the decision by grounding it in domestic and international law. According to this hyper-legalist reasoning, the government's only course of action was enforcing the letter of the law. As such, the government attempted to remove accountability for its priority to tackle the issue of naturalization fraud.

Concerning the second research question, I find that undergoing the process of citizenship deprivation is an embodied experience that also shapes social relations. I examine the process of denaturalization as an "affective economy", in which emotions "circulate" and "stick" to subjects experiencing it. Based on the interview material, I reconstruct three constellations of emotions and estrangements. First, some interviewees expressed pain and anger about being alienated from the national body. To them, the prospect of possible expulsion opened a space for critiquing racially coded promises of equal citizenship. Another finding was that fears of deportation and surveillance circulated, which destabilized families and heavily targeted communities. These fears led to social isolation and a sense of containment, making some consider self-deportation. A final finding was that the interviewees experienced exhaustion because of protracted case processing. Their lives became increasingly mechanical and "zombie"-like, followed by a sense of self-estrangement. Overall, the interviewees' expressed experiences of alienation in three concentric circles of life: from the nation, their families and communities and themselves.

Undergoing the citizenship revocation process also shaped subjectivities. All interviewees were facing or had faced an accusation of lying or concealing information to the immigration authorities. The accusation forms part of a broader policy trend through which states use citizenship policies as an instrument to distinguish between deserving and undeserving citizens. I analyze the accusation as an interpellation, understood as a speech act that calls out a subject and designates a place for them in the social and ideological system. Based on the interview material, I distinguish between three positions in response to the accusation of acquiring citizenship by fraudulent means. The "sinners" assumed guilt and appealed for administrative mercy. Interviewees who took this position reflected the notion of deservingness. The "saints" claimed minor wrongdoings in asylum procedures but implied they were the wrong targets of citizenship revocation. This position implied alignment with welfare state virtues (e.g., being financially self-supportive) while implicitly taking distance from undeserving others (e.g., welfare clients). The "racialized scapegoats" claimed that the authorities had no substantiating evidence to support the accusation against them, suggesting instead that the government used citizenship revocation to gain political currency. Some of the interviewees originating from Somalia suspected that they were collectively targeted because of their racialized, inferior position in Norwegian society.

The dissertation consists of three articles prefaced by an introduction. Whereas the articles revolve around the current practice of citizenship deprivation in Norway, the introduction seeks to historicize it. The impression left by prevailing histories of Norwegian citizenship is that citizenship deprivation is a new practice. However, this is not entirely true. During the first half of the 20th century, the Norwegian state turned many Roma, Jews, and war brides into "alien citizens" and expelled them from the national community. The fact that the expulsion of these groups was considered legitimate at the time calls for an open discussion of today's policies, their justifications, and their consequences. Therefore, I reflect on the breaks and continuities between past and current practices of citizenship deprivation.

The introduction comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic and the research questions. Chapter 2 discusses cases of alien citizens in Norway's past and present. Chapters 3 and 4 reflect on the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the dissertation. Chapter 5 summarizes the three articles. Chapter 6 outlines the main findings of the dissertation, discusses their implications for our understanding of the relationship between state and subject, and reflect on the re-emergence of citizenship deprivation against the backdrop of its prehistories. The articles are listed below.

List of articles:

"Citizenship Cheaters" before the Law: Reading Fraud-Based Denaturalization in Norway through Lenses of Exceptionalism." *International Political Sociology* 17 (1). doi: 10.1093/ips/olad006

Circles of alienation: examining first-hand experiences of citizenship deprivation through the perspective of emotions and estrangement. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* doi: 10.1080/1369183X.2023.2266148

Sinners, Saints, and Racialized Scapegoats: (Mis)interpellation and Subject Positions in the Face of Citizenship Deprivation. Under review.

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1 Introduction: From foreigners to citizens and back again

In the fall of 2016, I interviewed immigrants in Norway for my master's thesis in sociology, asking them why some applied for citizenship and others did not. By coincidence, a contact within the Norwegian-Somali community referred me to three naturalized citizens who faced a peculiar problem with the Norwegian immigration authorities: Jamilah, Muhammed, and Amina were suspected of acquiring citizenship—naturalizing—on false pretenses.[1] The potential consequences of violating the Nationality Act were severe for these individuals: citizenship deprivation—denaturalization—and, by extension, deportation.[2]

Before this interview, I had never heard of the state practice of citizenship revocation. My initial thought was that their experiences were "extreme cases" (Flyvbjerg 2006) of state power, a dramatic but unusual state practice. However, I soon learned that they were part of at least 500 cases being investigated by the immigration authorities at the time. At the height of the 2015-2016 "refugee crisis", the government—at the time consisting of the Conservative Party and the right-wing Progress Party—declared that they had decided to sanction cases of "naturalization fraud" more aggressively, ostensibly to curb the number of asylum seekers and protect the integrity of the asylum system. Public commentators and opposition parties exclaimed their astonishment at this seemingly new policy and accused the government of executive overreach. However, this critique was quickly debunked by the then Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, from the Conservative Party. She pointed out that the decision to reinforce citizenship revocation neither violated domestic laws nor international conventions. On the contrary, she claimed that the decision was grounded in both bodies of law (Solberg 2017). Nevertheless, debates continued in newspapers and in the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament). The opposition parties submitted proposals aimed at

[1] All participants have been given pseudonyms.

[2] Citizenship deprivation refers to involuntary loss of citizenship. Deprivation is initiated by the state and is distinguishable from voluntary renunciation of citizenship (Gibney 2013). Citizenship deprivation is also known as citizenship stripping and citizenship revocation. In this thesis, I treat these terms as synonyms. However, I make a distinction between denationalization and denaturalization. Denationalization occurs when citizenship is taken away from someone who acquired citizenship through birth, while denaturalization occurs when citizenship is taken away from a naturalized citizen (Belton and Liew 2021).

weakening the power of the government and strengthen the legal position of individuals targeted by citizenship revocation (Birkvad 2023b).

As these debates unfolded in the Storting, I had just finished my master's degree and moved on to work for the Institute for Social Research (Oslo) as a research assistant. There, I participated in a state-commissioned research project that sought to map the consequences of the general reinforcement of revocation policies for those targeted (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020). We mainly interviewed refugees and permanent residents who risked losing their residence permits, but we also reached one naturalized citizen, Muhammed, whom I interviewed in 2016. Unlike the rest of the interviewees, he had passed the stage of the "waiting room of citizenship" (Fortier 2021)—at least, he used to think so: "I thought I'd never had to deal with the UDI again, but suddenly, they are back in my life and call me a foreigner."[3]

The unexpected encounters with Muhammed opened up a new terrain for research. I became especially interested in the subject of citizenship revocation because Muhammed's statement disrupted a recurring refrain in public discourse, immigration historiography, and mainstream citizenship theory: that immigrants follow a linear path from outsiders to insiders, or from foreigners to citizens, through the process of naturalization (cf. Fortier 2021; Ngai 2014). As Knut Kjelstadli, a leading historian on the Norwegian history of immigration, put it: "After passing this final, decisive legal step [naturalization], the process could not be reversed. Also the 'inner border' was passed" (2003b, 369, translated by author).

When I started as a PhD candidate in 2019, I wanted to explore the process through which Muhammed and other Norwegian citizens were turned into foreigners. I discovered that the Norwegian practice was not unique but rather emblematic of a broader policy trend in Europe and North America, dubbed the "revival of citizenship deprivation" (Fargues 2017). In recent years, states have re-invigorated citizenship deprivation to target and expel undesirable citizens, primarily alleged terrorists, criminals, and fraudsters (Birnie and Bauböck 2020).

The term "revival" refers to the sinister history of citizenship stripping, often associated with totalitarian regimes (Weil 2017). Nazi Germany's Nuremberg laws rendered Jews and other minorities stateless. As stateless people, no country claimed them, rendering them ready for extermination in concentration camps. Against this backdrop, Hannah Arendt, political theorist and a stateless Jewish refugee for nearly two decades, wrote that stripping people of citizenship was one of the ultimate expressions of national sovereignty (Arendt 1951/2017). After the Second

[3] The UDI is the acronym for the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, the responsible unit for processing and deciding citizenship revocation cases.

World War, citizenship deprivation acquired a bad reputation because of its association with discrimination. Human rights norms and constitutional as well as international law became constraints on states' sovereign power of denationalization (Birnie and Bauböck 2020, Gibney 2019b). However, since the turn of the century, citizenship deprivation has re-emerged as a potent policy tool of exclusion.

A growing body of literature has discussed the implications of the revival of citizenship deprivation from the perspective of history, law, political science, and sociology (Fargues and Winter 2019). Existing contributions have discussed some of the historical links as well as legal and normative issues at stake in states' rediscovery of denaturalization (Birnie and Bauböck 2020, Fargues and Winter 2019). Although this literature has addressed many important issues, it has left important empirical questions underexplored.

First, previous research has largely been limited to citizenship deprivation on "public good grounds", linked with recent changes introduced by many states that make it easier to take away citizenship from persons engaged in terrorist activities (Coca-Vila 2020, Macklin 2014, Mantu 2018, Midtbøen 2019b, Sykes 2016). However, citizenship revocation on grounds of fraud has also re-emerged in several countries, such as the US (Frost 2019), France, and the UK (Fargues 2019). Naturalization fraud has largely been overlooked or presented as an uncontroversial mode of involuntary loss of citizenship, as Fargues (2019) noted. Second, current scholarship is strikingly state-centric and has not paid much attention to *lived* experiences of denaturalization. Admittedly, a few scholars have examined the consequences of citizenship deprivation measures for migrant communities targeted (Kapoor 2018, Naqvi 2022) but accounts of first-hand experiences of denaturalization are lacking.

This thesis seeks to address these shortcomings by examining how the Norwegian government legitimized the decision to reinforce fraud-based denaturalization, as well as by interviewing individuals subjected to this state practice. Based on parliamentary debates and qualitative interviews, this thesis poses the following two research questions:

I. What arguments did the Norwegian government articulate to justify the decision to revitalize citizenship deprivation in Parliament?

II. How does the process of citizenship deprivation shape emotions, social relations, and subjectivities among those targeted?

In answering these research questions, I draw on different theoretical perspectives. Analyzing the parliamentary debates, I realized that one of the government's arguments for revitalizing citizenship deprivation was referring to domestic and international law. The government declared it was "only following the law." As such, the government's reasoning reflected what Schmitt (1922/2005) and Agamben (1998) called the "paradox of sovereignty": the fact that the government is both outside and inside the legal order at the same time. By using Schmitt and Agamben's theories of sovereignty and exceptionalism, I suggest that international law not only constrain national sovereignty, as some seem to suggest (Birnie and Bauböck 2020, Gibney 2019b), but also enable states in finding new grounds for citizenship deprivation. Analyzing the qualitative interviews with individuals undergoing processes of citizenship deprivation, I build on two different strands of theory. First, I use the concepts of affective citizenship (Ayata 2019, Fortier 2016) and affective economy (Ahmed 2004, 2014a) to examine the circulation of emotions and their capacity of shaping social relations. Second, I use the concept of interpellation, coined by Althusser (Althusser 1971) and developed by others (Ahmed 2000, Butler 1997, Fanon 1952/2021, Hage 2010, Macherey 2012), to show how citizenship deprivation shapes subjectivities. The results from these analyses are presented in three journal articles, which constitute the main bulk of this dissertation.

Whereas the articles revolve around the current practice of citizenship deprivation in Norway, this introduction seeks to historicize it. As indicated above, the practice of denaturalization is not new. The history of persecution and expulsion of minority groups is also reflected in Norwegian history. Reading the history of immigration to Norway, I came across three categories of Norwegian citizens who were persecuted, denied, or stripped of citizenship and deported: Jews, Roma and "war brides."[4] Delving deeper into these stories allows me to pose a third question for reflection in this thesis: What are the breaks and continuities between historical and contemporary forms of citizenship deprivation?

The introduction proceeds as follows. The next chapter discuss Norway's past and present "alien citizens" (Ngai 2006, 2014). It begins by discussing conventional understandings of citizenship as a clear legal boundary that separates citizens from aliens. From this core idea, it is assumed that foreigners will become citizens and stay citizens throughout their lives. I then show that these ideas have informed the prevailing histories of Norwegian citizenship. However, by

[4] Roma refers to immigrants from Romania who immigrated to Norway in the 1860s (Midtbøen and Lidén 2015). This group was previously called "Gypsies", but Roma is the official term today. Unless I cite historical sources, I use the term Roma in this thesis. "War brides" refers to Norwegian women who married German soldiers during and immediately after the Third Reich's occupation of Norway (1940-1945) (Holocaustsenteret 2016).

foregrounding the stories of Norwegian Roma, Jews, and war brides, I problematize these ideas, historically and conceptually. Roma, Jews, and war brides were all turned into alien citizens during the first half of the 20th century. The chapter ends by describing contemporary practices of citizenship deprivation in Norway, paying particular attention to naturalization fraud. Chapter 3 provides a brief review of the literature on the revival of citizenship deprivation and its shortcomings. To remedy these shortcomings, this thesis mainly relies on perspectives outside this literature: exceptionalism (Agamben 1998, 2005, Schmitt 1922/2005), emotions (Ahmed 2004, 2010, 2014a, Ayata 2019, Fortier 2013, 2016, 2017), and interpellation (Althusser 1971, Butler 1997, Fanon 1952/2021, Hage 2010, Macherey 2012).

The next chapter describes the methodological design and data material. This thesis studies denaturalization from the perspective of the state and targeted individuals. It draws on parliamentary debates and qualitative interviews to shed light on these perspectives. Reflections on the role of emotions and positionalities before, during, and after the interviews run through this chapter. Giving glimpses into the relational and processual dynamics between the participants and myself is crucial to understanding how this knowledge was produced (cf. Ayata et al. 2019). After providing a short summary of each article in Chapter 5, the final chapter concludes by teasing out my main findings and discussing the theoretical implications for our understanding of the relationship between nation-states and citizens in denaturalization practices. In closing, I discuss the breaks and continuities between historical and contemporary forms of denaturalization, and, on this basis, offer some reflections for future academic research on this important subject.

2 Alien Citizens in Norway's past and present

A core idea in citizenship theory is that citizenship demarcates a clear line between outsiders and insiders—that is between aliens and citizens in the nation-state (Bosniak 2006, Brubaker 1992, Joppke 1999). Another related idea is that aliens eventually turn into citizens, in the case of immigrants, through the formal process of naturalization (Aptekar 2016, Brubaker 2010, Goodman 2014, Motomura 2006). In this chapter, I spell out what these two ideas—which I call the conventional *topology* of citizenship and the *telos* of naturalization—imply for our understanding of citizenship and alienage. Then, I show how these ideas have been expressed in the historiography of Norwegian immigration and citizenship, from the drafting of the 1814 Constitution via the first 1888 Nationality Act to the current citizenship legislation. Overall, the historiography of Norwegian citizenship legislation leaves the impression that immigrants who were naturalized were free of state persecution and deportation. There are, however, examples of Norwegian citizens whose citizenship status was rendered suspect and insecure. During the first half of the 20th century, Roma, Jews and war brides were turned into "alien citizens" (Ngai 2006, 2014): citizens whose legal status was questioned, denied, and removed on discriminatory grounds.[5]

This chapter calls attention to the stories of these Roma, Jews, and war brides for two reasons. First, the narratives challenge the conventional topology of citizenship and the telos of naturalization implied by the historiography of Norwegian citizenship. To be sure, citizenship provided no protection against persecution and deportation for Roma, Jews, and war brides. Second, the stories allow me to *historicize* my object of study (Shammas 2018): the state practice of citizenship deprivation. Law, policies, and practices regulating immigration and citizenship are not natural, given products but always occur in historical context. Attending to the stories of Roma, Jews and war brides can further our understanding of the current practices of citizenship

[5] Ngai (2006, 2014), who coined this concept, referred to two historical instances of official alien citizenship in the US. In the first instance, 400,000 ethnic Mexicans who were removed from American territory during the Great Depression, half of them US citizens. In the second instance, the internment of 120,000 people of Japanese descent during World War II, two-thirds of them US citizens.

deprivation. This historicizing move opens up a discussion of the breaks and continuities between past and present practices of denaturalization, which the final chapter takes up.

I do not claim that the stories of the Roma, Jews, and war brides have been neglected in prevailing histories of Norwegian immigration and citizenship, nor that they are typical examples of Norwegian citizenship practice. Rather, I claim that these stories have only been narrated separately, and not as cases of the same state practice: citizenship deprivation. The historical treatment of Jews, Roma, and war brides was neither incidental nor unique to the history of Norway. Anti-Jewish policies were carried out in all German-occupied countries in Western Europe in the 1940s (Bruland 2014). For example, thousands of Jews lost their citizenship—and lives—in Vichy France (Zalc 2020). Roma had been persecuted for hundreds of years across Europe (Johansen 2008), which culminated in Nazi Germany's racist and genocidal policies from the end of the 1930s onwards (Brustad et al. 2017, 122-3). Historically, women have been treated as the property of male citizens in many countries. Consequently, they often lost their birthright citizenship upon marriage to a foreigner (Belton and Liew 2021, 28). For example, the US 1907 Expatriation Act decided that marriages between American women and foreign men were acts of voluntary expatriation (Herzog 2011). In general, states' citizenship deprivation powers greatly expanded in the first half of the 20th century. As Arendt noted (1951/2017, 364), there was hardly a country left that did not pass new legislation that allowed for getting rid of a great number of its citizens between the two world wars.

2.1. Outside | inside: The conventional topology of sovereignty and citizenship

Ever since the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, the international order has been based on the principle of state sovereignty (Brochmann 2006, 25). According to this principle, states have the right to control their territories and populations. Citizenship refers to the governance of the population and is concerned with the state as a membership organization (Joppke 1999, 5-6). The institution of citizenship was developed as a legal instrument to delineate those who belonged to the nation and those who did not: citizens and, hence, aliens (Brubaker 1992, Joppke 1999). Indeed, most European countries drafted their first citizenship laws in the 19th century, a period in which the modern idea of the nation-state emerged and flourished (Bauböck 2006, Brubaker 1992, Joppke 1999).

Citizenship law is the institutional expression of the sovereign right to determine the terms under which new members shall be included in the national community (Weil and Hansen 2001). The line between citizens and foreigners can be drawn according to different principles. Individuals can gain citizenship through descent (jus sanguinis), birthplace (jus soli), or naturalization based on residence in the country (jus domicilis, or jus matrimonii—the right to citizenship through marriage) (Erdal and Sagmo 2017). In legal terms, naturalization means the conferral of citizenship to foreigners through application. In its wider social meaning, however, to naturalize is "to make native" (Fortier 2013, 698). Naturalization indicates that "something is 'made natural', brought into conformity with nature" (ibid.).

In his pioneering study of citizenship legislation in France and Germany, Brubaker (1992) claimed that citizenship is "internally inclusive" and "externally exclusive." The state distributes a set of rights and obligations equal to all members of the community while excluding non-members from these goods. According to Brubaker, citizenship therefore works as a powerful instrument of social closure. In his words, this entails "a conceptually clear, legally consequential and ideologically charged distinction between citizens and foreigners" (1992, 21). The line between citizens and foreigners is *ideologically charged* because the state invests *national identity* in citizenship, reflecting state-prescribed norms, values, and behaviors. In short, citizenship signals who "we" are, as opposed to who "we" are not. Moreover, the line is *legally consequential* because citizenship is a status that comes with duties and rights (Joppke 2007). Most importantly, citizens have a right to enter and stay in the territory as well as the right to participate in national elections, while aliens do not. For advanced welfare states that offer considerable social rights, such as Norway, guarding the door to these rights is seen as especially important (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012). As Joppke (1999, 6) concisely puts it, "[B]ecause rights are costly, they cannot be for everybody."[6]

Sovereignty, in these influential accounts of citizenship and immigration, refers to states' right to delineate between citizens and aliens. As such, the institution of citizenship has been depicted as having two faces: "a hard outside and a soft inside" (Bosniak 2006). Citizenship and alienness are seen as two separate spheres (Bosniak 2006, 122). Consequently, the underlying assumption of these theories is that sovereignty is "not absolute but limited to the exclusion of aliens" (Joppke 1999, 5). The unconditional right not to be deported is "one of the few remaining privileges which separates citizens from settled non-citizens" (Anderson, Gibney, and Paoletti

[6] Thus, the content of these rights attached to citizenship vary greatly between nation-states (Kochenov 2019, Shachar 2009) and across time (Marshall and Bottomore 1992). Most rights today are attached to *denizenship* (Hammar 1990), a category between citizens and aliens. A denizen is a legal resident who holds civil, social, and certain political rights but falls short of formal citizenship (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012, 190).

2011, 548). The implication is that once foreigners transform into citizens, they are free of state persecution and expulsion. This topology of citizenship, as well as the telos of naturalization, has also undergirded prevailing histories of Norwegian citizenship.

2.2. Prevailing histories of Norwegian citizenship

Norwegian citizenship has been deployed as an instrument of nation-building (Myhre 2003, 213) and laws regulating access to citizenship demonstrate that the line between Norwegian citizens and aliens has been drawn in different ways. The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 (instigated by independence from 400 years of Danish colonial rule) provided no clear definition of the "citizen" (Brochmann 2013). References to "statsborger" (citizen), "Statens Borgere" (citizens of the state), "Nordmænd" (Norwegians), and "Undersaat" (subject) were sporadically made in the document, but the distinction between citizen and non-citizen was not clear-cut. Only the clause regulating "innfødsrett" (native right) provides us with some clues. This clause stated that access to high-ranking government positions was reserved for Norwegian citizens who professed the Evangelical-Lutheran religion, swore allegiance to the Constitution, and spoke the Norwegian language.[7]

In exceptional cases, the Storting was granted the right to deviate from these rules by *naturalizing* foreigners. Decisions to naturalize foreigners were typically motivated by the demand for educated people, often from Denmark, to fill university positions. Otherwise, regulating citizenship was left to the general legislation. In practice, citizenship was determined by permanent residence in the kingdom, and citizenship rights could normally be acquired after three years of residency. Thus, this practice relied on the jus domicilis principle (Niemi 2003, 13-17). Although the Constitution provided no positive definition of "citizen," it *negatively* defined religious minorities as not belonging to the national community. Article 2 of the Constitution stated that Jews, Mormons, and Jesuits were prohibited from entering the Norwegian kingdom. Historian Frode Ulvund (2017) argues that these religious minorities played a significant part in Norwegian nation-building as "anti-citizens"—counterparts to "good citizens."[8]

Norway adopted its first Nationality Act in 1888, which sharpened the divide between citizens and aliens. Several conditions motivated the making of this law. As immigration increased

[7] In addition, one of the following requirements had to be fulfilled: birth in the kingdom by parents who were subjects of the state, born in "foreign countries" by Norwegian parents, or continuous permanent residence in Norway for ten years (Niemi 2003, 15).
[8] Article 2 of the 1814 Constitution is popularly referred to as the "Jew clause," but this is a misleading term because Jesuits and Mormons were also targeted.

in size and changed in nature, economic liberalism was losing ground in favor of protectionism, and national concerns were becoming more salient (Nordhaug 2000 in Midtbøen et al. 2018, 27). The fear of foreign acquisitions of Norwegian resources was the direct backdrop for creating the new law. The law's main objective was to ensure that only Norwegian citizens could access the economic resources of the country. Jus sanguinis was adopted as the main principle for the attribution of citizenship. Children could only derive citizenship from their fathers and women only from their husbands (Brochmann 2013). Immigrants could naturalize provided that they had lived in Norway for three consecutive years, had the right of municipal domicile, and could prove that they and his family would not become burdens on the social system and had reached the age of majority (Kjelstadli 2003a, 207). The principle of single citizenship was established, as the lawmakers feared that allowing dual citizenship could lead to conflicting national loyalties (Myhre 2003, 207).

In 1924, the Nationality Act was revised. The revised law stipulated that women married to foreigners could keep their citizenship on individual grounds, regardless of marital status, as long as they stayed in Norway. To prevent cases of statelessness, foreigners born and raised in Norway automatically received Norwegian citizenship at the age of 22. The main principle of jus sanguinis was, therefore, complemented with elements of jus soli and jus domicilis (Nordhaug 2000 in Midtbøen et al. 2018). A new rule on the loss of citizenship was added, which aimed at preventing the great wave of North American emigrants returning to Norway to claim benefits. The residency requirement was raised from three to five years, and economic self-sufficiency became a factor in naturalization decisions (Brochmann 2013). From the 1880s to the first revision in 1924, citizenship increasingly involved social rights. As Brochmann (2013, 2) noted, these changes were precursors of the modern welfare state.

The citizenship law was amended for the second time in 1950 (Midtbøen 2015). The 1950 law introduced important changes. The "war bride clause" from 1946, which targeted Norwegian women who had married Nazi soldiers during the German occupation of Norway, was removed (Holocaustsenteret 2016). Additionally, a two-tiered naturalization system came into force (Wickström 2016). While the required period of domicile was raised to seven years for foreigners, a shorter period of domicile was required for Nordic citizens. The latter category could become Norwegian citizens through "notification," a simplified administrative procedure (Brochmann 2013).

After the 1950 Act was passed, citizenship legislation was hardly on the political agenda in Norway. Only a few liberalizations were made to the Norwegian Nationality Act in the postwar

decades, while naturalization requirements were barely addressed (Brochmann 2013). From the 1950s until the 1970s, the door to immigrants was relatively open (Brochmann 2006, 35). The Norwegian attitude toward international migration followed the European zeitgeist of open borders. "Alien workers" (*fremmedarbeidere*) from Pakistan, Turkey, Morocco, and India came to Norway in the 1960s to fill the needs in the industry and service sectors (Brochmann 2006, 69). In 1975, however, the authorities introduced an "immigration stop." Yet it was not a proper "stop" but a selective policy that sought to limit unskilled migrants from the Global South while recruiting skilled workers to the booming oil sector (Brochmann 2006, 37). In fact, immigration increased after the "stop", as people came through humanitarian channels instead. In the 1970s and 1980s, family migrants (spouses, children, and parents of the original labor migrants) and refugees from Chile and Vietnam immigrated to Norway in large numbers. From the 1990s, larger groups of refugees and asylum seekers from Iraq, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, and Somalia came to Norway (Brochmann 2006, 68-9).

Growing immigration from these countries led to a strong increase in the number of applications for Norwegian citizenship, as these migrants fled conditions marked by a *lack* of rights (Brochmann 2013, 5). The fast-growing number of citizenship applications as well as recent developments in international law compelled the government to revise the nationality act once again. In 1999, the government—consisting of the Christian Democratic Party, the Center Party and the Liberal Party—appointed an official committee to draft a new citizenship act. The committee was mandated to build on existing traditions of the Norwegian citizenship law but also to consider modernizations to foster the process of integration of immigrants. One of these modernizations was whether to allow dual citizenship or retain the single citizenship regime established in the first law of 1888. The 1997 European Convention of Nationality, which represented the most comprehensive collection of basic principles in the field of nationality law, left governments free to decide on this question (Midtbøen 2015, 3). When the new law was introduced in 2005, however, the principle of single citizenship was further entrenched. The chief argument was that accepting dual citizenship would "erode traditional Norwegian ideals of equality" (Midtbøen 2015, 15). The new act also introduced new requirements for naturalization: language skills and knowledge of society as well as documentation of identity. Despite raising the bar for naturalization, citizenship became an entitlement, leaving no room for administrative discretion if the conditions were met (Midtbøen 2010, 321).

A bifurcated provision on citizenship revocation was also added to the new law. This provision stated, first, that applicants who fail to renounce their previous citizenship could have their Norwegian citizenship revoked. Second, the provision stipulated that citizenship revocation

was allowed if the "acquisition of the nationality of the State Party by means of fraudulent conduct, false information or concealment of any relevant fact attributable to the applicant" (1997 Europan Convention of Nationality [1997 ECN], Article 7, no. 1, b). This paragraph did not cause strong disagreements at the time of its institution. However, it became a bone of contention a decade later, when the government announced its crackdown on naturalization fraud (Birkvad 2023). In the same period, the government introduced new grounds for citizenship revocation—serious crime and terrorism—which also caused controversy (Midtbøen 2019a).

I return to these controversies in the conclusion to this chapter, but let me first summarize the prevailing histories of Norwegian citizenship. Access to citizenship has been determined by a combination of jus sanguinis, jus soli, and jus domicilis. Historically, requirements for naturalization have varied, and so have the rights attached to Norwegian citizenship. Nevertheless, the premise was that foreigners who passed the "inner border" were free of state persecution, as Kjelstadli claimed (2003, 369). On a similar note, Brochmann indicated that the Norwegian post-war welfare state has drawn legitimacy through a dual approach to immigration and membership: a hard outer control and a softer inner sphere (2006, 128). Although this has clearly been the norm, important exceptions exist. In the next sections, I outline three cases that defy the conventional topology of citizenship and the telos of naturalization: Roma, Jews, and war brides. Although these categories of people were targeted by different laws and regulations, their stories converge on one crucial point: all were deprived of their rights as citizens, denied entry, or deported from Norwegian territory.

2.3 Alien citizens in the 20th century: Roma, Jews, and war brides

2.3.1 The persecution of Roma (1901–1930s)

From the 1814 Constitution to the 1890s, immigration to Norway was dominated by high skilled workers and professionals. There were few restrictions on immigration to Norway, and immigrants were generally seen as positive additions to Norwegian society (Myhre 2003, 201). However, as non-skilled workers began to cross the border in higher numbers, typically from Sweden, Norway introduced its first Alien Act in 1901. This law was intended to protect the labor market against these "unwanted immigrants." Yet, the law did not deny access to the kingdom but required that all foreigners immigrating to Norway had to register with the police and keep a "residence book" (*oppholdsbok*). In addition, the law opened for deporting foreigners on various grounds. In most cases, the authorities used the law to deport foreigners who were unable to support themselves or

suspected of idleness, begging, or illegal activities (Kjelstadli 2003b, 371). Therefore, Kjelstadli argued that the 1901 Alien Act was more about controlling the Swedish "underclass" than about immigration to Norway.[9]

In 1915, a new Alien Act came into force. One of the motives behind the new law was to reinforce and continue the exclusion of "physically and morally shabby individuals," as the Justice Department put it (quoted in Kjelstadli 2003b, 384, translated by the author). One of the law's targets was traveling foreigners (or vagrants—in Norwegian, "omstreifere"). The legal text was ostensibly race-neutral, but the preparatory works and circular documents specified that Jewish merchants from Tsarist Russia and "Gypsies" (Roma) were its intended targets, solely based on their ethnic backgrounds (ibid.).

The first group of travelers, also called "Taters," settled in Denmark-Norway in the 1500s. Roma were considered a newer group of Taters, likely immigrated to Norway between 1860 and 1888. Despite shared descent and itinerant lifestyles, the Taters and Roma were categorized as two distinct "races" by the Norwegian state. The authorities wanted to "make good Norwegians out of Taters" through assimilation. Much of the groundwork for this policy was laid by the studies of Eilert Sundt, a priest and pioneer of the social sciences. Sundt aimed at "civilizing" the Taters and removing the alleged problems that they caused for the majority population (Brustad et al. 2017, 19). A Christian organization (*Foreningen for Modarbeidelse af Omstreifervæsenet*) continued Sundt's mission. Tater families were placed in the Svanviken work colony with the aim of transforming them into decent, sober, Christian workers and forcing them to settle down and stop traveling. By contrast, Roma people were not considered Norwegian and required a different solution: expulsion (Brustad et al. 2017, 59-60). The general secretary of "Omstreifermisjonen" and administrator of the Svanviken work colony, Reverend Ingvald B. Carlsen, was the ideologue behind this dual approach. Reverend Carlsen claimed that the success of transforming Taters to decent people hinged upon the exclusion of Roma. His reasoning was that the entry of new groups of vagrants would be demoralize and tempt the Taters to resume vagrancy. Therefore, he drew a sharp line between Taters, whom he considered Norwegian citizens, and Roma whom he construed as alien. The policies Carlsen suggested were similar to those of other countries', such as Germany (Brustad et al. 2017, 61-62).

During the 1920s, the Norwegian authorities tried to find a more permanent solution to the "Gypsy problem," a problem that only counted 100-150 individuals at the time (Brustad et al.

[9] However, in some cases, the authorities also used the law as a fig leaf to exclude a few political dissidents, such as anarchists and revolutionary socialists (Kjelstadli 2003b, 375).

2017, 9). The authorities implemented a series of bureaucratic measures to deny Roma access to Norwegian territory. In 1921, the Ministry of Social Affairs initiated an extensive registration of Roma, aiming to deter further immigration and deport those present in Norway. In 1924, the Justice Department decided that Roma were not to be recognized as Norwegian citizens, and if they showed identification papers, they were to be considered fraudulent; in 1925, another circular document decided that passports shown by newly arrived Roma were invalid and should be confiscated (Kjelstadli 2003c, 453).

In 1927, a revised Alien Act specified what was only implied in the 1915 Alien Act: "Gypsies and other vagrants [omstreifere] who cannot prove their Norwegian citizenship shall be denied entry to the realm" (Brustad et al. 2017, 9, translated by the author). The "Gypsy Clause," as it has been called, was a very effective tool of exclusion. After 1934, virtually no Roma existed in Norway. At the outbreak of the Second World War, a group of 66 Norwegian Roma were stranded in Belgium and later deported to Auschwitz, where only four survived. Brustad and colleagues (2017) argued that the Norwegian state cannot be held *directly* responsible for the deaths of Norwegian Roma. Yet, the fate of Roma was *indirectly* sealed by the state bureaucracy's systematic infringement of the Romas' rights to enter and stay in Norway as citizens (Brustad et al. 2017, 10).

2.3.2 The deportation of Jews during the German occupation (1940s)

Norwegian Jews were another less desirable group in Norway, as indicated by Article 2 of the Constitution and the 1915 Alien Act. Despite these legal restrictions, the majority were allowed to stay in Norway.

The Jews' right to stay in Norway was first seriously challenged after Germany invaded Norway in 1940. When the German troops took control of Norwegian territory, the Norwegian government went into exile in London. Nazi Germany viewed Norway favorably, considering it an "Aryan nation." Hitler's representative in Norway, Josef Terboven, decided that Vidkun Quisling's party, the National Gathering (Nasjonal samling, NS), should assume parliamentary control, while all other parties were banned. Norwegian Jews were not seen as members of the racially defined nation. When Quisling declared Minister President in February 1942, one of his first actions was to reintroduce the "Jew Clause" into the Constitution (Bruland 2022). Although Norway had the smallest Jewish population among the countries occupied by Nazi Germany—counting 2,100 individuals— Norway still played a part in "the final solution of the Jewish question" (Bruland 2014, 359).

In January 1942, an announcement published in Norwegian newspapers marked the beginning of the systematic registration of Norwegian Jews (Bruland 2014, 360). The announcement required all Jews in Norway to register with the authorities and get their passports (or identity documents) stamped with a red "J." Based on this registration, Gestapo and the Norwegian police obtained an address of 1,500 people. These people were also asked to fill out a "questionnaire for Jews in Norway." This questionnaire was distributed by the Quisling regime to collect information on Norwegian Jews' financial situations and criminal records. Despite antisemitic thinking concerning the central position of Jews in the national economy, the results of the questionnaires demonstrated that only a few Jews worked in finance and banking. The average wealth among Jewish people in Norway was small, and very few had criminal records. However, this information did not diminish the authorities' prejudice against Jews but rather exacerbated it. The head of NS' Statistics Department claimed that these numbers could only be explained by the fact that the respondents had provided incorrect information (Bruland 2014, 361).

Between 1940 and 1942, several anti-Jewish policies were adopted, and anti-Semitic propaganda was on the rise (Bruland 2014, 363). Systematic arrests of Jews began in October 1942. All male Jews over 15 were arrested by Norwegian police (*Statspolitiet*) and detained in the Berg internment camp (outside the south-eastern city of Tønsberg), while female Jews were forced to register every day with the police (Bruland 2022). The Quisling regime also confiscated the wealth and property of the Jewish people in Norway. All actions were carried out by the Norwegian police in close cooperation with the German security police. Meanwhile, deportation ordinances were prepared. The police took action against Jewish women and children with the purpose of transporting all Jews with German ships to Auschwitz. One half of the Jews in Norway managed to escape to Sweden with the help of the Norwegian resistance movement, the "Home front" (Hjemmefronten), which organized transport across the border. The other half—nearly 800 individuals and among them approximately 500 Norwegian citizens—were transported directly to concentration camps in Poland. Only 38 survived. In addition, 21 Jews were killed or committed suicide as a direct or indirect consequence of the policies perpetrated against them (Bruland 2014, 372). Norwegian historian Bruland has called the deportation of Norwegian Jews "a German plan with local helpers and local initiative" (Bruland 2014, 360). The Norwegian bureaucracy and police carried out J-stamping, unlike in other countries (Bruland 2014, 362). According to Bruland (2014, 365), the persecution of Jews was an extremely efficient bureaucratic process. It only took three and a half months to arrest, arrange transport, and deport the Jews to the Polish death camps.

2.3.3 The persecution of war brides and their children in the aftermath of war (1945-50)

While Jews were persecuted and deported during the German occupation, another group of Norwegian citizens were persecuted immediately after Norway was liberated from the Germans: the "German girls" (*tyskerjentene*). Many Norwegians had cultivated professional and private relationships with German soldiers during the war. Although every act of fraternization with the enemy was viewed unfavorably by the Norwegian government in exile in London, Norwegian women who initiated personal relationships with German soldiers were particularly targeted. Despite breaking no laws, these girls and women received formal and informal sanctions after the occupation ceased (Holocaustsenteret 2016, 23-24).

In most cases, contact between Norwegian women and German soldiers was not motivated by ideological or political sympathies. In contrast to Norwegian men who joined the German army and NS, the "German girls" (or "the German sluts" —*tyskertøsene*—as they were derogatorily referred to) could not be prosecuted for violating the law. Instead, the government tried different tactics in an attempt to solve the "German girl problem". Between 3000 and 5000 women were unlawfully arrested and detained in camps across Norway. The authorities justified the detainment by claiming to protect the women against retributive justice or vigilantism, while protecting society against morally and sexually "contagious women." Other women lost their jobs and faced financial deprivation (Holocaustsenteret 2016).

War brides, those who had married German soldiers during the occupation, however, were stripped of Norwegian citizenship. During the occupation, applications for marriages between Norwegians and Germans were processed by German authorities. Getting the German authorities' permission to marry was, however, a complicated and time-consuming process. In the summer of 1945, Norwegian and allied authorities resumed control of this mandate and approved applications for marriages. To the Norwegian authorities, granting permission to these marriages was a possible solution to the "German girl problem", namely that the women would leave Norway and move to Germany with their husbands. However, Norwegian law did not permit the deportation of Norwegian citizens, so the government added an exceptional clause to the Nationality Act. The "war bride clause" stated that those who acquired citizenship in an enemy state during the occupation would *automatically* lose their Norwegian citizenship (thus, disregarding Section 8 of the 1924 Nationality Act, which stipulated that women married to foreigners would only be able to lose their citizenship if they left Norway). The clause was applied with retro-active effect (in violation of Section 97 of the Constitution) but only applied to women who had married enemies of the state (including Austrian and Japanese citizens) during the years of occupation.

Conversely, 28 Norwegian men who had married German women were not stripped of their citizenship. The exceptional "war bride clause" was included in the Nationality Act on a permanent basis in 1946 (Holocaustsenteret 2016, 33-35).

Although the "German girls" did not violate Norwegian law, they broke gendered, moral norms. According to traditional gender roles, women were not autonomous subjects but were considered as the property of the fatherland. By voluntarily entering relationships with the enemy, they gave away something that did not belong to them—their bodies. By *not* rejecting German men, the girls and women were considered "sexual traitors." According to this view, these women positioned themselves outside the national community (Holocaustsenteret 2016, 41). Claudia Lenz (2009) captured the reactions against the "German girls" described above as a symbolic re-institution of national boundaries and the national sexual order.

The offspring of the "German girls" were also considered threats to the national order (Borgersrud 2005). During the occupation, 8,000 children were born in various "Lebensborn" homes across Norway. These homes were organized by Nazi Germany to support the birth and care of supposedly racially and genetically valuable mothers and children (Olsen 1998). Whereas Nazi Germany highly valued these children for their supposed racial superiority during the years of occupation, the Norwegian exile government regarded them as a national problem after the war. In line with eugenic ideas emblematic of the time, these children were seen as socially, nationally, and genetically inferior (Borgersrud 2005, 355) as well as future threats to Norwegian society as a potential German "fifth column." In essence, they were "not genuinely Norwegian and did not really belong here" (ibid.).

In 1945, an official committee (*Krigsbarnutvalget*) was formed to propose solutions to the problem. Specifically, the committee was asked to consider whether the children should be deported to Germany alongside their mothers. The committee advised against deporting children to Germany because of poor living conditions after the war. However, the committee did not rule out deportation to other countries, and hence mass deportation to Australia was suggested as a solution to the problem. Ultimately, most of the "war children" were not deported but grew up in Norway. Many were taken away from their mothers and placed in institutions, where experiences of abuse and mistreatment were documented (Borgersrud 2005).

However, one group of children was disowned by the Norwegian state. In the "Summer of Peace" in 1945, 30 Norwegian children were found in an orphanage in Bremen, Germany. Instead of bringing them back to Norway, the children were unlawfully adopted to Swedish foster parents. To make the children more "marketable" to Swedish authorities, the children were said

to be orphans found in German concentration camps, while their real identity and nationality were kept hidden. This was in violation of Norwegian and Swedish adoption laws. When the Swedish government decided to grant them Swedish citizenship, the children lost their Norwegian citizenship (Borgersrud 2005, 357-8).

2.3.4 Mixed reception of alien citizens after the Second World War

Jews, Roma, and war brides faced an ambivalent attitude from the Norwegian authorities after the war. As for the targeted "German girls" who had lost their citizenship, the "war bride clause" was removed in a general revision of the Nationality Act in 1950. This change allowed women and their children to reacquire Norwegian citizenship if they left Germany and resettled in Norway within five years. However, because many of the war brides had already settled down in Germany, this was not a viable option. Some of the "German girls" stayed in Norway after the war but as foreign citizens (Borgersrud 2005).

Jews holding Norwegian citizenship could reenter Norway after the war, whereas stateless people were initially denied access to Norway. Nevertheless, after months of pressure from Norwegian Jews and Swedish authorities, they could return to their homes in Norway (Brustad 372). The Jews' right to reside in Norway was secured, but as survivors of the Holocaust, they faced bureaucratic indifference and a general lack of understanding of the atrocities endured (Bruland 2014, 371).

The Roma who survived the Holocaust tried to re-enter Norway in the 1950s but were initially rejected by Norwegian authorities. However, after political pressure, they were granted access by the government. In 1956, Parliament removed the "Gypsy clause," which explicitly denied entry for Roma, because it justified racial discrimination. However, in practice, discrimination against Roma continued. The authorities applied the seemingly race-neutral term "vagrant" in the Alien Act to deny access to Roma. Nevertheless, their struggle for legal recognition eventually paid off. Most Roma could return to Norway and reacquire Norwegian citizenship between 1955 and 1972 (Brustad et al. 2017).

The Norwegian state's decision to remove the racist "Gypsy clause" mirrored a wider development in international law, seeking to remedy the horrors of the Holocaust. Jews, Roma, and other minorities' experiences during World War II, gave citizenship deprivation a bad reputation (Gibney 2019b). States' powers to take away citizenship became curtailed by domestic as well as international law in many European countries (Gibney 2019). The 1948 Universal

Declaration of Human Rights enshrined that "everyone has a right to a nationality" and that "no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality" (Article 15). The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness prohibited denationalization based on race, religion, or political orientation (ratified by Norway in 1971). In 1999, Norway ratified the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Against the background of discriminatory, assimilationist and exclusionary state policies, Jews, Roma, Taters (Romani), Kvens, and Forest Finns were assigned the status of national minorities in Norway (Midtbøen and Lidén 2015).[10] These conventions thus added protection to minorities.

2.4 Alien citizens in the 21st century: terrorists and fraudsters

The historical treatment of Roma, Jews, and war brides are examples of citizenship deprivation being used against minorities in the first half of the 20th century. Denaturalization powers were formally removed from Norway's immigration and citizenship legislation in the 1950s, and the recognition of Jews and Roma as national minorities in the late 1990s formally ended these chapters of Norwegian history.

Nevertheless, the citizenship revocation practice was to be resurrected, albeit in new forms. As previously mentioned, two clauses concerning involuntary loss of citizenship have been added to Norwegian citizenship law since the turn of the millennium. The first clause is revocation on the grounds of criminal acts and acts that defy fundamental national interests. The second clause is revocation based on the fraudulent acquisition of citizenship. These grounds for citizenship revocation do not target specific groups, but certain *acts* that are deemed unacceptable to the national community.

Citizenship revocation on the grounds of prejudicial acts or acts of terrorism has been introduced by many countries in recent years. The 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City, and, more recently, the return of "foreign fighters" from the Islamic State have heightened anxieties about national security and "homegrown-terrorism" (Macklin 2014). Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Denmark, and the UK have passed laws that punish "foreign fighters" or suspected terrorists with citizenship revocation (Birnie and Bauböck 2020, 6). Outside

[10] Unlike Jews and Roma, who were sought expelled from the national community, Taters (Romani), Kvens, and Forest Finns, as well as the indigenous Sami population, were subjected to assimilationist policies from 1850 onward. The distinctive ethnic and cultural traits of these groups were sought to be erased in order to make the Norwegian nation "identical to itself," as historian Narve Fulsås explained (cited in Niemi 2003, 25).

Europe, Australia, Canada, and Israel have passed similar laws (Burchardt and Gulati 2018). These concerns were also the backdrop for Norway's introduction of citizenship deprivation as a counter-terrorism tool. The provision was introduced in two steps. First, in 2016, the government (consisting of the Conservative Party and the Progress Party) proposed a legal change that allowed for the loss of citizenship concerning persons who had been convicted of serious criminal acts and criminal acts that defy fundamental national interests. The second step was the introduction of dual citizenship two years later.

The proposal to abolish the single citizenship principle was widely supported in Parliament, although the parties articulated different reasons for their support. The Liberal Party and the Socialist Left Party argued that accepting dual citizenship would formally support immigrants' dual identities and incorporate them into the political community. For the Conservative Party and the Progress Party, accepting dual citizenship would allow Norwegians living abroad to retain their Norwegian citizenship. They also argued that permitting dual citizenship would facilitate citizenship deprivation on the grounds of criminal acts. As it is considered illegitimate to make people stateless, allowing dual citizenship would permit the authorities to revoke citizenship from dual citizens who engage in or support acts of terrorism (Midtbøen 2019a).[11] This two-pronged government strategy—introducing loss of citizenship due to criminal acts and subsequently allowing dual citizenship—was justified with reference to the 1997 European Convention of Nationality (Ministry of Education and Research 2018). In general, the convention seeks to restrain states' citizenship deprivation powers, but certain cases are exempted, such as "conduct seriously prejudicial to the vital interests of the State Party" (Article 7D).

Citizenship revocation on the grounds of fraud is another exception outlined by the 1997 European Convention of Nationality. Most liberal democracies have such a provision in their citizenship laws (Herzog 2011). In Norway, fraud-based revocation was formally adopted into the Norwegian Nationality Act in 2005, without invoking political debate at the time (Birkvad 2023b).[12] The official report that laid the groundwork for the 2005 citizenship law referred to the convention's Article 7B in its recommendation to include grounds for fraud in the Nationality Act (NOU 2000: 32). According to this article, states can revoke citizenship from people who have acquired citizenship "[…] by means of fraudulent conduct, false information or concealment of any relevant fact attributable to the applicant." Fraudulent conduct is also known as

[11] In 2002, the Progress Party proposed to examine possibilities of revoking citizenship from dual citizens on grounds of criminal acts (Dokument nr. 8:50 (2001-2002)). The qualifying criminal act then was not terrorism, but listed as genital mutilation, forced marriages, threats and violence within immigrant communities.
[12] It was practiced by the authorities even before this, based on the Public Administration Act (Section 35).

"misrepresentation" (Lenard 2020, 4). Misrepresentation refers to "statements, orally or in writing, made by applicants during the naturalization process, which are found to be inaccurate, inconsistent, or otherwise incomplete" (ibid.).

The new rule in the Nationality Act states that citizenship revocation can only be executed if the applicant has furnished the incorrect information against his or her better judgment or has suppressed circumstances of substantial importance for the decision (Section 26, subsection 2). The decision to revoke citizenship based on false information can render the person stateless. From a legal perspective, citizenship revocation in cases of fraud is not a criminal sanction, as in the case of citizenship revocation based on acts of crime or terrorism ("prejudicial conduct"). Revoking or reversing a naturalization decision based on false pretenses is seen as an administrative correction. It is regarded as an "annulment," or a "nullification" (Lenard 2020, Yeo 2019). Since citizenship was not lawfully acquired, it is not regarded as a *loss* of citizenship.[13] After the rule came into force in 2006, the annual number of revocation decisions was negligible, and its number remained stable. Indeed, between 2007 and 2015, the immigration administration reached around 20 decisions each year (Midtbøen, Birkvad, and Erdal 2018, 85).

However, this number rose dramatically in the following years, as the result of a series of policy decisions during and after the 2015-2016 "refugee crisis." In the fall of 2015, 31,000—an unprecedented number—of asylum seekers applied for protection in Norway, many fleeing war and conflict in countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. An initial willingness to help refugees in need quickly turned into political pressure to "regain control" of the situation (Brekke and Staver 2018). The government suggested a wide range of restrictive measures with the aim of making "Norway less attractive to asylum seekers" (Brekke et al. 2020). Activating the "cessation clause" was one of the measures that allowed the authorities to return refugees whose grounds for temporary protection had ceased. When the number of asylum seekers dropped in 2016 and 2017, the government decided to instruct the Directorate of Immigration to prioritize revocation cases (based on Section 28, the Norwegian Nationality Act). Increasing political interest in revocation and an excess of institutional capacity have led to a sharp increase in the number of opened cases (Brekke et al. 2020).

In 2017, 500 cases were investigated by the UDI (Tjernshaugen and Olsen 2017), the administrative unit responsible for processing citizenship revocation cases. As the media unveiled some of the stories behind these numbers, parties in opposition became aware of the personal stakes of citizenship revocation. The so-called "Mahad case" became iconic of the state practice.

[13] For a detailed description of the current rules on fraud-based citizenship revocation, see Birkvad (2023a)

Mahad Abib Mahamud had claimed to be a Somali citizen, but according to Norwegian authorities, this was a false claim. In their view, evidence indicates that he originated from Djibouti. Consequently, Mahamud was deprived of Norwegian citizenship, a decision later upheld by the courts. As a bioengineer and well-respected citizen, Mahamud's case incited public sympathy and protest.[14]

These public protests eventually reached the halls of Parliament. Against the backdrop of the Mahad case, a majority in Parliament—including the Socialist Party, the Center Party, the Liberal Party, the Labor Party, and the Green Party—proposed to move the decision-making authority from the executive to the judicial branch of government. According to the proposal makers, the judiciary would ensure due process and full independence from political interests. Moreover, the news story of a family of three generations who collectively faced citizenship revocation prompted a critique of the "original sin" inherent in the legislation.[15] The Socialist Party, the Green Party, and the Red Party, therefore, suggested removing the possibility of revoking the citizenship of children based on their parents' or grandparents' loss. In addition, they proposed adding a time limit to revocation cases, legally referred to as the "statute of limitations" (Birkvad 2023b).

These proposals did not gain a majority in Parliament, but the government nevertheless presented a bill with modest liberalizations to law and practice (Ministry of Education and Research 2019). Rather than moving the decision-making power to the courts, the government sought to strengthen the system of administrative processing.[16] To this end, personal attendance in appeal cases and free legal aid were provided during the process. Moreover, the bill stated that the UDI should make a "proportionality assessment" in each case, which meant weighing the person's attachment and "degree of integration" in Norway against the seriousness of the violation. Finally, the bill stated that a child should not lose citizenship automatically based on the parents' (or grandparents') loss, unless the immigration authorities find that the child does not exhibit a strong enough "connection to the realm." The revised rules were outlined in a circular document to the UDI and the Immigration Appeals Board (the UNE) (Ministry of Education and Research 2020).

[14] Recently, however, Mahamud's case has taken a new turn. According to the police, Mahamud's true identity was a Djibouti man by the name of Houssein-Mawli Abdi Mohamed. However, new evidence from Mahamud's lawyer suggests that this man is dead, making the grounds for citizenship revocation baseless (Jensen 2022a).
[15] Also known as "derivative loss of citizenship."
[16] As mentioned above, the proposal to move decision-making power to the courts initially had majority. When the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party entered government, however, the vote tipped in favor of improving the existing system of administrative processing.

As these parliamentary deliberations unfolded—lasting for a period of nearly three years—the government instructed the immigration authorities to freeze all case processing. After the revised rules came into effect and the case processing resumed, new people affected by citizenship revocation emerged in the media.[17] One of them was Omar Sayedahmad. After 10 years in Norway, Norwegian authorities discovered that Sayedahmad had been granted asylum and citizenship on false pretenses. Sayedahmad had attested to being a stateless Palestinian, concealing his Jordanian citizenship in his original application for asylum. The UNE therefore decided to revoke citizenship and deport him to Jordan, leaving his wife and two children behind in Norway (Jensen 2022b). Based on this case, the Socialist Party and the Red Party questioned whether sufficient weight was given to people's length of residency and attachment to Norway in decisions on citizenship revocation. In April 2022, these parties proposed introducing a time limit on revocation cases, but the proposal failed again. Meanwhile the UDI expressed concerns about the backlog of cases, which exceeded 1,100. To free up the capacity to execute more pressing tasks, the UDI asked the Minister of Justice and Public Security, Emilie Enger Mehl (the Center Party), for permission to dismiss the oldest revocation cases (including the revocation of permanent residence permits), but this request was denied by the Minister (Brandvold 2023).

Norway is not the only state that has shown renewed interest in sanctioning citizenship cheaters. Governments in the UK and France have shown growing interest (Fargues 2019). US authorities, first at the initiative of the Obama administration, then propelled by the Trump administration, opened 700,000 cases for investigation of errors in the naturalization process (Frost 2019). Canada announced a "crackdown" on citizenship fraud in 2011, citing 11,000 cases under investigation, yet failed to uncover widespread fraud (Kojic 2015). In 2018, Denmark also launched a mass-scale review. The authorities investigated 21,000 cases to examine if naturalized citizens had suppressed information about their criminal records, but the police nonetheless ended up dismissing most of the cases (Skærbæk 2021).

2.5 Summary

This chapter began by describing two core ideas in citizenship theory and the historiography of immigration. First, the conventional topology of sovereignty and citizenship suggests that citizenship unequivocally demarcates citizens from aliens. Second, the telos of naturalization

[17] For the outcome of appeal cases processed by the Immigration Appeals Board (the UNE), see Birkvad (2023a).

suggests that once immigrants naturalize, they are free from state persecution and deportation. These ideas have also undergirded the historiography of Norwegian citizenship legislation. However, by calling attention to the stories of Roma, Jews, and war brides, the supposed clear-cut line between citizen and alien becomes less distinct. Above all, these stories reveal that citizenship has not been a sacred and untouchable status (cf. Honig 2002), but remained a precarious status to these racialized and gendered minorities until the 1950s. From 1950 onward, women's citizenship status was no longer dependent on their husbands. Jews and Roma struggled to gain legal and social recognition immediately after the war but were recognized as national minorities in 1999.

Citizenship deprivation powers resurfaced in the new millennium. The revised Norwegian Nationality Act and its recent amendments have produced new categories of alien citizens, namely terrorists and fraudsters. These developments in Norway form part of an international rediscovery of denaturalization. Although denaturalization as a counter-terrorism tool has been widely discussed (e.g., Choudhury 2017, Coca-Vila 2020, Herzog 2019, Hong 2020, Kapoor 2018, Macklin 2014, Mantu 2018, Masters and Regilme 2020, Midtbøen 2019b, Nyers 2006, Seet 2020, Sykes 2016), citizenship revocation on grounds of fraud has been devoted little attention (for a valuable exception, see Fargues 2019). Fraud has generally been brushed off as a customary and consequently less dramatic mode of citizenship deprivation. This relative neglect is unfortunate, however. Due to the fraud provision's customary character, it has a wider dragnet than terrorism-based denaturalization, as suggested by the numbers from the US, Canada, Denmark, and Norway. My research questions therefore center on this specific mode of citizenship deprivation, its justification, and lived experiences. I ask how the government justifies the decision to revitalize denaturalization in Parliament, and how the process of denaturalization shapes emotions, social relations, and subjectivities among those targeted by it. The next chapter discusses the theoretical motivation behind the phrasing of the research questions.

3 Theoretical perspectives

A growing body of literature has discussed the implications of the revival of citizenship deprivation from the perspectives of history, law, political science, and sociology. This body of research has shed light on some of the historical links as well as legal and normative issues at stake in states' rediscovery of denaturalization (Fargues and Winter 2019, Birnie and Bauböck 2020). Although useful in positioning Norway's recent policy changes across time and space, this literature has some shortcomings. I begin this chapter by briefly reviewing the literature and discussing some of its blind spots. To redress these blind spots, I argue for moving beyond the confines of this literature by drawing on perspectives of exceptionalism, emotions, and interpellation. The perspective of exceptionalism can help us understand how alien citizens are produced in and through law, while perspectives of emotions and interpellation help illuminating the embodied, social and subjectivating consequences of citizenship deprivation.

3.1 The revival of citizenship deprivation: A brief literature review

Historical research has discussed the wave of recently introduced denaturalization policies against legacies of colonialism, empire, and past forms of banishment (Gibney 2019a, Shahid and Turner 2022, Troy 2019, Weil 2017). Legal scholars and political scientists have discussed whether citizenship revocation clashes with rules of non-discrimination as well as liberal, democratic, and human rights norms (Bauböck 2020, Cohen 2016, Gibney 2013, Lenard 2018, Macklin 2014, Mantu 2018, Masters and Regilme 2020, Pélabay and Sénac 2019, Pillai and Williams 2017). Criminologists have discussed whether to classify citizenship deprivation as a criminal measure or as another form of sanction (Coca-Vila 2020, Tripkovic 2021). From a normative point of view, scholars from different disciplines have also discussed whether or not to understand citizenship revocation as a *legitimate* form of punishment for acts of terrorism (Bauböck 2018, Joppke 2016, Macklin 2018, Shai 2011).

The literature on the revival of citizenship deprivation has many merits but also some limitations. One drawback is that existing contributions do not sufficiently theorize how governments produce alien citizens in and through law. Gibney (2019a) argues that modern

denationalization revives banishment but that it is severely constrained by domestic and international norms about the security of citizenship. Similarly, in a reflection on the return of banishment, Birnie and Baubock (2020, 4) claimed that "liberal democracies find it difficult to simply cast off the shackles of constitutional and international law they have themselves put on their wrists." According to their argument, we are not witnessing a full-scale return to past practices but rather states' attempts at exploiting "legal loopholes" (ibid.). Although they pointed to legal loopholes, they seemed to suggest that the law merely functions as an *external restraint* on national sovereignty. However, contemporary citizenship deprivation practices indicate that domestic and international law not only constrains but also *enable* government's denaturalization powers. For example, the Norwegian government referred to the 1997 ECN to introduce citizenship deprivation on the grounds of fraud and prejudicial acts, as the last chapter made clear.

Another shortcoming in the literature is that it largely discusses denaturalization as a counter-terrorism tool. Fraud, by contrast, is mentioned only in passing. As Fargues (2019) pointed out, when fraud is mentioned, it is characterized as a rather uncontroversial mode of denaturalization. I find several reasons to question this framing of fraud. There are fewer constraints on fraud-based denaturalization than on terror-based citizenship stripping. Dual citizenship is not a precondition for executing denaturalization, meaning that there is no protection against statelessness. Rules concerning fraud belong to administrative, not criminal law. It requires an administrative decision, not a court judgment. Fewer constraints and the ease of administrative processing make "nullification" of citizenship especially attractive for the executive branch (Yeo 2019, 136). The government's justification as well as the personal consequences for those targeted may therefore differ from the justifications and consequences of terror-based revocation.

This brings me to the final limitation of the current scholarship on the revival, namely its lack of attention to lived experiences of denaturalization. Political scientists have dominated the discussions, placing the state and the institution of citizenship as main units of analysis. In a special issue on the topic, the authors of the introductory article stated that the contributions share a focus "on the implications of these practices for the institution of citizenship" (Birnie and Bauböck 2020, 1-2). The title of an introductory chapter of another special issue illustrates the same focus: "Conditional citizenship: what revocation does to *citizenship*" (Fargues and Winter 2019, emphasis added). Admittedly, the authors also attended to what revocation does to *people*. Yet, the contributions examine these consequences through analyses of policies and media discourses (Winter and Previsic 2019), not from the perspective the targeted people. The limited research from a sociological perspective has examined citizenship revocation policies' impact on migrant

communities (Kapoor 2018, Kapoor and Narkowicz 2019, Naqvi 2022) but has not addressed *first-hand experiences*.

Due to these three limitations, the articles in this thesis mainly draw on theoretical resources from outside of this "mainstream" citizenship literature. To analyze how the Norwegian government justified the decision to reinforce fraud (Article I), I use Schmitt (Schmitt 1922/2005) and Agamben's (Agamben 1998, 2005) perspectives on exceptionalism. A key argument articulated by the Norwegian government was grounding the decision in domestic and international law. Following Schmitt and Agamben, this reasoning reflects the "paradox of sovereignty": the fact that the government is both outside and inside the legal order at the same time. To address lived experiences of denaturalization (Articles II and III), I use theories of emotions and interpellation. The perspective on emotions highlights that state power works through affective governance. Further, it argues that power is embodied, involves emotions, and stresses how these emotions impact social relations. An interpellation can be understood as a speech act that calls out a subject and designates a place for them in the social and ideological system. Thus, interpellation theorizes how power, via interpellation, shapes subjectivities. I proceed by laying out these three different perspectives— exceptionalism, emotions, and interpellation—and conclude the chapter with a summary.

3.2 Exceptionalism: An alternative topology of sovereignty and citizenship

Agamben offered an alternative understanding of sovereignty to traditional citizenship theory, which sees sovereignty as states' liberty to draw lines between citizens and aliens (e.g., Bosniak 2006, Brubaker 1992, Joppke 1999). According to Agamben's (1998) line of thinking, the distinction between alien and citizen—and, more broadly, between law and politics as well as law and life—are not so distinct but rather located in a "zone of indistinction." The core of Agamben's theory of sovereign power lies in the concept of *exception*. Agamben's understanding of the exception is deeply influenced by Carl Schmitt's ideas. Therefore, I take a brief detour here to review Schmitt's ideas before discussing Agamben's topology of sovereignty and "bare life."

Carl Schmitt was a controversial legal and political thinker who published his main works at the time of the Weimar Republic, Germany's first experiment with parliamentary democracy (Slagstad 2019). Schmitt strongly opposed liberal democracy as a form of government. According to Schmitt, "[t]he modern state seems to have actually become what Max Weber envisioned: a

huge industrial plant" (Schmitt 1922/2005, 65). Schmitt argued that this plant was increasingly "run by itself," while the "decisionistic and personalistic element in the concept of sovereignty" had become irrelevant (2006, 48). Schmitt argued for reinstating and raising the status of sovereignty and political authority. The opening sentence of *Political Theology*, considered one of his most influential works, concisely captures his authoritarian theory of sovereignty: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt 1922/2006, 1). Schmitt intervened in a contemporary debate in German constitutional law. His adversaries advocated a "normativistic" or "positivistic" understanding of law, a jurisprudence that considered legal norms as the fundamental basis of law. To Schmitt, this was a naïve understanding of the legal system, as norms cannot capture or subsume every real-life situation. Schmitt argued that legal norms cannot apply, enforce, realize, or sanction themselves. Rather, they require an external party—a sovereign—to apply them. The exception cannot be codified in law as it is the case that eludes the legal norm. Therefore, it requires a decision on the exception for the exception to exist (2006, 6).

We can interpret Schmitt's conceptualization of the "state of exception" in general or narrow terms. On the one hand, we can think of the exception as a "general concept in the theory of the state" (Strong 2005, 5), applying to all law, not just existential dangers to the state. This general interpretation highlights the challenge of "legal indeterminacy" (Scheuerman 2019): the gap between norms and facts and the necessity of sovereign decisions to close this gap. On the other hand, Schmitt characterized the state of exception narrowly as "a danger to the existence of the state, public safety and order" (Strong 2005, 2006, 6). In the state of exception, Schmitt argued, we discover where true power lies. The sovereign enjoys principally unlimited authority, which implicates the authority to suspend the entire existing legal order. As such, the sovereign stands outside the juridical order, and, nevertheless, belongs to it, since it is up to him to decide whether constitution is to be suspended in its entirety (Schmitt 2005, 7).

To Agamben, this constitutes the *paradox of sovereignty*: "the fact that the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order" (1998, 15). Following Schmitt, Agamben presented the structure of sovereignty as the structure of the exception. The exception is a *kind* of exclusion but not in the simple sense of being excluded from law. Rather, he argued that the exception belongs to the *same* legal realm in the sense that "law is made of nothing but what it manages to capture inside itself through the inclusive exclusion of the exception: it nourishes itself on this exception and is a dead letter without it" (Agamben 1998, 27). The exception is therefore, according to its lexical meaning, "taken outside (ex-capere), and not simply excluded." Something, or someone, is "included solely through its exclusion" (Agamben 1998, 18).

Let me make this less abstract and spell out the human stakes involved in Agamben's logic of the exception: banishment. Agamben claimed that a person who has been banned is not:

> simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable. It is literally not possible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order (1998, 28).

The person who has been banned is at once excluded and included, both removed and captured (Agamben 1998, 110). Given that the sovereign is both outside and inside the legal order, and the sovereign exception lies in the *threshold* between norm and exception, there are no legal norms that mediate the relationship between the sovereign and the banned subject (or in modern terms, between state and citizens).

With no recourse to law, states can potentially reduce their subjects to "bare life," naked biological beings. To Agamben, Nazi Germany's *concentration camps* are the physical location that most clearly illustrates the condition of "bare life." Drawing on Arendt's (1951/2017) post-Holocaust reflections, Agamben argued that the Nazi's had to make the Jews stateless to exterminate them. Indeed, Jews and other minorities were deprived of their rights as citizens and stripped of their political status through the Nuremberg laws. When no state would claim them, they were left with no protection but their bare humanity. In the camps, Agamben therefore said, "power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation" (1998, 171). The human figure captured in the camp may be killed without impunity. Agamben called this figure *homo sacer*.

In contrast to the narrow reading of Schmitt's state of exception, which sees it as a *limited* suspension of law to restore order, Agamben (2005) claimed the state of exception has become *permanent*. The state of exception did not end when the concentration camps were shut down. Rather, Agamben argued that state of exception is the essential structure of sovereign power and the "hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity" (1998, 123). From the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the principle of sovereignty was no longer vested in God, or the King, but in nation-states. As we are attributed citizenship in nation-states by birth—either through jus soli or jus sanguinis—our biological life is inevitably inscribed into the juridical-political order of the nation (Agamben 1998, 126-128). Our inscription in the register of the nation-state is exactly what makes us vulnerable to sovereign exceptions. In the worst cases, this involves citizenship deprivation and internment in concentration camps. Agamben's conclusion is therefore that "[I]f today there is no longer any one clear figure of the sacred man, it is perhaps because we are all virtually *homines sacri*" (Agamben 1998, 115).

In trying to come to grips with the modern form of banishment in Norway, I found Agamben's theoretical perspective useful for understanding the relationship between the government and the legal order. One of the key arguments that the government articulated to justify citizenship deprivation came close to Agamben's topology of sovereignty. The government repeatedly declared that it only "followed the law," and as such, implied that there was nothing outside the law. However, I nuance the claim that sovereign power works unmediated on its subjects. By bringing in Ghezelbash' (2020) concept of "hyper-legalism," I suggest a new twist to Agamben's perspective on exceptionalism (I return to this discussion in Chapter 6).

In understanding the legal position of those subject to citizenship revocation, Agamben's logic of exception served as a helpful starting point. Their lives were located on the *threshold* of expulsion, at once "removed" and "captured" by the Norwegian nation-state. However, I do not follow the implication of Agamben's theory, namely that their lives can be singularly described as "bare." In Article 1 (Birkvad 2023b), I criticize Agamben's universalizing claim that we are equally disposed to sovereign power. This claim erases social categories of difference (Butler 2004, Huysmans 2008), including historically specific experiences of minority groups (Chapter 2, this thesis). I also argue that designating lives as "bare" fails to address how people negotiate sovereign power in everyday life (Seet 2020, Cooper-Knock 2018, Sunam 2022). In the following, I will discuss phenomenological perspectives on emotions and sociological theories of interpellation. These perspectives better address embodied and socially differentiated experiences of citizenship revocation.

3.3 Emotions

My theoretical focus shifted when I moved from reading parliamentary politics through the lenses of legal and political philosophy to interviewing people about their lived experiences of denaturalization. These interview encounters drew my attention to *emotions* as an analytical lens for understanding the dynamic relationship between the state and citizens in processes of denaturalization. Through this reorientation, I join a larger "affective turn" in citizenship studies (Fortier 2016). Citizenship is conventionally understood as a legal status and rights-based political membership, an institutional bond between citizen and state (Ayata 2019). The "affective turn" seeks to unsettle the traditional understanding of citizenship as a "strictly legal, institutional product of state authority and rationality" (Fortier 2016, 1038). A fundamental point within this scholarship is that affect, emotions, and embodiment play a key role in political life, a point long

underscored by feminist theorists. This point implies that emotions are deeply felt and embodied, and social and public at the same time (Fortier 2016, 1039).

"Affective citizenship" refers to how emotions are involved in the construction of citizenship (Kalm 2019). A focus on emotions in citizenship policies enables a closer examination of differentiations and hierarchies beyond formal access or legal equality (Ayata 2019). International law prohibits legal discrimination based on race, gender, and class. Given that it is illegitimate to legally discriminate, states increasingly appeal to the emotions of their subjects to regulate access to citizenship (Ayata 2019). Fortier (2010) called this phenomenon "governing through affect." Affective governance entails recognizing some feelings as legitimate while delegitimizing others (Fortier 2010).

One example of this phenomenon can be found in naturalization policies. Naturalization policies can be analyzed as "economies of desire" (Somerville 2005) or as an "economy of feelings" (Fortier 2010), where the state designs, circulates, and assigns different value to feelings. These policies seek to construct citizenship as an object of desire. The state wants its newcomers to desire citizenship because this desire reproduces and legitimizes the nation-state. In this sense, naturalization is a process that naturalizes state authority and citizenship itself (Fortier 2013, 698). Even so, the state does not desire just *any* newcomers. Applicants for citizenship must display the *right* desire for citizenship. As Fortier (2013, 708) argued, those who desire "us" must be desirable to "us". Citizenship ceremonies, civics, and language tests are measures that function to ensure that the state attracts the right candidates for citizenship. Bureaucrats are given the task of distinguishing between desirable and undesirable citizens. Hierarchies of belonging and entitlement to citizenship are thus produced through these policies: the sincere, desiring citizen is at the top of the hierarchy; the integrated citizen is placed one step down; and the fraud, who acts instrumentally and dishonestly to acquire citizenship, is placed on the bottom (Fortier 2017, 9-12). Thus, the introduction of new language and citizenship tests are sites where some feelings are legitimated (authentic desire) and others are discredited (instrumental desire) (Fortier 2017).

Denaturalization policies can similarly be studied through an affective lens. Beauchamps (Beauchamps 2016, 2018) examined denaturalization policies in France as an "affective economy," coined by Sara Ahmed (2004). According to Ahmed (2004), signs of affect circulate economically and "stick" to certain subjects. The circulation of signs of affect gives shape to collective bodies, such as "the body of the nation" (2004, 121). Ahmed used the figure of "the bogus asylum seeker" to illustrate how signs accumulate affect. The "bogus asylum seeker" is posed as a threat to the nation's capacity to secure its borders. Since the state is not fully capable of differentiating between

"bogus" and "genuine" asylum seekers, the bogus asylum seeker can be "anywhere and anyone" (Ahmed 2004, 123). This discursive figure is therefore able to generate affect in others. Through a shared emotional orientation—hate and fear toward the bogus asylum seeker—the nation, as a collective body, is given shape. In Ahmed's words, "Together we hate, and this hate is what makes us together" (2004, 118). Thus, in Ahmed's (2014a) phenomenological model of emotions, emotions are always directed toward objects. More precisely, emotions move us toward or away from objects, and thereby shape social relations (Ahmed 2014, 209). Objects here encompass other human subjects or imagined objects, for example, the nation as an imagined community (Anderson 2016).

Another key point for Ahmed and other feminist theorists of affect is that emotions are unequally distributed (Bargetz 2015). Negative feelings, such as suspicion, fear, and hate, tend to be projected onto outsiders who appear to threaten the nation from the inside (cf. Ahmed 2014, 227). Reading denaturalization as an affective economy enables an examination of what emotions circulate and stick and how these emotions shape the social relations of those considered outsiders. In short, it enables an analysis of "what emotions do" (Ahmed 2004). In the next section, I discuss what *interpellation* in denaturalization policies "do" to subjectivities.

3.4 Interpellation

One question is what emotions circulate and stick to subjects undergoing denaturalization processes. Another question concerns how individuals respond to the state's accusation of cheating. Initially, I was interested in whether the interviewees directed the guilt inwards or outwards and whether they blamed themselves or the state. I considered placing "guilt" at the center of the analysis but came to realize the shortcomings of deploying a primarily juridical and psychological category: reproducing state thought (Shammas 2018, Sayad 2004) and individualizing the problem at hand. Instead, I utilized the sociological concept of interpellation, originally coined by French Marxist Louis Althusser (1971). Interpellation describes a mechanism in which individuals are "hailed"—that is, named and categorized in a specific way— into subject positions. Althusser's classic example of interpellation is a theoretical situation taking place in the street: A policeman shouts, "Hey, you there!" to a pedestrian walking by. In the act of stopping and turning around, the pedestrian becomes the subject of the law. For the process to be successful, the pedestrian must recognize and accept their subject position and act according to the norms prescribed by it.

Interpellation can therefore be considered "recruitment": it calls a person into a subject position and its underlying ideology (e.g., the legitimacy of law, religion, capitalism, or citizenship). The concept of interpellation thus provided me with a lens through which to study how the state interpellates individuals in various ways during citizenship revocation processes from the point of view of the accused individual. The interviewees mentioned administrative letters and interviews with the police, as well as in political discourse, as instances of being hailed. Curiously, the Norwegian legal term for citizenship revocation—*tilbakekall*—itself suggests an interpellation. Directly translated, it means that citizenship is being "called back."

However, Althusser (1971) did not theorize *why* we subject ourselves to power. He depicted interpellation as a one-way process, omitting the inter-subjective aspect of interpellation (Ahmed 1998 in Bassel, Monforte, and Khan 2018). A key question for Butler (1997, 5), who developed Althusser's concept from a linguistic and psychoanalytic approach, is "*why* the subject turn toward the voice of law." Butler's answer to this question is that we turn around and embrace power because it offers us an identity: "Where social categories guarantee a recognizable and enduring social existence, the embrace of such categories, even as they work in the service of subjection, is often preferred to no social existence at all" (1997, 20). Following Butler's line of thought, the state's accusation of cheating subjectivates its addressees into a relationship with the law, either obedient ("yes, I am guilty of cheating") or disobedient ("no, the accusation is false"). However, it can be useful to broaden the context of the accusation as an instance of interpellation. The accusation—and its responses—should be placed within wider citizenship discourses of "worthiness" and "deservingness." That citizenship should be earned and deserved is *the* central theme of restrictive citizenship discourse (Joppke 2021). Such discourse encourages naturalized citizens to become "Super Citizens", that is, economic, political, and cultural assets to the nation-state (Badenhoop 2017).

Responses can also be informed by social positions *outside* of the citizenship revocation process (cf. Bassel, Monforte, and Khan 2018). The variation of different *readings* of the accusation relates to a broader theoretical point: an act of interpellation (e.g., being accused of naturalization fraud) cannot be read as an isolated instance but should be seen in light of previous experiences of being called. According to Ahmed, "(…) inter-subjective encounters in public life *continually reinterpellates* subjects into differentiated economies of names and signs, where they are assigned different value in social spaces" (2000, 23, emphasis added). Thus, individuals are repeatedly hailed as social subjects in different domains of life, not just by the voice of the law. Through these interpellations, we are assigned different values according to hierarchies of class, gender, nationality, and "race" (Bassel et al. 2018).

One of the hierarchies that surfaced in the interviews with people undergoing citizenship deprivation was "race"-ethnicity. Hage (2010) drew on Althusser and Frantz Fanon to theorize the force of *racializing* interpellations. In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon (1952/2021) describes his experiences of being racialized as a black subject in colonial France. Fanon recalls an episode on a train in which he was hailed as a "negro" by a white boy. In this moment of being called, Fanon discovers his blackness. Based on this powerful and painful passage, Hage (2010) distinguished between three forms of racialization. First, there is racist *non-interpellation*, where the racialized feel ignored and non-existent: they are physically present but not recognized by the symbolic order. The second form is *negative interpellation*. Rather than being ignored, the racialized are made hyper-visible as they are hailed with negative traits (see Chapter 2). The third is *mis-interpellation*. Hage (2010, 122), with reference to Fanon, said that mis-interpellation unfolds in two acts:

> in the first instance the racialized person is interpellated as belonging to a collectivity 'like everybody else.' S/he is hailed by the cultural group or the nation, or even by modernity which claims to be addressing 'everyone.' And the yet-to-be-racialized person believes that the hailing is for 'everyone' and answers the call thinking that there is a place for him or her awaiting to be occupied. Yet, no sooner do they answer the call and claim their spot than the symbolic order brutally reminds them that they are not part of everyone: 'No, I wasn't talking to you. Piss off. You are not part of us.'

The experience of mis-interpellation is akin to the experience of denaturalization. Naturalization can be seen as an official call for outsiders to "become one of us." In principle, citizenship grants equal status, rights, and duties and symbolizes identity in the collective identity of the nation (Joppke 2007). Some of the interviewees had responded wholeheartedly to the call to take part in the Norwegian nation and had invested heavily in this collectivity but only to realize that they had no spot within the circle of citizenship after all. Despite having naturalized—literally, having become *like* natives (cf. Fortier 2013)—they were suddenly hailed as foreigners again. According to Hage (2010), individuals experiencing mis-interpellation feel more painful than negative interpellation. This is because the former, unlike the latter, have expectations of being treated equally (e.g., as a citizen) but then have their hopes shattered.

3.5 Summary

The literature on the revival of citizenship deprivation has discussed its historical links as well as contemporary legal and normative stakes (Fargues and Winter 2019). Yet, this body of research is lacking in three respects: it does not sufficiently theorize how alien citizens are produced in and through law, it has largely ignored or underestimated fraud as an object of study, and it has not

addressed lived experiences of citizenship revocation. To remedy these theoretical and empirical shortcomings, this thesis mainly builds on theoretical resources from outside the mainstream literature. First, it draws on the perspective of exceptionalism, as conceptualized by Schmitt, Agamben, and later proponents. This perspective helps analyze the Norwegian government's decision to tighten citizenship law (Article I). Second, the perspective on emotions sheds light on how denaturalization processes are embodied and how emotions shape social relations (Article II). Thirdly, interpellation theorizes how people accused of fraud position themselves vis-à-vis the law and the nation-state in processes of denaturalization (Article III). As such, the theoretical foci on emotions and interpellation complement the *legalistic* lenses of Schmitt and Agamben (cf. Lemke 2005). They also theorize a less deterministic, more dynamic relationship between state and subject than the perspective of exceptionalism allows for. In the subsequent chapter, I describe the dual methodological approach guiding this thesis, studying denaturalization from the perspective of the state and its subjects.

4 Methodology and data material

Two main actors are involved in the citizenship revocation practice: the state and the subject. To shed light on the state's justification for executing citizenship revocation, I use parliamentary debates. To illuminate the subjects' experiences of undergoing citizenship revocation, I rely on qualitative interviews. This chapter first describes how I analyzed the parliamentary debates, discusses what this source can tell us about the subject matter, and argue why it is important to examine the state's perspective with a critical lens. While parliamentary discussions are openly available sources of data, conducting qualitative interviews involves face-to-face encounters with a group that is hard to access. The main part of the chapter is therefore devoted to practical, ethical, and epistemological reflections on conducting qualitative interviews with people facing denaturalization. I understand qualitative interviews as a *process* (before, during, after) and pay particular attention to the role of emotions and positionalities in knowledge production in this process.

4.1 Examining the state's perspective through parliamentary debates

Initially, I wanted to find out how the state justified the decision to intensify citizenship deprivation on the grounds of fraud. A preliminary answer was suggested by the research I conducted in collaboration with Brekke and Erdal (Brekke et al. 2020). In the immediate wake of the "refugee crisis," citizenship revocation, along with the revocation of permanent residence permits and cessation of refugee permits, was reinforced by the government as a deterrence tool. Citizenship has a different status than permanent and temporary residence permits. In principle, it gives people an unconditional right to enter and stay in the country (Anderson, Gibney, and Paoletti 2011). Therefore, it seems important to concentrate the study on how the government justified the strengthening of citizenship law.

To this end, the Parliament provided a valuable research site, as citizenship revocation was debated there in the period between 2017 and 2020. The center-left opposition parties criticized the government's decision to intensify denaturalization and submitted three proposals to challenge the government's authority in this matter. In Article 1, I analyze these proposals and their ensuing

debates. The first was a proposal to move the decision-making authority from the executive to the judiciary (Dokument 8:33 S (2016–2017)). The second was a proposal to remove the revocation provision and offer amnesty to confessors (Dokument 8:66 S (2016–2017)). The third was a bundle of proposals that included introducing a time limit for opening revocation cases ("statute of limitations"), making dual citizenship a precondition to revoke citizenship, and setting a maximum time limit for administrative case processing (Dokument 8:43 S (2018–2019)). These were not passed, however. Instead, the government passed a bill that sought to accommodate some of the criticism (Ministry of Education and Research 2019).[18] As supplementary material, I drew on statements by members of the government in the media, where they justified the denaturalization campaign.

In analyzing the debates, I noticed an interesting tension between two paradoxical lines of reasoning: a "legal" and a "political" argument. This tension between law and politics pointed me in the direction of Schmitt and Agamben's theories of sovereignty.[19] A closer reading, in dialogue with Fargues' (2019) comparable study from the UK and France, added further nuance to the "political argument" (distinguishing between moralization and criminalization). Using parliamentary debates as a data source was useful because the Schmittian-Agambenian analyses of state power often center exclusively on executive decision-making. Consequently, these analyses tend to relegate the significance of parliaments (Neal 2019, Rogenhofer 2022).

The parliamentary debates were well suited to discussing some of the key assumptions of Schmitt and Agamben's theories to enhance our understanding of how sovereignty works in liberal democracies like Norway. The Storting is the Norwegian parliamentary assembly. It is the supreme arena for political debate and decision-making. One of its main functions is to pass new legislation or amend or repeal existing legislation. Another important function is to control the government and public administration. The government must therefore defend its decisions toward Parliament. Since the government is elected by the people, it must also legitimize decisions toward the collective or the common good (Andersen 2017, 57). Rather than "slender decisionism" (White 2015), in which the sovereign needs no justificatory grounds, the government must make meaning of its decisions toward the Parliament and the public (Rogenhofer 2022).

In a study of the historical practices of denaturalization in France, Beauchamps (2018, xxiii) noted that "One of the main characteristics of denaturalization is its tendency to be hardly visible.

[18] The three proposals were debated in the Storting on 9 May 2017, 2 June 2017, and 12 February 2019 (see the reference list).
[19] Thanks to Rune Slagstad for introducing me to Schmitt's concept of "decisionism" (2019) and Cathrine Holst for encouraging me to pursue this line of inquiry further.

Like water in a paper bag, it sometimes leaks into societal debates, yet it remains covered by an opaque layer of political and administrative justifications that claim to speak for themselves." Arguably, Beauchamp's point holds especially true for denaturalization on grounds of fraud. To undo grants of naturalization falsely obtained through fraud is said to be a "mundane concern" (Gibney 2019b), bypassed as an "uncontroversial" state practice by many scholars (Fargues 2019). It is important to examine this state practice precisely because it is portrayed as commonsensical and legitimate by the state and some scholars. Subjecting state thought to critical reflection involves questioning "what goes without saying" (Sayad 2004, 281). Reading parliamentary discussions is one method of doing such critical work, as discussed here. Interviewing people accused of naturalization fraud is another method of inquiry, which I turn to in the following sections.

4.2 Exploring the subjects' perspectives through qualitative interviews

The group interview with Muhammed, Jamilah, and Amina, referred to in the introductory chapter, brought my attention to lived experiences of denaturalization. The importance of taking this perspective seriously was underlined by the fact that it was largely absent in the literature on the revival of citizenship deprivation. For this reason, I recruited people targeted by citizenship deprivation to examine their perspectives. This thesis builds on 24 qualitative interviews with 28 individuals who were undergoing denaturalization on the grounds of fraud. Qualitative interviews are suited to exploring life-worlds, allowing subjects to freely express their thoughts, emotions, views, and experiences (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015). This is especially important in interviewing people from this group whose credibility and morality were questioned and discredited by members of the government in public debates (see Article I).

The project was pre-approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (reference no. 329494). Before I started recruiting participants, I constructed a consent form (Appendix B) and a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C). The consent form, which I presented in writing and verbally, provided information about the aims of the project, the participants' rights, and the storage of data. According to the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities guidelines, I obtained "informed, voluntary, and unambiguous consent" after the content was clarified. Their consent was obtained *verbally* (on tape), not in writing, to protect the anonymity of the interviewees and to prevent potential harm. As I discuss below, many feared being surveilled by the authorities (or people within their communities) and losing control over

personal information. To gain their trust and minimize these concerns, I found it necessary to collect as little directly identifiable information about them as possible, such as names.

The interview guide organized the questions into different themes: daily life; background in Norway; naturalization experiences; the revocation case; consequences of loss of citizenship for the individual and their family; community effects; views on the revocation practice (its regulations and politics); perception of agency; and outlook to the future. The questions on the possible consequences for families and communities were motivated by the literature on deportability (Abrego 2019, Asad 2020, Golash-Boza 2019, de Genova 2002), while the remaining questions were phrased openly to allow for a wide range of answers.

Following Ayata and colleagues (2019), I understand the qualitative interview as a *process* that "encompasses the phases before and after the actual conversation." I wrote a field diary to document the data collection process and the actual interviews (cf. Ayata et al. 2019, 69). Building on these notes, I offer some reflections on the practical dilemmas, emotional entanglements, and epistemological issues that occurred in these phases.

4.2.1 Recruitment challenges

Beginning with the PhD project that had already acquired two interviews, I was optimistic regarding recruitment of new participants. Recruitment, however, turned out to be frustratingly difficult. One reason is the peculiar legal and social position of those accused of fraud, as discussed throughout this thesis. People targeted by denaturalization have been notified about *possible* expulsion, yet many are still living in Norway and hold full rights as they await the outcome of their case. In a sense, they embody both sides of the Janus face of the Norwegian welfare state: its "hard outside" and "soft inside" (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012). Unlike, for example, asylum seekers and detainees at Trandum (the National Police Immigration Detention Centre), their lives were not located on the *margins* of Norwegian society, but rather in its *center*: most worked or went to school and carried on their lives as usual in their local communities. Moreover, this category of people does not make up a meaningful sociological group (cf. Dahinden, Fischer, and Menet 2021) but is defined by administrative law. Nor did any unifying interest organization exist when I initiated the recruitment process.

However, statistics on citizenship revocation helped me channel recruitment efforts. Somali immigrants were the most heavily targeted group by revocation. Other targeted immigrant groups were ethnic Palestinians and Afghans (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020, Engebretsen

2017). As a first step, I reached out to gatekeepers from the two previous research projects (Birkvad 2019, Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020). One of these gatekeepers lent me a hand in this project, which resulted in two interviews in the first four months. Two more interviews were conducted within the first year, after which recruitment came to a halt. As mentioned in the second and third articles, the gatekeepers suggested that the fear and mistrust of state representatives made people disinclined to participate.

I can also add here that it is likely that people who have abused Norwegian citizenship for criminal purposes—the worst-case scenario often referred to in parliamentary debates (Birkvad 2023b)—refrained from participating. Similarly, people who had received a final decision on revocation and deportation and had lost all hope of staying may have seen no point in participating in the project. I cannot speak for those "too ashamed, disheartened or angry to speak", as Peutz (2007, 189) noted about deportees who refused to meet her. Thus, these experiences demonstrate how emotions animated the recruitment process. A key point for Ahmed (2004, 2014) is that emotions can move us toward or away from objects. If we consider the research interview an object, my preliminary field experiences suggest that shame, despair, fear, and mistrust drove away some potential interviewees.

After this slow recruitment period, two digital ads on *Utrop* (a multicultural Norwegian newspaper) and *Norsom News* (a Norwegian-Somali newspaper), however, set things in motion. The editor of Norsom News and I produced a promotional video that generated great interest from the Somali community in Norway. Norsom News had 70,000 followers on Facebook at the time (October 2020), almost twice the number of Somali immigrants and descendants living in Norway. However, most of those who contacted me did *not* face citizenship deprivation but adjacent legal difficulties. Confusion seemed to reign in the Somali community. Somali immigrants were targeted by several restrictions at the same time: cessation of refugee status (allowing for returns to Mogadishu), denial of citizenship applications due to "unclarified identity," and revocation of permanent residence permits (cf. Brekke et al. 2020). The same type of information (identity, country of origin, or family relations) was often the center of suspicion in citizenship revocation cases, too. Since I struggled to find people affected by citizenship revocation, I debated whether to stick to my original topic or broaden it by centering on legal exclusion in more general terms. To keep my options open, I decided to conduct interviews with people whose legal status

was questioned somehow by the UDI and recruit family members or friends of people targeted by citizenship revocation.[20]

However, through several rounds of posting at Utrop, Norsom News, alongside recruitment help from the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), the Norwegian Center Against Racism, and a law firm specializing in citizenship law, I reached enough interviewees in my primary group of interest. Therefore, I stuck to my original topic—citizenship deprivation—and started rejecting people who responded to the ads. One respondent confronted me with this methodological choice. He said that the distinction between citizenship and permanent residents did not matter, because revocation processes "affected the health and lives of humans in the same way." In other words, the experience of revocation did not discriminate between citizens and non-citizens. The intensified practice of citizenship deprivation blurred this categorical distinction, making naturalized citizens vulnerable to deportation on par with permanent residents (cf. Agamben 1998; Birkvad 2019). His remark can be read as a critique of my research design, which indirectly elevated citizenship to a sacred status (Brubaker 1992, 147). Thus, the methodological choice to exclude permanent residents from the project also bore political implications.

I stopped recruitment for nearly two years in the project. At this point, I reached out to over 50 different organizations and gatekeepers. The extensive outreach, combined with repeated negative feedback from intermediaries (recounted above), confirmed that I was dealing with a hard-to-reach population.[21] I found it unnecessary and unethical to continue recruitment because I wanted to make use of the depth and richness of the collected data material (O'Reilly and Parker 2013).

Given that I only had one sample criterion—being targeted by citizenship revocation—the participants' migration stories and trajectories in Norwegian society varied significantly. The interviewees had immigrated to Norway in different phases of life. Of the 28 participants, 16 of the participants were men and 12 women. Two thirds of the interviewees originated from Somalia (18 persons) and four from Palestine, reflecting two of the most heavily targeted immigrant groups (Engebretsen 2017). The remaining six interviewees immigrated from different countries in Asia.

[20] I conducted seven formal interviews in the categories stated above. In addition, I interviewed spokespersons for the Somali community and two descendants of Somali immigrants who volunteered to participate in response to the ads in Utrop and NorSom News.

[21] In part, this may also explain why there are few published interview studies with people undergoing naturalization fraud processes. However, see Kojic's (2015) master's thesis for a rare example.

To increase anonymization, I chose to lump the interviewees originating from different Asian countries into one category. I used self-reported countries of origin.

At the time of the interview, they had lived in Norway between 11 and 25 years (5-year intervals are used to increase anonymization). The interviewees were in different stages of the revocation process. Four had recently been notified of revocation, twenty-four interviewees were waiting for the first decision by the UDI (twenty of these had undertaken one or several administrative interviews); a married couple were waiting for their appeal to be processed by the UNE, two individuals had been deprived of citizenship and were currently living in Norway as stateless, and one person had his revocation case dismissed. In other words, the majority were waiting for their case to be processed. The waiting time varied significantly: a few were interviewed only weeks after receiving notification of revocation, while most had waited for a decision for several years.

4.2.2 Interviews, emotional entanglements, and negotiated positionalities

The interviews were conducted in 2016 (1), 2018 (1) and 2019-2021 (22), and took place in the participants' homes (in Oslo and beyond), at the University of Oslo, in cafes and via telephone or video call. I interviewed five *pairs* (either parent/child or spouses), one *trio* (a married couple and a friend), and the rest individually. Three interviews were conducted with a Somali-Norwegian translator, the rest in Norwegian. All interviews were tape-recoded, except for two. These two interviewees did not want to tape the interview because they feared the potential consequences of information being misused. One person backed out of a scheduled phone interview, as he became suspicious when I asked to record the interview. In another phone interview, I was asked to send a link to my personal webpage at the University of Oslo to confirm my identity as a researcher.

Besides fear and suspicion, the interviews were filled with feelings of frustration, anger, exhaustion, and despair. As mentioned in Chapter Three, these encounters drew my attention to emotions as a theoretical and methodological tool. Qualitative interviews can be understood as "situated affective encounters" (Ayata et al. 2019). According to Ayata and colleagues (2019), interviews involve a relational process in which both the researcher and the researched affect each other. The relationship is dynamic and shaped by different relational intensities. Some sought legal counsel and responded with disappointment and disinterest when I told them that I could not provide it. Others seemed to seek emotional care. On several occasions, interviewees burst into tears, either expressing despair or cathartic relief. For instance, one interviewee said, "A psychologist cannot magically get my passport back, you know? You can't, either. But I just wanted

to get this out [of my head]." Here, the participant positioned me as a proxy therapist. Others regretfully "confessed" to their sins, such as furnishing incorrect information in their original asylum interview (discussed in Article III), perhaps seeking redemption in our interview. These snippets point to potential benefits for interviewees, such as having their experiences acknowledged and shared with a wider audience (Bloemraad and Menjívar 2021).

I was also positioned as "the benevolent outsider" (cf. Baser and Toivanen 2018, 2081), a spokesperson for their cause. Several interviewees expressed gratitude for listening to their stories. However, one of the interviewees pursued his own agenda in the interview (cf. Jacobsson and Åkerström 2013). While I was primarily interested in his personal experiences of undergoing revocation, his primary aim seemed to be to use our interview to mobilize targets of citizenship revocation as a group. During the interview, he turned the table and asked me questions about the other participants. For example, "What are they doing to change the situation? Why don't they get together and speak up as a group?" He argued that their case could only be furthered if they fought a collective fight against the perceived injustice inflicted upon them. For this to happen, he urged me to bridge the contact between him and the other interviewees. His request poses ethical questions: Where does the obligation of the researcher lie? How much do we "owe" our research participants? On the one hand, I believed he was right: a collective effort to change the system could have been in their best interest. On the other hand, I saw my primary obligation to protect the privacy of my informants, as they shared sensitive information with me in strict confidentiality. Most interviewees did not want to voice their grievances in public or share them with anyone else. Gaining the trust of the interviewees was difficult enough in the first place. It would therefore be unethical to accept his request because I ran the risk of muddling this relationship of trust.

Still, others read me as a "representative of the state" and projected feelings of suspicion, anger, and resentment toward me (Baser and Toivanen 2018). Despite stating my position as an independent researcher at the University of Oslo, a few spoke to me *as if* I had worked for immigration authorities. They brought paperwork from the revocation case to our interview. As they faced allegations of having lied during asylum and naturalization proceedings, they were eager to show me documents that proved their identity, family relations, or places of origin. Since they had failed to convince Norwegian immigration authorities that they were speaking the truth, some seemingly used the research interview as a second chance to (re)claim credibility and self-worth.

To be the proxy target of this anger and resentment could be uncomfortable. For one interview, I visited a middle-aged man in his apartment. He had a confronting, occasionally aggressive tone. When I asked him about his thoughts, experiences, and feelings about his current

predicament, he responded sarcastically, "Well, how would *you* feel?" He also pointed out that I could not understand his experiences with racism in Norway. As he plainly put it, "You are white. You will never experience racism." As a white citizen by birth, it is unlikely that I will ever be on the receiving end of racism or citizenship revocation. Historically, these observations hold true. Born in Denmark to a Norwegian mother and a Danish father, immigrating to Norway at age two, I represent a privileged subject position in Norwegian history. Scandinavians—especially Danes—have enjoyed a privileged pathway to immigrate and naturalize in Norway since the 1950s. As such, I am a product of the history of Scandinavian citizenship legislation, which continues to favor "Nordic brothers" over "strange others" (Wickström 2016).

4.2.3 Coding and analyzing the interview material

The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed by a research assistant (N = 11) and me (N = 13). These interviews lasted between 35 minutes and 2 hours and 45 minutes, amounting to 33 hours of tape-recorded material in total. On average, each interview lasted 1.5 hours. I coded the interviews twice using the NVivo software. The first coding process was guided by 14 pre-determined categories, or themes, based on questions in the interview guide and theoretical interests (e.g., deportability). It was beneficial insofar as I familiarizing myself with the material, but I realized that the categories were too broad to capture variations and nuances. To discover the material anew and bring me closer to what the interviewees were *actually* saying (Tjora 2017), I undertook a second, more textually attuned round of coding. In the second process, I followed some of Tjora's (2017, 175-195) steps for qualitative, inductive analysis: first, attaching labels to the excerpts, then sorting these in groups, and finally constructing analytical categories.

I divided the interview material into two according to the article questions, which initially revolved around examining what characterized their life conditions and how they managed the question of guilt. For both articles, I aimed to account for variations in the material. In the second article, I was interested in *what* emotions were expressed, and how these shaped social relations in different ways (cf. Ahmed 2004, 2014) in processes of citizenship revocation. In the third article, I distinguish between three subject positions: sinners, saints, and racialized scapegoats. I treat these as Weberian ideal types (cf. Swedberg 2018), accentuating three different responses to the accusation of fraud. These subject positions not only respond to the accusation of cheating itself, but more broadly to hierarchies of deservingness and "race"-ethnicity within Norwegian society.

4.3 Are they speaking of the truth? Representation and knowledge production

Both types of actors investigated in this thesis—the state and the subjects—engage in a political struggle over values, rights, justice, and truth. In short, both actors present their vision of what is true and just. As the empirical material suggests, occasionally, these visions align, but often they come into conflict. The point of conflict concerns whether the subject in question has concealed information or lied to the state, or if this is a poorly informed or false accusation. To rephrase Sandberg's (2010) slightly provocative questions, what actor is speaking the truth? Does it matter?

Undoubtedly, the truth matters to the subjects in question whose credibility, rights, and future are at stake in these cases. It also matters to the immigration administration to make the right decision, that is, to find out whether the subject is speaking the truth about their identity or background. Immigration officials decide cases according to a binary legal code: either they are truthful or they, or lying (Fortier 2017). The debates in Parliament seemed to be driven by the same binary logic. The government tended to depict targets of citizenship revocation as cynical cheaters, while the opposition portrayed them as innocent victims of state oppression. Some of the interviewees positioned themselves as sinners (claiming they had furnished incorrect information to the authorities), while others considered themselves scapegoats (claiming no wrongdoing whatsoever). A third type of position was that of the saints, who positioned themselves between sinners and scapegoats (admitting to concealing some information, but not outright lying).

However, I cannot evaluate neither claims to truth in this thesis. Instead, I treat the parliamentary debates and the qualitative interviews as "speech acts," a concept coined by the philosopher J.L. Austin (1975). Austin's (1975) main point was that language is not merely descriptive but also *performative*. The content of performative language is not true or false but should be considered as acts that perform tasks and have consequences. For example, statements by interviewees can be interpreted as forms of self-presentation, such as a morally decent self (cf. Sandberg 2010, 455). Concerning my own interviews, I cannot determine whether the subject positions (sinners, saints, and racialized scapegoats) are accurate descriptions of the content of their revocation cases. Rather, I can interpret them as speech acts that perform prevailing ideas about citizenship and deservingness, as well as hierarchies of race-ethnicity in Norwegian society. Similarly, I cannot determine whether the state's construction of targets of citizenship revocation—either as innocent victims or as potential criminals—are accurate descriptions of these people (at least not by looking at the parliamentary debates alone). Yet, I can examine the

possible consequences of these speech acts. Whether the targets of citizenship revocation are constructed as potential criminals or victims of state repression affects public perception and policymaking, either used as an argument to tighten or relax denaturalization practices. A focus on speech acts thus helps to analyze how the two actors—the state and the subjects—use language to present themselves and in relation to each other.

4.4. Summary

This chapter has described the two methodologies and empirical material used in this thesis. I have examined denaturalization from two different angles: the state and the subjects. Parliamentary debates have been used to investigate the state's justification of reinforcing denaturalization and qualitative interviews have shed light on the subjects' experiences of undergoing denaturalization procedures. The chapter included detailed reflections on some of the practical, emotional, and epistemological issues that surfaced before, during, and after the fieldwork. The following chapter summarizes the articles derived from these methodological processes.

5 Summary of articles

This chapter summarizes each article comprising this thesis. Two are published in journals, and the third is currently under review. The first article analyzes what arguments the Norwegian government articulated to justify the decision to revitalize citizenship deprivation in Parliament. The second and third articles examines how the process of citizenship deprivation shapes emotions, social relations, and subjectivities among those targeted by it.

Article I: "Citizenship Cheaters" before the Law: Reading Fraud-Based Denaturalization in Norway through Lenses of Exceptionalism

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In the first article, I ask how the decision to reinforce fraud-based denaturalization emerged and how the Norwegian government justified this decision against criticism from parliament. The empirical material primarily consists of parliamentary debates. These debates were based on three legislative proposals submitted by the opposition, all aiming to tame the executive's authority and reach in citizenship revocation cases: a proposal to remove the revocation provision and offer amnesty to confessors; a proposal to move the decision-making authority from the executive to the judiciary; and a bundle of proposals to introduce a time limit ("statute of limitations") in revocation cases, shield mono-citizens from citizenship revocation, and set a maximum time on administrative case processing.

I take Schmitt's (1922/2005) concepts of "decisionism" and "state of exception" and Agamben's (1998, 2005) theoretical reinterpretations as my theoretical vantage points. Then, I bring these perspectives into dialogue with theoretical advancements and critiques (Doty 2007, Huysmans 2004, 2008, Johns 2005, Neocleous 2006, Neal 2019, Nyers 2006, Rogenhofer 2022) and the literature on citizenship deprivation (e.g., Beauchamps 2018, Birnie and Bauböck 2020, Fargues 2019, Gibney 2019b, Troy 2019). I describe the administrative process of citizenship

revocation and the "refugee crisis" in 2015-2016 as the backdrop for the decision to strengthen citizenship law. The analysis reconstructs three arguments articulated by members of government. First, they argued that naturalization fraud was not only a technical breach of citizenship law but constituted a morally dubious action (*moralization*). The argument was that "fraudsters" had systematically and repeatedly lied to Norwegian authorities, which betrayed the Norwegian system of trust. Second, they legitimized the decision to reinforce and uphold the strict practice by criminalizing fraudsters. Although most cases of naturalization fraud belong to the realm of administrative law, proponents of this argument rely on "worst cases" of naturalization fraud—serious crime and terrorism—to justify indefinite revocation powers (*criminalization*). Finally, the government argued that the decision to reinforce citizenship revocation rested firmly on domestic and international law. According to such "hyper-legalistic" (cf. Ghezelbash 2020) reasoning, the government only abided to the letter of the law, and as such, this argument functioned to de-politicize the decision and counter criticism of executive overreach (*de-politicization*).

The hyper-legalist argument seems to confirm Agamben's (1998) paradox of sovereignty—that law has no grounding outside itself—albeit with a slight modification. Instead of seeing the collapse of law and politics, as Agamben suggests, hyper-legalism indicates that the formulation of politics has been reduced to formalistic interpretations of legal texts. Moreover, I argue that there is no straight line between sovereign power (or decisions) and "bare life," contra Agamben's claims, but is mediated through administrative and democratic procedures. The article concludes that scholars of exceptional practices—such as citizenship deprivation—should examine their consequences by studying lived experiences, paying particular attention to social categories of difference.

Article II: Circles of alienation: examining first-hand experiences of citizenship deprivation through the perspective of emotions and estrangement

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The second article explores embodied experiences of citizenship deprivation. The empirical basis is in-depth interviews with 28 individuals who were or had found themselves in the process of citizenship revocation. Through the recruitment process and preliminary observations during the

interviews, the methodological and analytical value of emotions emerged. The article therefore draws on theoretical and analytical resources from the literature on affective citizenship (Ayata 2019, Ayata et al. 2019, Bargetz 2015, Beauchamps 2016, 2018, Di Gregorio and Merolli 2016, Fortier 2016, 2017, 2021). A crucial point within this strand of research is that emotions are simultaneously personal and social.

According to Sara Ahmed (Ahmed 2004, 2010, 2014a), often cited by scholars working within this strand of research, emotions circulate and accumulate value like goods in an economy but stick and make their marks on subjects. Representatives from the Norwegian government deployed fear-laden rhetoric that spread insecurity in targeted communities. Building on these theoretical insights and preliminary empirical observations, this article poses the following questions: What emotions circulate in the affective economy of denaturalization in Norway? How do these emotions shape individual bodies, families, and communities exposed to denaturalization?

Methodologically and analytically, I understand the interviews as "situated affective encounters" (Ayata et al. 2019). I look for emotions expressed through body language and intensity shifts during the interviews and for words that carry emotions in the interview transcripts. The focus is not only on how emotions are *personally felt*, but also on "what emotions *do*" (Ahmed 2004). The analysis differentiates between three constellations of emotions and estrangement, underscoring that emotions shape social relations (cf. Ahmed 2014). The first constellation was pain, anger, and alienation from the national body. To some, being accused of naturalization fraud only added to pre-existing feelings of anger and alienation, as they already felt excluded from the alleged "white nation." To others, citizenship revocation was a painful discovery that they were perennial foreigners in an ethnically defined national community. The second emotion analyzed was fear of deportation and surveillance, which destabilized families and communities. These fears tended to isolate people and made some consider self-deportation. The final constellation was exhaustion and self-estrangement. The long and tedious administrative process wore the interviewees out, as they gradually lost their footing in the world. Exposure to denaturalization thus led to alienation in three concentric circles of their lives: estrangement from the nation, their families and communities, and themselves.

In the concluding discussion, I outline the implications of these findings for existing and future research. Feelings of fear and exhaustion have been found in studies of migrants undergoing asylum and naturalization processes. However, I argue that the experience of undergoing denaturalization must be understood in its legal and emotional particularity. Being transformed from citizen to foreigner provoked pain and anger and motivated acts of resistance against the

state. Future studies on citizenship deprivation should therefore examine the ways in which emotions conform to, challenge, or exceed state powers.

Article III: Sinners, Saints, and Racialized Scapegoats: (Mis)interpellation and Subject Positions in the Face of Citizenship Deprivation

Under review

The final article examines variations in responses to accusations of naturalization fraud. Empirically, this article builds on qualitative interviews with 28 individuals who were facing or had faced accusations of naturalization fraud. Drawing on Althusser (1971), Fanon (1952/2021), and later proponents (Ahmed 2000, Butler 1997, Hage 2010, Macherey 2012, Martel 2015, Winfield 2022), I theorize the accusation as a case of interpellation. According to Althusser's Marxist perspective, interpellation captures how speech acts—naming and categorizing—transform individuals into subjects of an ideology (in this case, the legitimacy of the law). Fanon drew attention to how interpellations in everyday interactions in colonial societies "fix" and subjugate minorities into an ideology of racialized difference. Departing from these theoretical perspectives as well as recent research on interpellation in naturalization policies (Bassel, Monforte, and Khan 2018), the article seeks to answer the following questions: How do individuals respond to accusations of dishonesty and cheating? How do they (re)position themselves vis-à-vis the law, the state, and Norwegian society at large during processes of citizenship revocation?

To broaden the context, I lay out recent developments in Norwegian immigration and citizenship policies. Mirroring a larger trend in European countries, Norwegian citizenship has become more difficult to acquire and easier to lose. The ideological basis for this trend is that citizenship is construed as a privilege, not a right. According to this policy credo, immigrants should *earn* and *deserve* citizenship (Joppke 2021). However, these policies and imperatives fall unevenly on immigrant groups. In Norway, Somali immigrants have been disproportionately targeted by recent immigration and citizenship policy restrictions. Outside the sphere of immigration regulations, this group has also been hailed as "work-averse" (Handulle and Vassenden 2021) and unwilling to integrate into Norwegian society (Næss 2020). The article proceeds by describing the administrative process of citizenship revocation and its possible

outcomes. Although statistics reveal that many cases do not lead to citizenship revocation *and* deportation, I argue that the process is effective insofar as it shapes and reshapes subjectivities.

Three ideal-typical subject positions are examined in the analysis. Interviewees taking the first position—the sinners—admitted to having provided incorrect information to the authorities to increase their chances of acquiring residency. Their guilty conscience made them turn toward the law and plead for administrative mercy. Some claimed that the state was "doing the right thing," even urging the authorities to enforce the law more strictly. As such, they accepted the terms of the interpellation. The second subject position—the saints—admitted to having some inconsistencies in their immigration records but claimed the authorities were addressing "the wrong" people. Criminals and terrorists should be targeted, not them, since they fully aligned themselves with welfare state virtues—first and foremost, respecting the law, paying taxes, and being self-supported. Therefore, the saints felt mis-interpellated. By contrast, the racialized scapegoats dismissed the accusation itself, claiming that the authorities had little, if any, substantiating evidence against them. In particular, interviewees originating from Somalia said they were being used by the government to gain political currency. According to this position, Somali immigrants were "easy targets" of citizenship revocation because of their racial-ethnic otherness and their purported *will* (cf. Ahmed 2014b) to stick to Somali culture rather than "integrate" into Norwegian society. This constitutes a case of "failed interpellation" (cf. Winfield 2022).

This article offers a sociological analysis of how subjectivities are formed and transformed during processes of citizenship revocation. The concluding discussion compares Althusser and Fanon's vertical and horizontal perspectives on interpellation (cf. Macherey 2012). I emphasize the value of studying the multiplicities and intersections of interpellations to capture the variation of subjectivating consequences of denaturalization processes.

6 Concluding discussion

The re-emergence of citizenship deprivation in Norway has been the focal point of this thesis. My interest in denaturalization was triggered by a single interview encounter in 2016 with three people facing citizenship revocation on the grounds of fraud. This thesis has examined the practice of fraud-based denaturalization in Norway from two vantage points and attendant data sources. I looked at parliamentary debates to interrogate the government's justification for citizenship deprivation and qualitative interviews to explore subjects' experiences of citizenship deprivation. Analyzing the empirical material through the theoretical approaches of exceptionalism, emotions, and interpellation, the thesis has posed two overarching research questions: What arguments did the Norwegian government articulate to justify the decision to revitalize denaturalization in Parliament? How does the process of denaturalization shape emotions, social relations, and subjectivities among those targeted by it?

In this concluding chapter, I will summarize the main findings by answering these two questions. Further, I outline some implications of these findings for our understanding of the state–subject relation in denaturalization practices. This allows me to reflect on the third research question raised in the introductory chapter: What are the breaks and continuities between past and present practices of citizenship deprivation? On this basis, I offer some final reflections for future research.

6.1 Main findings

What arguments did the Norwegian government articulate to justify the decision to revitalize citizenship deprivation in Parliament?

Citizenship revocation on grounds of fraud emerged in the immediate wake of the "refugee crisis" in 2015–2016. A record high number of asylum seekers were registered at the Norwegian border in 2015. The government—consisting of the Conservative Party and the rightwing Progress Party—introduced a range of restrictive measures aimed at deterring further arrivals and regaining

control over the borders. As the number of asylum seekers rapidly decreased in 2016, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration was left with a surplus capacity. To absorb this capacity, the government instructed the UDI to sanction "citizenship cheating" more strictly. This decision was met with criticism by the center-left and left parties in opposition. The opposition parties submitted legislative proposals in Parliament to constrain the revocation powers of the government. In countering these proposals, the government relied on three different arguments to justify the revitalization and continuation of a strict denaturalization practice: moralization, criminalization, and de-politicization through hyper-legalism.

First, the government couched naturalization fraud in a moralizing language. Rather than seeing it as a legal technicality, as it was at the time of its institution, sanctioning naturalization fraud was claimed to protect the moral integrity of the asylum system and the institution of citizenship itself. In this line of reasoning, fraud-based denaturalization upholds the alleged "sacred character" of citizenship (cf. Brubaker 1992). Naturalization is rewarded to those who have shown themselves worthy, while those who "lie," "cheat," and "con us," should rightfully be excluded from this privilege.

Second, the government *criminalized* naturalization fraud to justify its decision to reinforce the practice. "Fraudsters" were not construed not only as morally dubious actors, but in "worst case scenarios," as potential criminals and security threats. For these individuals, naturalization was likened to "stealing" a privilege. This type of criminalizing discourse functioned to keep the possibility of citizenship deprivation open indefinitely. It placed (some) naturalized citizens in a state of exception (Agamben 1998), neither inside nor outside the law.

Finally, the government tried to *de-politicize* the state practice by resorting to *hyper-legalism* (cf. Ghezelbash 2020). The government grounded the decision to prioritize cases of fraud by claiming that their sole course of action was to enforce the letter of the law. Members of the government referred to the unanimous agreement in Parliament at the time of the provision's introduction and claimed that the practice did not violate international conventions. On the contrary, the decision to strengthen the law was firmly grounded in these conventions.

Taken together, the three arguments lay bare self-contradictory reasoning. Sanctioning naturalization fraud more strictly was deemed an important political priority for the government, as fraudsters pose threats to morality and law. At the same time, the government sought to remove accountability for the decision by seeking refuge in domestic and international law. In the same move, the government can be seen to have opened a new political field and tried to close the discussion by referring to the law as an autonomous, self-referential field (cf. Agamben 1998).

How does the process of denaturalization shape emotions, social relations, and subjectivities among those targeted?

The interviewees were not stripped of citizenship by a single, unilateral decision, but underwent lengthy administrative processes that could lead to multiple outcomes. The administrative process of citizenship revocation can be read as an "affective economy" (Ahmed 2004), wherein signs of affect circulate, accumulate value, and stick to subjects undergoing the process. I found three constellations of emotions and estrangement by examining the affective economy of denaturalization in Norway.

The first constellation was pain and anger in being alienated from the national body. In legal and symbolic terms, denaturalization means transforming citizens into foreigners (Winter and Previsic 2019). Some were in pain because they suddenly realized that they were not equal to ethnic Norwegians but merely foreigners residing within the national community. Other interviewees were angered by this downgrading because it allegedly *confirmed* their inferior status in the racial-ethnic hierarchy. The process of denaturalization thus alienated or further alienated these interviewees from the national community.

The second constellation analyzed was the circulation and embodiment of fear that destabilized families and communities. Fear of deportation as well as surveillance by authorities and members from their own community, restricted their social lives and led to isolation. Some interviewees pondered the possibility of leaving Norway—"self-deporting"—regardless of the outcome of their case. In particular, the Somali community in Norway was affected by this destabilization, as Somali immigrants were targeted by numerous newly imposed immigrant regulations at the time.

Lastly, the protracted administrative processes, often lasting for several years, shaped feelings of exhaustion and self-estrangement. Although they continued with their daily affairs, some of the interviewees said they felt like "robots" or "zombies." These metaphors signify lives increasingly drained of energy and purpose. Having their legal standing questioned by the authorities over the years unsettled their very sense of place in the world.

Emotions cannot be reduced to personal properties; rather, they move us away or toward objects, thereby shaping our social relations. Emotions *do* something, as underscored by Ahmed (2014a). The social consequences of denaturalization can be traced to three circles of alienation: national disembodiment, family and community estrangement, and self-estrangement.

As mentioned above, most of the cases were still undecided. Despite not being able to study the legal outcomes of their cases, I found that the accusation of lying itself played a significant role in shaping subjectivity. The accusation of lying can be read as an *interpellation*. According to Althusser (1971), interpellation captures how individuals are transformed into subjects through being "hailed"—that is named and categorized in a specific way. Through moments of interpellation, individuals are recruited to a certain ideology. However, individuals do not mechanically subject themselves to power and ideology. Rather, interpellation is a bilateral process that includes hails and responses (Ahmed). In the case of citizenship revocation in Norway, the accusation of cheating seeks to recruit targeted individuals for the legitimacy of the law. On another level, this accusation forms part of a wider ideology of deservingness. According to this ideology, citizenship should only be granted to applicants who earn it (Joppke 2021), while those who "cheat their way to citizenship" should be excluded from this purported privilege. The interviews provided a unique opportunity to explore how the interviewees positioned themselves vis-à-vis the law, state ideology, and Norwegian society at large during processes of citizenship revocation. I distinguished between three different subject positions: sinners, saints, and racialized scapegoats.

The sinners positioned themselves as guilty in relation to the law. Interviewees taking this position expressed remorse for their decision to conceal information from the authorities. Some even urged the authorities to further strengthen the law and, hence, justified the ideological distinction between deserving and undeserving citizens. The saints downplayed the content of the allegation put forward by the authorities. Inconsistencies in their asylum stories were minor errors, not the result of purposeful cheating. Although they did not submit to the law, they subscribed to the ideology of deservingness. They aligned themselves with the welfare state and the law while simultaneously distancing themselves from welfare clients and criminals. By contrast, the racialized scapegoats, claimed that they were free of wrongdoing, suggesting instead that the state was scapegoating them due to their racial-ethnic otherness. Some of the interviewees originating from Somalia said they were "easy targets" of citizenship revocation, as they were repeatedly subject to negative interpellations in public and political discourse.

Whereas the two former subject positions implied absorbing or deflecting the interpellation as "cheaters," the latter position reversed suspicion and mistrust and questioned the legitimacy of denaturalization altogether. As such, these three positions testify to the varying consequences of the accusation, understood as an act of interpellation that seeks to subject individuals to power and ideology. "Sinners" were successfully interpellated to the ideology of law and deservingness; "saints" felt mis-interpellated, as they followed the line of moral conduct drawn by the Norwegian welfare state; "racialized scapegoats" were unsuccessfully interpellated through

their dismissal of the terms of the interpellation. Subjection to denaturalization therefore reinforced or shaped new subject positions vis-à-vis the law, state ideology, and Norwegian society at large.

6.2 Implications for understanding the relationship between state and subject

Citizenship deprivation has potentially detrimental consequences for those targeted. Criminologists call citizenship deprivation "the harshest available state-imposed sanction" (Tripkovic 2021). Legal scholars and political scientists have likened the consequences to "political" (Macklin 2014), "civic," and "civil death" (Gibney 2019b, Coca-Vila 2020). Political theorists claim that denationalization produces lives animated by "rightlessness," "total domination" (Arendt 1951/2017) and sheer "nakedness" (Agamben 1998). Albeit speaking from different disciplines, these perspectives assume a direct relationship between state and citizen with a singular outcome: *actual* citizenship stripping and statelessness. However, there are multiple outcomes of cases of citizenship deprivation. All—except two—of the participants in this research project still held onto Norwegian citizenship and were deeply entangled in administrative processes. By analyzing parliamentary debates and individual experiences of denaturalization, a more complex relationship between state and subject emerges. These findings reveal interesting ambiguities and paradoxes manifest in the practice of denaturalization.

The government uncompromisingly signaled its desire to sanction cases of naturalization fraud. In one reading, this attempt to reinforce citizenship law can be read as sheer decisionism (in line with Schmitt and Agamben's thoughts). On another reading, however, the repercussions of the decision also indicate its failure and ineffectiveness (cf. Brown 2010). The task of making individual decisions regarding citizenship revocation is placed in the hands of the immigration administration. The government can instruct the UDI to prioritize cases, but the UDI officials make individual decisions on citizenship revocation. In making these decisions, immigration officials are confronted with a dilemma. They must comply with political instructions—sanctioning fraud to make way for deportation—while at the same time considering the rights of citizens and their families. Statistics from the immigration authorities indicate that only thirty percent of those subjected to this state practice are actually deported (Utlendingsnemnda 2022). Hence, the majority of targeted people are allowed to stay, either because of lack of evidence or because of the person's "strong attachment to the realm," "degree of integration" in Norway, or

because it is in the "best interest" of their children. Thus, the "soft" side of the welfare state seems to constrain some of the impulses of the "hard side."

The government argued that those who posed threats to morality and law should be deported from Norway. Tightening the practice of citizenship revocation aimed at delineating between legitimate and illegitimate (naturalized) citizens. Yet, parliamentary procedures and the introduction of new rules slowed down the decision-making of the immigration authorities. Paradoxically, people accused of naturalization fraud were placed in a "zone of indistinction" (Agamben 1998), a blurred line between citizenship and alienage. This legal ambiguity was expressed in a wide variety of emotions and subject positions. The findings from the interviews both confirm and contest the state's power of subjection through interpellation (Althusser 1971) and governing through affect (Fortier 2010).

On the one hand, the circulation of fear indicates the far-reaching effects of the government's denaturalization initiative, stretching beyond individuals and families directly targeted. Feelings of fear and exhaustion of waiting for an outcome, whether unintended or intended by the state (the latter claimed by some of the interviewees), were effective insofar as making some consider *self-deportation*. Thus, the state could get rid of unwanted citizens with the "help" of the citizens themselves. Moreover, the subject positions of the sinner and the saints legitimized the state's revocation policy and/or its underlying ideology of deservingness. On the other hand, the pain and anger of being accused of fraud opened up critiques of the state's promises of equal citizenship and non-discrimination. Despite the prospect of being allowed to stay in Norway, pain and anger seemed to create disaffection for the nation-state. A clearer example of state contestation was expressed by the position of the racialized scapegoats. This position involved attempts to subvert the state's allegations of lying and cheating, and, more broadly, to de-legitimize the state's denaturalization practice. One way of doing so was to point to Norway's persecution of Jews during the German occupation. This point invites a discussion of both the continuities and the breaks between past and present practices of citizenship deprivation.

6.3 Breaks and continuities: Reflections on past and current practices of citizenship deprivation

A comparison between historical and contemporary forms of citizenship deprivation emerged in one of the interviews conducted. Zahid (15–20 years in Norway, Somalia) claimed that he had been falsely accused of cheating by Norwegian authorities. In his mind, the authorities had no

substantiated evidence. Instead, he suggested that the authorities were using citizenship revocation as a fig leaf to persecute immigrants who refused to "assimilate." He criticized the current citizenship revocation practice by pointing backwards in Norwegian history:

> (…) [W]hen the Germans invaded Norway, Norwegians were divided. Some were chased away and deprived of their lives, their families, and their houses. What was that, really? It was just someone who thought they were doing something right. But what have they proved 70 years later? Norway apologized. Europe apologized (…); it proves that what they did was wrong. When I sat in the [interview] room at the police station (…), I said to them, "One day, this room will become a museum. In one hundred or two hundred years, Norwegians will be ashamed as they read these records.

Zahid here refers to Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's (Labor Party) apology to Norwegian Jews. This apology was delivered in 2012, 72 years after the Norwegian police arrested, rounded up, and transported nearly 800 Norwegian Jews to Polish concentration camps. Four and six years later, Prime Minister Erna Solberg (Conservative Party) presented similar apologies to Roma and the "German girls," respectively, for the state's exclusionary policies applied in the decades before and after the Second World War. Zahid's question invites us to critically reflect on current practices of citizenship deprivation. If depriving Norwegian Jews of citizenship and removing them from Norwegian territory were considered legitimate at that time, how should we consider current denaturalization practices? And how will we consider the current practices in one hundred, or two hundred years into the future? Of course, I cannot predict future ethical and political judgments on today's policies. Instead, I can offer some reflections on breaks and continuities between past and present state denaturalization practices.

There are obvious breaks between historical and contemporary citizenship deprivation practices. Today, national governments face far more obstacles to citizenship deprivation than before the Second World War (cf. Seet 2020). Governments are constrained by human rights norms and international legal conventions. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrined everyone's right to nationality and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality (Article 15). Legal protections against statelessness were added to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, except in cases of fraud (Macklin 2014). Denaturalization based on race, religion, gender, and political orientation is considered illegitimate. Consequently, citizens are protected against arbitrary deprivation through these norms and conventions. Denaturalization-eager governments are also accountable to parliaments and the general public (Neal 2019, Rogenhofer 2022). Governments cannot assume that their decisions to adopt or reinforce denaturalization policies go unnoticed. Rather, they must respond to criticism and make sense of and justify these policies. Moreover, in countries such as the United States, France, and

the United Kingdom, judicial institutions have also played a role in restricting the scope of denaturalization (Weil 2017).

Bureaucratic norms and procedures also play a mediating role in citizenship deprivation practices. Although the government is allowed by law to instruct the immigration bureaucracy to prioritize revocation cases, it is UDI that make individual decisions on citizenship revocation. The UDI first notifies the person and prompts them to give a written response. The person may also be summoned to an administrative interview to further inform the case (Brekke et al. 2020). A person deprived of citizenship can appeal to the UNE and the court system. In principle, these different steps shall provide due process and protection against unjust treatment. If the authorities decide to revoke *and* deport the person, their country of origin must be willing to take their citizen back in order for deportation to occur (Gibney 2019b). Modern banishment therefore consists of two steps: "first, strip citizenship; second, deport the newly minted alien" (Macklin 2018, 164). By contrast, Roma, Jews, and war brides were targeted by acts that *at once* stripped them of citizenship and denied entry or removed them from Norwegian territory. They were given no right to appeal these decisions and were at the mercy of their new states.

Human rights norms, international conventions, parliamentary and judicial control, and bureaucratic procedures have added protection to minorities against arbitrary citizenship deprivation. Consequently, these different layers of protection play a crucial role in constraining states from pursuing discriminatory denaturalization policies. However, we might question whether contemporary denaturalization has fully broken free of its discriminatory past, or if there are some continuities between past and present practices (Gibney 2019b). This question can be approached from two locations: the letter of the law and the realm of legal enforcement. Only naturalized and dual citizens are targeted by citizenship deprivation measures by the letter of the law. This means that if a mono-citizen and a dual citizen undertake the same act, only the dual national will lose citizenship. Gibney (2019b, 13) stated that this is evidence of discrimination and hence inconsistent with the principles of democratic equality. In the realm of legal enforcement, Gibney (2019b, 16) further noted that denationalization has been used almost exclusively on citizens originating from Muslim majority countries. Other studies from the UK have also demonstrated that ethnic and migrant communities are especially targeted (Kapoor 2018, Naqvi 2022).

In Norway—as in other countries—the fraud provision applies only to naturalized citizens. The letter of the law does not single out any ethnic or gendered group, as the "Gypsy clause" and the "war bride clause" did historically. Nevertheless, the practice of the fraud provision shows that

some groups are disproportionately targeted. Immigrants originating from Somalia are overrepresented in statistics of citizenship revocation. Of course, overrepresentation is not in itself proof of discrimination. According to the immigration authorities, the level of "system abuse" is especially high in this group, warranting this disproportionate level of suspicion. However, we should view this measure in a broader context. Since the first wave of refugees and asylum seekers came to Norway in the late 1980s/early 1990s, Somali immigrants have been singled out as a "problematic" group. Despite its internal diversity, high unemployment rates over time have cast Somalis as scapegoats in Norwegian immigration and integration debates (Næss 2020). Somalis are said to be unwilling to work, have too many children, and rely too much on social welfare (Handulle and Vassenden 2021). Somalis themselves report frequent experiences of discrimination and racism (Vrålstad and Wiggen 2017) and express fears of being disproportionately targeted by child welfare services (Handulle 2021) and immigration authorities (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020).

Given Somali immigrants' experiences of being targeted in multiple domains over three decades, citizenship revocation may confirm their pariah status in Norway. This pariah-status has historically been assigned to both Jews and Roma. In the 1920s, the Norwegian authorities claimed that the Roma's identity papers were fraudulent in discrediting their rights to enter and remain in the country. We know today that the authorities had ulterior motives for this denial of rights, namely, to remove an "undesirable people" (Brustad et al. 2017). This is not to suggest that Norwegian authorities are simply doing the same thing against Somalis today. Yet, history shows that fraud provisions—as with all legal texts (Schmitt 1922/2005)—are ambiguous and can be repurposed to suit discriminatory ends.[22]

The latter point allows for a more critical consideration of how governments use international conventions to justify citizenship deprivation. Liberal democracies are intimately aware of their commitments to human rights and international law. Rather than acting with disregard to laws and conventions, states interpret them literally and subvert their original purpose—referred to as hyper-legalism by legal scholar Ghezelbash (2020). This strategy allows them to ride two horses at the same time: expel undesirable subjects, while also expelling accountability, as they can claim that they are "only following the law." At first glance, hyper-legalism seems to confirm Agamben's paradox of sovereignty: the impossibility of distinguishing between law and politics. Following this reading, democratic states are essentially totalitarian states

[22] For other historical examples of how fraud laws have been selectively used to target unpopular groups, see (Frost 2021) and Gibney (2019b).

in disguise, where all laws are equally oppressive. A more careful reading, however, puts an interesting spin on Agamben's paradox, namely that states articulate politics based on formalistic interpretations of law.[23] It suggests that international law and human rights norms add protection to minorities *and* provide grounds for national governments to define "new" targets of citizenship revocation. The exceptions spelled out in the 1997 ECN are ambiguous and leave states with a wide room of discretion to define what "prejudicial conduct" and "fraud" should entail (cf. Beauchamps 2018).

Although facing constraints, states seem to actively use these exceptions to rid themselves of unwanted citizens. The implication is that the boundaries of the nation-state have never been finally determined by citizenship status. Tools and targets of persecution may shift, but there is a deeper sociological truth that connects historical and contemporary forms of citizenship deprivation. In the words of Honig (2002),

> The deeper truth is that *we almost always make foreign those whom we persecute*. Foreignness is a symbolic marker that the nation attaches to the people we want to disavow, deport, or detain because we experience them as a threat. The distinction between who is part of the nation and who is an outsider is not exhausted nor even finally defined by working papers, skin color, ethnicity, or citizenship. Indeed, it is not an empirical line at all; it is a symbolic one, used for political purposes. (11, emphasis added)

In the first half of the 20th century, Jews were considered "anti-national citizens" by the makers of the Constitution and persecuted on racial grounds during the occupation of Norway (Ulvund 2017, Bruland 2014). Roma people were seen as racially inferior and morally threatening (Brustad et al. 2017). "German girls" and their children were conceived of as "sexual traitors" and "fifth columnists" (Borgersrud 2005, Lenz 2009). These categories of citizens were constructed as national problems and threats. To restore social order, the Norwegian state legally and physically expelled these supposed threats. The contemporary targets of citizenship deprivation—terrorists and fraudsters—are similarly constructed as threats to national security, law, and morality, which must be ejected to "purify the national community" (Gibney 2019a, 3). As Gibney (ibid.) stated, "By purging society of failed members, banishment demonstrates the worth of membership and affirms the symbolic boundaries of community."

[23] Thanks to Reviewer 1 in International Political Sociology for helping me articulate this point.

6.4 Closing reflections

One might ask what kind of worth states seek to demonstrate by banishing "cheaters." High levels of *trust* are often lauded as one of Norway's most valuable currencies. Accordingly, seen through the eyes of the state, sanctioning cases of fraud is crucial to uphold the system of trust. In some ways, it makes sense that an applicant who lies or fails to provide all requested information should be denied citizenship. Equally, it seems reasonable that the citizenship status granted under these conditions can permissibly be removed (Lenard 2020). Abusing the system should be taken seriously, as it compromises the integrity of the asylum system and the institution of citizenship itself. For the state, then, granting citizenship on the correct grounds is a legitimate and necessary principle to uphold. Even if this principle seems permissible at first glance, we should question *how* this principle is being used and what purposes it serves (cf. Beauchamps 2018) as well as interrogate its human and social consequences. In closing, I offer some questions and reflections to consider for future research.

Researchers should critically investigate states' denaturalization campaigns, their justifications and repercussions. Historically, citizenship law has been weaponized to target "unruly subjects" (Kapoor and Narkowicz 2019), be it political dissidents, convicted criminals, and ethnic, religious, and racial minorities (Macklin 2018). These measures run the risk of rendering entire communities as suspect, dangerous, and perpetually foreign. For the targeted groups, this may cause trauma and mistrust toward the state, which may be transferred across generations. The stories of Norwegian Jews and Roma lay bare these risks. Their experiences give reason to be attentive to Somali immigrants in Norway today as a potential new pariah group, as one interviewee also suggested. How do descendants of Somali immigrants experience their position in Norwegian society today? If Norwegian-Somalis continue to face barriers to incorporation, how will this affect their self-image and life chances in the future?

The consequences of the intensified denaturalization practices reach far beyond the individuals targeted. Some of the consequences are outlined in this thesis. Since there is no time limit for authorities to initiate revocation cases, naturalized citizens are held in a permanently precarious position before the law. In principle, the authorities can withdraw their status at any moment. Bearing witness to family members or neighbors losing citizenship may trigger fears about one's own legal status. Indeed, research from the US shows that deportation threats also affect people who are largely immune to deportation (Asad 2020, Abrego 2019). People close to the person who is deported may experience trauma and impoverishment (Golash-Boza 2019). We

need research on how such experiences of proximate deportability (Asad 2020, Horsti and Pirkkalainen 2020), or *proximate revocability*, affect the lives of people within targeted families and communities in Norway and beyond.

Another question for future research concerns the discursive construction of subjects targeted by citizenship deprivation. Although denaturalization laws are race-neutral, some suggest that they operate through a "racialized filter" (Choudhury 2017). An illustration is the figure of the terrorist, which is "virtually always Muslim and male" (Macklin 2018, 163; see also Winter and Previsic 2019). It remains important to investigate the discursive construction of the figures of "citizenship cheaters" and "bogus asylum seekers" across time examine how these tropes have legitimized denaturalization campaigns (cf. Kapoor 2015). How do these tropes circulate in public policy and debate, what meanings attach to them, and what categories of people do these tropes explicitly or implicitly refer to? Finally, in what ways are laws, policies, and bureaucratic decisions affected by these culturalized and racialized ideas?

Asking these questions implies going beyond the letter of the law when examining states' justifications for citizenship deprivation. With the annihilation of stateless Jews in Nazi concentration camps fresh in mind, Hannah Arendt was concerned that totalitarian solutions would outlive totalitarian regimes. Only a few years after 1945, the United States, the country that received and granted Arendt citizenship after she had fled the Nazi regime, fell to a similar totalitarian temptation. In arguing against a proposal to strip communists of US citizenship in the 1950s, Arendt (1951/2017, 366) noted that, "the sinister aspect of these measures is that they are being considered in all innocence." Her warning holds relevance today.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Overview of research participants

Pseudonym	Country of origin	Generation	Years in Norway	Case status	Duration of case	Deportation notification	Interviews with state authorities	Affected family members[24]
Maryam & Ismael (mother & son)	Somalia	Immigrant & 1.5	15-20 & 10-15	Waiting for first decision	2 years	Yes	2	0
Hadiya & Aisha (mother & daughter	Somalia	Immigrant & 1.5	20-25 & 15-20	Waiting for first decision	<0.5 years	Yes	3	1
Zakaria	Somalia	Immigrant	20-25	Notified	2 years	Yes	N/A	2
Yasmine	Somalia	1.5	10-15	Waiting for first decision	5 years	Yes	1	3
Adam & Suraya (spouses)	Country in Asia	Immigrants	15-20 & 10-15	Waiting for first decision	<0.5 years	Yes	1	3
Yacub	Palestine	Immigrant	20-25	Waiting for decision on deprivation	5 years	Dismissed	1	0
Khaled	Palestine	Immigrant	20-25	Waiting for decision on deprivation	5 years	Dismissed	0	0
Zahid	Somalia	Immigrant	15-20	Waiting for first decision	0.5 years	Yes	3	2
Jibril	Somalia	Immigrant	10-15	Notified	4 years	Yes	0	3
Masood	Country in Asia	Immigrant	20-25	Deprived (stateless)	___	Yes	1	0
Emre	Country in Asia	1.5	20-25	Dismissed	___	No	0	2
Sarah & Abdi (spouses)	Somalia	Immigrants	10-15 & 15-20	Deprived, waiting for appeal	5 years	Yes	1	5
Leila	Somalia	Immigrant	10-15	Waiting for first decision	5 years	Yes	1	2

[24] Children, spouses, or other relatives.

Nadia	Somalia	Immigrant	20-25	Deprived (stateless), requested reversal	8 years	Yes	N/A	1
Dina	Somalia	Immigrant	20-25	Waiting for first decision	0.5 years	Yes	3	3
Shakir	Somalia	Immigrant	20-25	Waiting for first decision	6 years	Yes	1	0
Yusuf	Somalia	Immigrant	15-20	Waiting for first decision	5 years	Yes	2	1
Samir	Palestine	Immigrant	10-15	Waiting for first decision	0.5 years	Yes	0	3
Karima	Country in Asia	Immigrant	20-25	Waiting for first decision	0.5 years	Yes	0	0
Toufik	Palestine	1.5	20-25	Waiting for appeal	9 years	Yes	0	3
Ali	Country in Asia	1.5	10-15	Waiting for first decision	0.5 years	Yes	3	2
Muhammed	Somalia	Immigrant	20-25	Waiting for first decision	2 years	Yes	2	2
Jamilah	Somalia	Immigrant	15-20	Notified	<0.5 years	Yes	0	2
Amina	Somalia	Immigrant	15-20	Notified	<0.5 years	Yes	0	N/A

Appendix B: Consent form

Do you want to participate in the research project, "Controlling the Circle of Citizenship: Policies, Experiences, Implications"?

What does participation entail?

Participation in the project entails being interviewed. The interview will last between one and two hours.

To better understand your situation, I will ask about some background information such as country of origin and age. If you think it is ok, I would like to tape the interview. I will also take notes during the interview. During the interview, I would like to talk to you about your experience of the citizenship revocation process, what consequences loss of citizenship potentially has for you and how you have dealt with the situation.

Participation is voluntary

It is voluntary to participate in the project. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time. You do not have to provide a reason for withdrawing your consent. Information will be anonymized. You will not face any negative consequences if you do not want to participate or if you choose to withdraw from the project on a later point.

Participation in this research project will not affect the processing of your citizenship revocation case.

Your right to privacy – how we process your personal data

We will only use the personal data according to the specified aims in this form. We process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with the data protection rules.

It is only the University of Oslo, by PhD candidate Simon Roland Birkvad, who will have access to the personal data. I will replace names and contact information with a code, which will be stored on a list separate from the rest of the data. This list will be located on a protected server owned by the University of Oslo.

Your personal data will be anonymized, so it will not be possible to identify you in the research publications.

What happens with your personal data after the research project is concluded?

According to the plan, the project will be concluded 12.09.2023. After this date, personal data, including tape recordings, will be deleted and all interviews will be anonymized.

Your rights

As long as you can be identified in the data material, you have the right to:

- Access personal data registered about you,
- Have your personal data corrected,
- Have your personal data deleted,
- Obtain a copy of the personal data, and
- Complain to the Data Protection Official/Officer about the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We process personal data based on your consent.

On behalf of the University of Oslo, NSD – the Norwegian Centre for Research Data – has approved that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with the data protection rules.

Where can you find more information?

If you have any questions about the research project, or wish to use your rights, contact:

- University of Oslo by Simon Roland Birkvad, email: s.r.birkvad@sosgeo.uio.no and phone +4790190489.
- Our Data Protection Official/Officer: Maren Magnus Voll, email: personvernombud@uio.no
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, email (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Kind regards,

Simon Roland Birkvad

Consent declaration

I have received and understood the information about the project *Controlling the Circle of Citizenship: Policies, Experiences, Implications* and have been given the chance to ask questions about it. I consent to:

☐ Participate in an interview

I consent to my information being processed until the project is concluded, ca. 12.09.2023.

(Signed by project participant, date)

Appendix C: Interview guide

Theme	Aspects	Theoretical motivation
Warm-up		
What do you do in a regular week?	Work, family, hobbies, etc.	
Background in Norway		
Could you tell me about when and why you first came to Norway?	Alone or with family, type of permit, asylum process, first encounter with authorities	
Naturalization		
When and why did you apply for Norwegian citizenship, what did you feel when you acquired it?	Material, symbolic, emotional dimensions	Meanings attributed to citizenship
The revocation case		
Could you tell me about your revocation case and take me through the process? When and how did you know? What went through your mind when you were notified?	Different phases: Notification, interviews, waiting, etc.	
How did you navigate the process? Did you speak to anyone for help?	Family, friends, lawyer, community	Sense of agency within the process
Consequences (individual and family)		
What does it or what would it mean for you to be deprived of citizenship?	Practical consequences, belonging, loyalty	Material and symbolic aspects of citizenship loss
Is your family affected, how?	Type of permit, fear, practical difficulties, children	"Mixed-status families", proximal deportability, («relational legal consciousness»)
Consequences (community level)		
How do people talk about revocation in your community?	Open/closed, circulating stories?	Stigma, fear, proximal deportability

How do other people from the community (e.g., Somali) react when people lose citizenship?	Are those with secure status also insecure?	Proximal deportability, («relational legal consciousness»)
Do you worry about family members or friends losing citizenship? How so?		**Only for secondarily affected.** Promixal deportability.
How is this insecurity expressed? When is it triggered?	Bodily reactions, fear of the police?	**Only for secondarily affected.** Proximal deportability
Considerations of the revocation practice and the citizenship institution		
How do you see your citizenship today, considering the revocation case?	Different feelings about citizenship then and now?	Revocation and implications for citizenship institution, strengthened, diminished, for whom?
In your mind, what is the most important difference between permanent residency and citizenship?	Difference then and now?	"Legal consciousness" and liminality
What do you think about the rule regulating revocation based on incorrect information?	Legitimate, not? Degrees of "cheating"?	"The morality of fraud-based deprivation"
What do you think about the fact that there is no time limit in revocation cases?		Temporality, integration
What do you think about the fact that children are affected?		Original sin
In your view, who or what groups, are being affected by revocation? Why?	Individuals or groups?	Experience of discrimination, or racism
Are there cases where it is ok to revoke citizenship? In what instances?	Serious crime, terrorism, abuse of identity, different degrees of "cheating"	Placing moral responsibility
What do you think Norwegian authorities want to achieve by the revocation practice? Why are they revoking citizenship?		
How do you consider the possibilities of affecting policies in this area?		Resistance and agency
Outlook		
How do you envision your future?	Stay in Norway, move, deportation, leave regardless of outcome?	

The articles

I

I

International Political Sociology (2023) **17**, 1–20

"Citizenship Cheaters" before the Law: Reading Fraud-Based Denaturalization in Norway through Lenses of Exceptionalism

Simon Roland Birkvad
University of Oslo, Norway

For decades, fraud-based denaturalization was hardly used in Norway. In the 2015–2016 "refugee crisis," however, the right-wing government decided to reinforce efforts to expose "citizenship cheaters." This article asks how this decision emerged, what arguments the government articulated to legitimize this decision, and how parliament responded. I examine the Norwegian case by reworking Schmitt and Agamben's perspectives on exceptionalism. The executive desire to reduce naturalized citizens to "bare life" illustrates Agamben's logic of exception: their potential exclusion is inscribed in law. Yet, the analysis shows that exceptionalism does not necessarily lead to "bare lives": denaturalization was mediated through legal, administrative, and democratic procedures. The opposition submitted proposals to tame the executive's denaturalization powers. In responding to criticism, the government relied on three different arguments to legitimize the decision: (1) moralizing and (2) criminalizing fraud, while simultaneously (3) de-politicizing the decision through hyper-legalism. Such reasoning does not suggest the collapse of law and politics, as Agamben envisions, but rather that states formulate exclusionary politics based on formalistic interpretations of law. The article concludes by problematizing Agamben's claim that we are all equally disposed to sovereign violence. I urge to take seriously social categories of difference in developing a political sociology of exceptionalism.

Pendant longtemps, la Norvège n'a quasiment pas eu recours à la dénaturalisation pour fraude. Néanmoins, lors de la crise des réfugiés de 2015-2016, le gouvernement de droite a décidé de renouveler d'efforts pour démasquer les « citoyens tricheurs ». Cet article s'interroge sur l'émergence de cette décision, les arguments avancés par le gouvernement pour la légitimer et la réponse du parlement. J'analyse le cas de la Norvège en retravaillant les points de vue de Carl Schmitt et Giorgio Agamben sur l'exceptionnalisme. Par son souhait de réduction des citoyens naturalisés à une « vie nue », l'exécutif illustre la logique d'exception de Giorgio Agamben: leur exclusion potentielle figure dans la loi. Pourtant, l'analyse montre que l'exceptionnalisme ne débouche pas nécessairement sur des « vies nues »: la dénaturalisation s'atténue grâce à des procédures juridiques, administratives et démocratiques. L'opposition a soumis des propositions afin de juguler les pouvoirs de dénaturalisation de l'exécutif. En réponse aux critiques, le gouvernement s'est fondé sur trois arguments afin de légitimer sa décision: i) la moralisation et ii) la criminalisation de la fraude, et la iii) dépolitisation de la décision par le biais d'un légalisme renforcé. Un tel raisonnement ne sous-entend pas l'effondrement de la loi et de la politique, comme l'envisageait Giorgio Agamben, mais plutôt

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Corresponding author e-mail: s.r.birkvad@sosgeo.uio.no

que les États formulent des politiques d'exclusion fondées sur une interprétation puriste de la loi. Enfin, l'article problématise l'affirmation de Giorgio Agamben selon laquelle nous sommes tous enclins à la violence souveraine. Je conseille vivement la prise au sérieux des catégories sociales de différence dans l'élaboration d'une sociologie politique de l'exceptionnalisme.

Durante décadas, la desnaturalización basada en el fraude apenas se utilizó en Noruega. Sin embargo, durante la «crisis de los refugiados» de 2015-2016, el Gobierno de derechas decidió redoblar los esfuerzos para desenmascarar a los «tramposos de la ciudadanía». Este artículo se pregunta cómo surgió esta decisión, qué argumentos articuló el Gobierno para legitimarla y cómo respondió el Parlamento. Examinamos el caso de Noruega reelaborando las perspectivas de Schmitt y Agamben sobre el excepcionalismo. El deseo del ejecutivo de reducir a los ciudadanos naturalizados a la «nuda vida» ilustra la lógica de excepción de Agamben: su exclusión potencial está recogida en la ley. Sin embargo, el análisis demuestra que el excepcionalismo no conduce necesariamente a «nudas vidas»: la desnaturalización se llevó a cabo a través de procedimientos legales, administrativos y democráticos. La oposición presentó propuestas para limitar los poderes de desnaturalización del ejecutivo. En respuesta a las críticas, el gobierno se apoyó en tres argumentos diferentes para legitimar la decisión: i) moralizar y ii) criminalizar el fraude, así como, al mismo tiempo, iii) despolitizar la decisión mediante un hiperlegalismo. Este razonamiento no sugiere el desmoronamiento del derecho y la política, como prevé Agamben, sino más bien que los Estados formulan políticas excluyentes basadas en interpretaciones formalistas del derecho. El artículo concluye con una problematización de la afirmación de Agamben de que todos estamos igualmente dispuestos a la violencia soberana. Instamos a tomar en serio las categorías sociales de la diferencia a la hora de desarrollar una sociología política del excepcionalismo.

Introduction

Writing in the aftermath of the Jewish genocide, Hannah Arendt claimed that stripping people of citizenship is the ultimate expression of national sovereignty (Arendt 1951/2017). Based on the Nuremberg laws, the Nazi government systematically stripped Jews and other minorities of their rights, which served as a necessary stepping stone toward their physical annihilation (Arendt 1951/2017; Agamben 1998). Due to the Nazi atrocities, denationalization became constrained by international and constitutional law and largely went into disuse (Gibney 2019).[1] Yet, after decades in hibernation, many western states have rediscovered their "sovereign right of denationalization" (Arendt 1951/2017). The revival of citizenship stripping primarily manifests itself as response to escalating fear of terrorism (Tripkovic 2021). States have passed new legislation or revitalized existing legal clauses to strip terrorists of their citizenship and expel them from the national territory (Birnie and Bauböck 2020).

However, citizenship stripping on less dramatic grounds is also re-emerging in liberal democracies. The focus on taking away citizenship from "naturalization fraudsters" has grown in countries such as France, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Fargues 2019; Lenard 2022). Fraud-based denaturalization can be executed if authorities discover that citizenship granted by application is based on faulty or

[1] I use citizenship stripping, deprivation, and denationalization interchangeably. Revocation [*tilbakekall*] is the administrative term used in fraud-based denaturalization cases. Denaturalization refers to a subset of denationalization cases, in which the state revokes citizenship acquired through naturalization.

incomplete information. Such denaturalization can result in statelessness or deportation (Lenard 2022). It is a standard legal provision in most liberal democracies and has generally been treated as an uncontroversial mode of citizenship deprivation (Fargues 2019; Herzog 2011). Despite its customary character—or perhaps *because* of this—the practice has attracted little academic attention.

Interestingly, Norway, a country renowned for its "hard outside/soft inside" approach to welfare, rights, and membership (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012), is spearheading the trend of denaturalizing citizens on grounds of fraud. Part of a broader law revision in 2006, the provision regulating fraudulent acquisition was unanimously passed by the Norwegian parliament. For almost a decade, it was a "sleeping" provision—hardly used and shy of political interest. In the midst of the 2015–2016 "refugee crisis," the right-wing government, consisting of the Conservative Party (*Høyre*) and the Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*), stepped up efforts to uncover and sanction naturalization fraud, as one of several measures intended to make Norway "less attractive to asylum seekers" (Ministry of Education and Research 2016). Despite data scarcity, the number of investigated cases of fraud (per head) suggests that Norway is in the higher end of the European spectrum. In early 2017, the Norwegian immigration administration had 500 cases on their desks. That equals the average number of investigated cases per year in France (Fargues 2019). The remarkable spike in denaturalization cases and political interest begs the following questions, which this article will answer: *How did the decision to reinforce fraud-based denaturalization emerge? Which arguments did the government articulate to legitimize the decision to reinforce and sustain the strict denaturalization practice, and how did parliament respond?*

My theoretical point of departure is Schmitt and Agamben's lenses on exceptionalism. According to Schmitt, the state of exception is an existential threat to sovereignty, in which the sovereign can temporarily suspend law to preserve the legal and political system. Agamben (1998, 2005) claims that exceptionalism has become a permanent feature of state governance in Western societies. The state of exception, he claims, originates from the paradox of sovereignty: the fact that the sovereign is positioned outside and inside the juridical order at the same time (Agamben 1998, 15). Sovereign power operates arbitrarily and unmediated on its subjects, holding the potential to reduce them to "bare life," a life stripped of all rights and protection.

In this article, I try to rework Agamben and Schmitt's concepts to better understand the exercise of sovereignty in contemporary liberal democracies such as Norway. The Norwegian practice follows Agamben's (1998) logic of exception: by being inscribed in the provision regulating fraudulent acquisition, these subjects are excepted from law through an *inclusive exclusion*. The unprecedented efforts to dig up "cold cases" of fraud revealed the legal precarity of (some) naturalized citizens. With no statute of limitations on revocation, they are virtually subject to perpetual state scrutiny. The willingness to reinforce denaturalization can also be read as a mediated form of Schmittian decisionism, understood as "the capacity to define when, how, to what degree, and against whom law functions" (Mosser 2018, 135). Indeed, the analysis shows that denaturalization is administered *through law* rather than suspending it (cf. Johns 2005). Moreover, the analysis shows that executive efforts to strengthen revocation faced political pushback in parliament. The political opposition reduced the scope of denaturalization through legislative proposals, demonstrating the role of parliament (cf. Neal 2019) in opposing exceptional practices. The executive was pressured to legitimize their decision to re-invigorate revocation.[2] The analysis distinguishes between three arguments: moralizing naturalization fraud, criminalizing "fraudsters," and attempting to de-politicize deprivation by

[2] This main part of the analysis is based on parliamentary discussions on proposals to soften the practice (2016–2020). For details, see section "Revitalization of citizenship revocation as site of political struggle."

hyper-legalist reasoning (cf. Ghezelbash 2020). Seen together, the arguments reveal a self-contradictory reasoning: intense *politicization* through the jargons of moral and crime, while simultaneously claiming that denaturalization belongs to the domain of law, *not* politics. Such excessive conformity to law allowed the government to remove accountability in its pursuit of "citizenship cheaters."

The article begins by first laying out Schmitt's (1922/2006) and Agamben's (1998, 2005) theories of exceptionalism. Then I take a critical look at their theories through the history of citizenship stripping and theoretical critiques. I proceed by mapping the legal and institutional framework of fraud-based revocation in Norway. The next section shows the backdrop of the reinforced practice and the political struggles that followed. Reading parliamentary discussions, I analyze the arguments articulated by the government (moralization, criminalization, and de-politicization/hyper-legalism) in response to criticism. I conclude the article by discussing its theoretical and political implications. Rather than treating this as an isolated case study of citizenship deprivation in Norway, I seek to make a sociological intervention in the literature on exceptionalism. This perspective adds a focus on hyper-legalism as a feature of exceptional practices. That implies, contra Schmitt and Agamben, not restricting exceptionalism to suspension of law and democracy, but seeing it as mediated through legal, administrative, and democratic procedures. In closing, I draw on sociologically oriented literature on citizenship deprivation to discuss Agamben's all-encompassing claims of exceptionalism. As historical and contemporary practices lay bare, we are not equally exposed to sovereign violence.

Schmitt and Agamben on Exceptionalism

Arendt claimed that "sovereignty is nowhere more absolute than in matters of emigration, naturalization, nationality, and expulsion" (Arendt 1951/2017, 364). As she suggested, naturalization and denaturalization lie at the heart of the national enterprise: to draw borders between citizens and foreigners. This raises the pressing questions: who decides and how does sovereignty operate? How are the boundaries of citizenship determined?

Carl Schmitt, the controversial legal and political scholar—and "crown jurist" of the Third Reich—famously claimed that "Sovereign is the one who decides on the exception" (Schmitt 1922/2006). With the concept of "the exception," Schmitt identified the challenge of "legal indeterminacy" (Scheuerman 2019): the fact that the law "cannot apply, enforce or realize itself; it can neither interpret, define or sanction" (Schmitt 1922/2006). On the contrary, it requires a sovereign decision to enforce it. The exception, which by definition cannot be codified in law, is precisely the case that eludes the legal norm, and it therefore requires a decision on the exception for it to exist (Schmitt 1922/2006, 6). Schmitt pointed out that legal indeterminacy is a general jurisprudential challenge, tainting all legal decisions, but the problem becomes particularly pertinent in the state of exception.

Schmitt characterizes the state of exception as an emergency or crisis, an imminent threat to the existence of the state (Schmitt 1922/2006, 6). Emergencies are unpredictable threats that cannot be safely cabined by law. The state, in most cases the executive branch, therefore, needs to act swift and unrestrained by law to eliminate the threat to restore order. In this critical moment, sovereign power in its purest form reveals itself; herein the sovereign enjoys principally unlimited authority, including the authority to suspend the entire legal order. Sovereignty, in Schmitt's authoritarian view of law and politics, is defined "not as the monopoly to coerce or to rule, but as the monopoly to decide" (Schmitt 1922/2006, 13).

Reading Schmitt—alongside Benjamin and Foucault—Agamben claims that exceptionalism has become a permanent feature of Western states' governance (Agamben 1998, 2005). Rather than being a temporary suspension of law, the state of exception constitutes "the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary

politics," increasingly utilized as "technique of government rather than exceptional measure" (Agamben 2005, 6–8). The exception has become the rule, which collapses Schmitt's dialectical relationship between norm and exception, or "law and anomie" in Agamben's terminology (Huysmans 2008). To Agamben, the Nazi death camp is both physical manifestation and the ultimate expression of the logic of the exception (Neocleous 2006): the camp is a space of exception, a piece of territory placed outside the normal juridical order, where those interned are stripped of their political existence—they are literally excepted, taken outside law. In this biopolitical space, sovereign power operates as arbitrary and unmediated on its subjects (Agamben 1998, 171). With no recourse to law or other mediations, subjects are reduced to "bare life," naked biological beings. However, rather than being totally excluded, they are held in an ambiguous relation to the state: "delivered over to their own separateness and, at the same time, consigned to the mercy of the one who abandons it," simultaneously included and excluded, removed and captured (Agamben 1998, 110).

Referring to more modern manifestations of this logic, such as Guantanamo Bay and asylum reception centers, Agamben's thesis is that the state of exception does not belong to the past. The relation of the ban is the essential structure of sovereign power from the beginning (Agamben 1998, 111). Modern democratic nation-states are continuously using this device to assert state sovereignty. Since states can grant and withdraw rights whenever they see fit, he contends that it is impossible to pin down the state of exception in time and space. The implication is that we are all living in a colossal concentration camp and, in this sense, we are all "virtually homines sacri" (Agamben 1998, 115).

Critiquing Schmitt and Agamben through the Lens of Citizenship Stripping

Schmitt and Agamben are not shy of strong, sweeping, and—occasionally—seductive claims. Thus, making use of them in reading citizenship deprivation in liberal democracies requires justification. With reference to theoretical critique and historical and contemporary practices of citizenship deprivation, I note some significant limitations and highlight attempts to rethink these perspectives.

Citizens in liberal democracies today are protected against arbitrary citizenship stripping—sheer sovereign violence—through international and constitutional law. We usually associate citizenship stripping with totalitarian regimes, most clearly expressed in Nazi Germany's Nuremberg laws (Weil 2017). These laws deprived Jews and other minorities of full-fledged citizenship and doing so served as a necessary stepping stone toward their physical annihilation in the camps, analyzed by Arendt (1951/2017) and Agamben (1998). The totalitarian use of citizenship stripping, however, served as a lesson to liberal–democratic states, namely that denationalization powers should be constrained (Birnie and Bauböck 2020). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrined that everyone has a right to a nationality and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality (Article 15), and legal protections against statelessness were added. The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness prohibited denaturalization based on race, religion, or political orientation. In countries such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, judicial institutions have restricted the scope of denaturalization (Weil 2017). These two restraints, human rights norms and the influence of judicial institutions, made denationalization largely disappear from the political repertoire of liberal–democratic states (Gibney 2019).

As wealthy democratic states are constrained by obligations to international law and human, they search for legal loopholes to exclude undesirable subjects (Birnie and Baubock 2020). Ghezelbash (2020) argues that *hyper-legalism* is a strategy to straddle the dilemma of upholding international commitments and excluding asylum seekers at the same time. According to him, hyper-legalism involves

"a formalistic bad-faith approach to interpreting and implementing international obligations. It allows states to claim ostensible compliance with the letter of the law, while at the same time subverting its purpose and substance" (Ghezelbash 2020, 485). Hyper-legalist reasoning equates rigid rule following with morality, yet rules are flexibly used to suit the government's needs. Interestingly, this deployment of law stands in stark contrast to Schmittian and Agambenian theories of sovereignty, in which sovereign decisions imply the *suspension* of law. In their view, sovereign decisions are defined by its *discretionary* and *extra*-legal character. Historical and contemporary practices of citizenship stripping, however, show that liberal–democratic states mainly operate within law rather than outside it. We find revocation provisions as standard clauses within the legal systems of most democratic states (Herzog 2011). Before World War II (WWII), armed conflict was the most common setting, and disloyalty the evoked legal ground (Sykes 2016). In the "war against terror," many western states have passed new legislation, expanded, or revitalized old provisions to take away citizenship from terrorists (Birnie and Baubock 2020). The removal of "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) bride" Shamima Begum's UK citizenship is a prominent case in point (see Masters and Regilme 2020).[3] The governing logic is that since home-grown terrorists are not alien *in* law—as natural-born or naturalized citizens—they must be alienated *by* law (Macklin 2014). Johns (2005) argues that even Guantanamo Bay, considered by Agamben the state of exception *par excellence*, is highly regulated by administrative rules and procedures, far from a "legal black hole."

Schmitt and Agamben's theories of sovereignty have also been criticized for their totalitarian (Schmitt) or totalizing (Agamben) underpinnings. By ignoring social and political negotiation of sovereign decisions, Schmitt and Agamben "ontologically erase" society, as Huysmans (2008) puts it. Rather than holding the "monopoly of power," governments in liberal democracies are accountable to the public. Democratically elected politicians often promise swift and decisive action in counteracting various social problems and crises, but they must make sense of these actions to the wider public (Rogenhofer 2022). Neal (2019, 277) stresses the crucial role of parliament in shaping security policies. The parliament may hinder government, but it may also act as a tool of government. Neal argues that MPs increasingly scrutinize the government's security policies and discourse and "play the political game" (Neal 2019, 6). Rather than assuming that the executive holds the monopoly of power, Neal's argument goes, we should empirically investigate how exceptional practices are discussed in parliament.

The Schmittian state of exception, implying the temporary but wholesale suspension of law and democratic politics, is rare and extreme (Rogenhofer 2022). Huysmans (2004) and Doty (2007) argue that we need to broaden our understanding of exceptionalism to capture its finer expressions. For Doty (2007), "decisions" to "invigorate or re-enforce the law or change the law in such a way so as to preserve a particular understanding of 'the social order'" are also articulations of sovereignty. The civilian border patrols she studied considered undocumented immigration to be "normal" and they therefore attempted to "strengthen the law, expand on it, to rectify neglect of the law, not suspend it" (Doty 2007, 116). Decisions, either in creation of new laws or in reviving dormant provisions, function to create exceptions that apply to a certain group of people within the society, Doty argues (Doty 2007, 125).

Fraud-based denaturalization is a subtle expression of exceptionalism by virtue of only applying to naturalized citizens. In most states, the executive has the power to revoke citizenship on grounds of fraud. As such, it is treated as an administrative correction rather than punishment in legal terms (Coca-Vila 2020). However,

[3] The UK government has recently introduced a bill that gives powers to deprive people of citizenship without warning (Siddique 2021).

the power to revoke citizenship on grounds of fraud has not only been a neutral instrument of state power. It has also been selectively used to target unpopular groups in times of social and political turmoil. Frost (2021) demonstrates that fraud-based revocation laws were enacted in 1906 as a "nativist response" due to growing concerns about immigration from Southern European countries. Stories of electoral corruption were discussed in Congress, as to warn against fake naturalization papers being sold to "Italians" and "other foreigners." Gibney (2019, 4) shows that hostility to Germans during WWII spurred both US and UK government to use the fraud provision. This provision was used to target other enemies of the American state, such as anarchists, Nazi sympathizers, and Communist supporters, claiming that they lack "attachment" to the US constitution at the time of naturalization, thereby constituting fraud (Frost 2021).

While contemporary practices of fraud-based citizenship revocation are under-researched, there are indications that states are brushing the dust of this provision. In early 2020, the then US president Trump announced the opening of a denaturalization task force dedicated to cases of fraud (Lenard 2022). Fargues' (2019) original study of fraud-based denaturalization in the United Kingdom and France found that government officials and judges in both countries constructed fraud not merely as a legal issue but also filled it with moral value. He also found that fraud is increasingly framed as a security issue. According to officials interviewed, "fraudsters" threaten the integrity of the immigration system, which justifies tighter controls and sanctions against them.

The Legal and Administrative Mediation of Fraud-Based Denaturalization in Norway

The first Norwegian nationality law (of 1888) stipulated three grounds for losing Norwegian citizenship: voluntary renunciation of citizenship, loss due to long-term absence from the country, and loss due to the acquisition of another citizenship (reference removed). Between the first and the end of WWII, citizenship deprivation and deportation was enforced against Norwegian Roma (Skorgen 2012) as well as children of Germans and German-married women (Landro 2002; Kalle 2020). After WWII, revocation and deportation became separate issues. The Norwegian postwar welfare state has been characterized by its "hard outside" and "soft inside": offering generous welfare benefits to its citizens and applying strict and exclusive measures toward noncitizens (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012).

Rules targeting naturalized citizens were, however, made more restrictive when the Nationality Act was revised in 2005. A wish to consolidate the single citizenship policy motivated the introduction of a provision regarding revocation due to non-renunciation of another citizenship (Brochmann 2013). Importantly, a provision regarding fraudulent acquisition was also added. This provision states that revocation based on incorrect or incomplete information may only be executed if the applicant has furnished incorrect information against his or her better judgment or has suppressed information that was relevant for the decision. Revocation on grounds of fraud was, however, practiced before the law revision, based on section 35 of the Public Administration Act and general principles of administrative law (Midtbøen, Birkvad and Erdal 2018).

Before the law revision in 2005, a preparatory committee received a mandate to consider, among other things, the need to implement a provision on fraud-based revocation. The committee proposed to include a fraud-based provision with reference to the 1997 European Convention on Nationality (Section 7B, ECN 7B hereafter) and the Alien Act (Section 13). Unlike other issues discussed in the committee, such as dual citizenship (Midtbøen 2015), this issue did not stir much debate within the committee, noting that: "The Justice Department has established that the Convention is to be ratified and there is no assumption that Article 7 no. 1 letter

B will represent any problem of significance. The committee concurs with this" (NOU 2000, 32, 273).[4] In line with the ECN, no statute of limitations was proposed, but the committee stated that "time lapsed" would be a factor of consideration in revocation cases. Further, the committee noted that revocation *may* lead to statelessness. In addition to time lapsed, possible statelessness should be a part of the consideration (NOU 2000, 32, 274). Children can also lose their Norwegian citizenship if it is based on the acquisition of the parents but must be assessed on a case-by-case basis (Midtbøen, Birkvad and Erdal 2018).

Moreover, the committee, in line with the signals from the ministry, established that invalid naturalization decisions as a main rule require an active decision on part of the administration to take away citizenship, as opposed to automatic loss (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2005, 175). Lastly, the final law proposal noted that "when criteria for revocation (…) is fulfilled, citizenship can be revoked. The administration has discretion in deciding whether the option [*adgang*] shall be used (…) this provision shall not be used as an exceptional provision" (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2005, 233). In other words, the immigration authorities have discretion in decisions regarding fraud-based revocation cases. The Parliament unanimously passed the new citizenship law, including the revocation provision.

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is responsible for processing applications for citizenship and for opening and deciding cases of citizenship revocation. The Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) reviews appeals of the UDI's decisions. UNE's decisions can ultimately be tried before a court. UDI is currently under the command of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. Until 2006, when the citizenship law was revised, the ministry had full authority to give instructions to UDI on how to process individual cases. This instruction authority was curtailed and reduced in the revised law. The ministry could no longer instruct UDI in individual cases (except for cases relating to national security), yet the ministry kept a "general authority of instruction" over UDI. In citizenship cases, the ministry can provide instructions to UDI regarding interpretation of laws, discretion, and priority of cases (the Norwegian Nationality Act, §28). Interestingly, political control regarding the execution of citizenship law was considered *unnecessary* by an official Norwegian report. The committee stated that, unlike cases relating to immigration and asylum, "dramatic events in the world rarely require swift measures when it comes to citizenship issues" (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion 2006, 10). The prevailing view then was that citizenship law was *not* a necessary tool of immigration control.

Since the ministry retained the general "instruction authority" over UDI, the government has the capacity to influence the volume of revocation cases. From 2013 to 2018, the period in which the immigration authorities decided to reinforce revocation efforts, the Conservative Party ruled together with the Progress Party, backed by the Christian Democratic Party (*Kristelig Folkeparti*) and the Liberal Party (*Venstre*). The Progress Party held the Minister of Justice and Public Security post during their period in government. Sylvi Listhaug (the Progress Party) was responsible for citizenship law between 2015 and 2018, in her position as Minister of Immigration and Integration (subordinate to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security). In 2018, citizenship law was transferred to the Ministry of Education and Research, headed by Jan-Tore Sanner (Conservative Party), during the time when proposals to amend law were discussed and decided upon in parliament. Following the general European trend, the government tightened access to citizenship simultaneously as new grounds for revocation were added (in the case of engagement in terrorism) and removed (non-renunciation of another citizenship upon naturalization).[5] At the same time, the right-wing government (2013–2021) made deportation a strong

[4] All quotes are translated from Norwegian to English by the author.

[5] As in Denmark, these legal changes were connected (Midtbøen 2019)—see closing discussion.

political priority (Franko 2020, 86), making Norway one of the European leaders of deportation (Leekes and Van Houte 2020).

The presentation of these dry details of legal and administrative practice serves an important theoretical purpose: to counter Agamben's notion that sovereign power operates *unmediated* on its subjects. Instead, citizenship deprivation on grounds of fraud works through administrative rules and procedures (cf. Johns 2005). The next section explores the mediating role of parliament in contesting and seeking to constrain the executive's denaturalization powers.

Revitalization of Citizenship Revocation as Site of Political Struggle

In 2015, a record-high number (31,145) of asylum seekers registered at the Norwegian border. The government, consisting of the Conservative Party and the Progress Party, was accused of having lost control over the borders by media and parties in opposition. The unprecedented pressure at the border was portrayed as a threat to Norwegian sovereignty. Responding to this critique, the government compiled a list of measures to "make Norway less attractive to asylum seekers" (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2016), supported by a broad alliance of political parties in parliament. Most of the measures targeted prospective asylum seekers, but also immigrants already residing in Norway were subject to new restrictions through revitalizing "sleeping" provisions in the Alien Act and the Nationality Act (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020).

One of these extraordinary measures was stepping up efforts to revoke residence permits and citizenship acquired on false premises. The number of asylum seekers plummeted to an all-time low in 2016 (3,460) and 2017 (3,560), leaving UDI with a surplus of resources and manpower (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020). The Ministry of Immigration and Integration instructed UDI to reallocate resources from asylum to family reunification and revocation cases. The head of the ministry at the time, Sylvi Listhaug (Progress Party), stated in a 2016 radio interview that "the money will contribute to reduce the backlog in the asylum system, modernize the ICT-system and to process revocation cases. These are cases where (…) those who have received a residence permit may have lied in their applications" (Nordnes 2016). In the same radio broadcast, the director of UDI, Frode Forfang, confirmed that the excess capacity would be used to "go after cheaters." UDI subsequently established a separate section dedicated to process revocation cases (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020).

With excessive resources and institutional restructuring, the numbers of opened revocation cases rose significantly in the next years. Numbers from UDI showed that in 2012, 66 persons were stripped of Norwegian citizenship, but increased to 134 persons in 2016 (Tjernshaugen and Olsen 2017). In 2017, 500 cases were under investigation at UDI. Most cases included Somalis and Palestinians, who the authorities suspected were lying about their country of origin or identity. Newspapers then started to direct critical attention to the revocation practice, highlighting its human costs through the "Mahad case." After 15 years in Norway, Norwegian authorities revoked Mahad Abib Mahamud's citizenship, alleging that he had lied about his origin country. UDI claimed that he was from Djibouti, not Somalia as Mahad initially claimed, making his right to asylum and citizenship baseless. A Palestinian family of three generations received notice of citizenship revocation in 2012 on the same legal grounds. According to Norwegian authorities, the couple who first arrived in Norway had access to Jordanian citizenship, making their claim to be stateless Palestinians erroneous. Consequently, this left all three generations at risk of citizenship stripping and deportation, taking the form of a modernized "original sin."

These mediatized, personal histories eventually made their way into the Norwegian parliament. Against this backdrop, the opposition parties raised questions about several aspects of revocation law and practice. Especially the "original sin" and the lack of statute of limitations made the political opposition acutely aware

of the consequences of revitalizing the revocation provision. Parties in opposition therefore submitted three legislative proposals seeking to either remove, restrain, or transfer denaturalization powers from the executive to the judiciary branch. First, the Green Party (*Miljøpartiet De Grønne*) proposed to abolish the revocation provision altogether (except for breaches of vital interests of the state) and to offer provisionary amnesty to those who have furnished incorrect information (Dokument 8:66 S [2016–2017]). Second, a broad coalition including the Socialist Party (*Sosialistisk venstreparti*), the Center Party (*Senterpartiet*), the Liberal Party, the Labor Party (*Arbeiderpartiet*), and the Green Party suggested to transfer the decision-making power from the executive to the judiciary branch of government (Dokument 8:33 S [2016–2017]). Third, representatives from the Socialist Party, the Green Party, and the Red Party (*Rødt*) proposed to introduce statute of limitations on citizenship revocation, to restrict citizenship revocation to dual citizens, and to set an absolute time limit on case processing (Dokument 8:43 S [2018–2019]).

However, none of the legislative proposals got majority in parliament. Instead, the government presented a bill (Ministry of Education and Research 2019) that made changes in law and practice in a liberal direction to accommodate criticism from parliament and the public (cf. Neal 2019; Rogenhofer 2022). Most importantly, the government (then including the Conservative Party, the Progress Party, the Liberal Party, and the Christian Democratic Party) decided to improve the existing system of administrative case processing rather than to transfer the authority to the court system.[6] Some changes were made to strengthen an individual's security under law, however. It was stipulated in law that children and grandchildren, as a main rule, should not automatically lose their citizenship based on their parents' (or grandparents') loss. Rather than instituting an absolute statute of limitation, the government introduced a proportionality assessment in law, which intended to prevent disproportionate intervention in the life of the person and his/her family. The assessment included years of residence in Norway, time elapsed since naturalization, "level of integration," risk of *long-term* statelessness, and the severity of the case (including identity fraud and criminal actions). Lastly, free legal aid and personal attendance at the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) meetings were introduced, intended to improve the security under law for targets of citizenship revocation.

The strengthening of citizenship revocation can be read as a political move, in Schmittian terms. However, contrary to Schmitt's "slender decisionism"—with his emphasis on the unconstrained character of the decision (White 2015)—this move did not escape public nor parliamentary scrutiny. The parliament played a significant role in challenging and (moderately) constraining the executive's "monopoly to decide" in denaturalization matters (cf. Neal 2019). Although the executive kept the decision-making power in denaturalization cases and the scope of denaturalization remained quite wide, the government was pushed to further legitimize the decision to strengthen revocation. I now turn to analyze these three arguments.

Justifying the Decision to Revitalize Denaturalization

Moralizing Naturalization Fraud

The legal provision regulating fraud-based denaturalization was passed unanimously in parliament in 2005, part of the revision of the nationality law. In the parliamentary discussion, it was framed as a peripheral, dry, legal technicality, an issue devoid of strong emotions and moral predicaments. Yet, this changed dramatically after an unprecedented number of asylum seekers reached the Norwegian border in 2015–2016. Uncovering and sanctioning naturalization fraud was construed as crucial to protect the moral integrity of the asylum system and the

[6] The proposal to move decision-making power to the courts initially had majority, but when the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party entered government, the vote tipped in favor of improving the existing system of administrative processing.

citizenship institution itself. In line with Fargues' (2019) findings in France and the United Kingdom, executive members in Norway framed fraudulent naturalization in *moral* as well as legal terms. According to the executive members, naturalization fraud was not only a breach of law, but also portrayed as a severe moral misconduct.

According to the government, the applicant was solely to blame for this misconduct whereas the opposition tended to portray targets of citizenship revocation as innocent victims of state repression. Rasmus Hansson (MP, the Green Party) proposed to give provisionary amnesty to individuals subject to citizenship revocation with the alleged intention of "correcting *possibly* incorrect information that *possibly* has been given" (Stortinget, June 2, 2017, 3701, emphasis added). Hansson explained the emergence of these cases as:

> (…) [an] ugly outcome of the government's politics, which has led to the revocation of citizenship from people because of very old *mistakes*, that has led to that children and grandchildren of [these] people have been thrown out of Norway, and that has led to other excesses that not at all is worthy of the Norwegian state. (Stortinget, June 2, 2017, emphasis added)

The current Minister of Justice and Public Security, Per Sandberg (Progress Party) staunchly rejected the amnesty proposal, claiming that

> Our system is largely based on trust. Norwegian authorities must be able to trust that persons provide correct information when they apply for citizenship. When incorrect information is furnished, this relationship of trust is broken. And citizenship granted on faulty grounds can therefore be revoked. In my opinion, this is the way it should continue be. I am therefore against the proposal to remove the provision regulating revocation of Norwegian citizenship based on incorrect information – incorrect information, [that has been given] *not only one time, but two or three times.* (Stortinget, June 2, 2017, 3702, emphasis added)

Sandberg here underscored the moral gravity of "fraudulent citizenship acquisition" by indicating that it should not be brushed off as a minor, singular mistake, as Hansson seemed to argue. On the contrary, the then minister argued that these cases should be interpreted and sanctioned as systematic and deceitful attempts to acquire Norwegian citizenship. By underlining that applicants *repeatedly* provide incorrect information, the statement suggests that this had become the norm of naturalization acquisitions. He further emphasized the need to break this pattern of repetition, not by suspending citizenship law but by rectifying its neglect (cf. Doty 2007).

The decision to sanction citizenship "cheaters" was thus loaded with moral value. Government representatives sent a clear moral message in parliament and in the media: cheating will not be rewarded. This message had two main addressees: suspects of naturalization fraud and prospective asylum seekers. Helge Andre Njåstad, representing the Progress Party, stated in a press release that "if you have lied to get residency, you should never relax. You should know that you could be exposed at any time and be deported. As is reasonable" (Fremskrittspartiet 2017). The message thus intended to instill fear among those who had "lied," by underlining that the state will expose this moral wrong and sanction it by deportation. The emphasis on "*could be* exposed" reveals the *potentiality* of exclusion by law, even if never realized (Agamben 1998). In a 2017 radio debate, Sylvi Listhaug (Progress Party), Minister of Immigration and Integration, conveyed this message to prospective asylum seekers as well:

> It is important to us to send a signal that lying will not be rewarded, it will not pay off to try to con us, even if this happened a good while ago (…) [if you do that] then you will also send a signal to those who come today and try to do the same thing: that if you lie to Norwegian authorities, there will be consequences (…) it is very important [to uncover fraud] because acquiring Norwegian citizenship should be very hard to

> get and should not be based on deceitful information but legitimate needs to come to Norway and get protection. (Solvang 2017)

In this message, citizenship revocation should sort out the "bad seeds" to make sure that those with legitimate needs for protection get prioritized. As the Minister indicated, this was also a key argument for rejecting the proposal to introduce statute of limitations. The largest opposition party, the Labor Party, was also skeptical of introducing a time limit on revocation cases because of its "signal effect." MP Helga Pedersen argued that "demanding asylum seekers to provide information about correct identity is a fundamental pillar in the asylum institute. This is very important to uphold, and we are very skeptical towards any signal that somehow may suggest the opposite" (Document 8:43 S [2018–2019]). Jon Helgheim, representing the government and the Progress Party, put a stronger moral spin to this message:

> To the Progress Party it is very important to have the opportunity to revoke citizenship based on false premises, regardless of time passed. To do the opposite, to introduce statute of limitations, will signalize that if you cheat your way into Norway with a false story or a fake ID, it will pay off as long as you hold on to that lie long enough. (Stortinget, February 12, 2019, 2576)

By moralizing the act of furnishing incorrect information, the executive members legitimized the exceptional practice of depriving "cheaters" of their Norwegian citizenship. Fraud-based revocation works to protect the "sacred" character of citizenship (Brubaker 1992, 147)—an institution that demands respect, where naturalization comes as a reward only for those who have shown themselves worthy. In this logic, those who "lie" and "cheat," act instrumentally and with deceit to naturalize, should suffer consequences and can never be safe.

Criminalizing Naturalization Fraud

The government drew on a related argument to justify the exceptional practice, namely that Norwegian citizenship could be abused for criminal purposes. Besides construing suspects of naturalization fraud as cheaters with illegitimate claims to Norwegian citizenship, they were also portrayed as potential criminals and security threats. Like Fargues (2019) argues, such criminalizing speech acts aim at tightening the controls and sanctions against alleged fraudsters.

This discourse is visible in the parliamentary discussions concerning the introduction of statute of limitations in revocation cases. The government parties (the Conservative Party, Progress Party, and eventually the Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Party) voted against both legislative proposals. The government argued, and got majority, for introducing a proportionality assessment instead of an absolute time limit. A key argument was that an absolute time limitation would remove the possibility of sanctioning criminals and security threats who "abuse" Norwegian citizenship. Jan Tore Sanner (Conservative Party), the then responsible minister of citizenship law, stressed that the state's denaturalization power should be unconstrained from temporal considerations because

> An absolute statute of limitations would have unfortunate consequences. In some cases, taking the gravity of the case in consideration, it will be proportional and desirable to revoke [citizenship], even though the person became Norwegian a long time ago. These could be cases where the person actively uses different identities, for example to commit serious crime (…) statute of limitations would to a larger degree make it possible for persons to continue to live a double life on different identities. The Norwegian citizenship also grants rights that can be used for illegal activities in other countries, and in worst cases, the person can constitute a security risk. In these cases, it is important to have the possibility to revoke [citizenship indefinitely]. (Stortinget February 12, 2019, 2581)

The minister argued that retaining *indefinite* revocation power was needed to sanction persons who abuse Norwegian citizenship to lead dual lives, commit crimes, and pose threats to national security. Although purportedly intended to target the gravest cases of fraud—"serious crime," "illegal activities" abroad, and "security risks"—it leaves a wide, ambiguous room of operation for denaturalization (cf. Beauchamps 2018). Naturalized citizens in Norway, at least in communities heavily targeted (e.g., the Somali), are held in a permanent state of exception by the sheer potentiality of exclusion.

The Socialist Party, the Green Party, and the Red Party, the architects of the proposal, argued for introducing a time limit by referring to other criminal actions that included statute of limitations. In response to this proposal, Jon Engen Helgheim (Progress Party) from the government compared citizenship acquisition based on false premises with stealing a car:

> Many like to compare statute of limitations [in fraud-based denaturalization] with serious crime. That is an odd comparison because returning something you never should have gotten is not punishment. It is not punishment if you steal a car and then return it. That is why it is not a punishment to return a citizenship that one never should have received. (Stortinget, February 12, 2019, 2583)

There seems to be an apparent paradox at play in this reasoning. On the one hand, government representatives argue that the state should possess wide-ranging denaturalization powers to sanction individuals who use Norwegian citizenship for criminal purposes—a punitive *rhetoric* if not in legal terms. On the other hand, Helgheim (Progress Party) rightly underlines that citizenship stripping is an administrative correction, not punishment in legal terms (cf. Coca-Vila 2020). Helgheim reasoned that because these individuals had naturalized on false premises, they had no right to citizenship in the first place. Party colleague Helge Andre Njåstad echoed this sentiment in a press release, commenting on Green Party's proposal to abolish the revocation provision altogether: "It is not even a punishment because Norwegian citizenship is a *privilege* this group never should have received to begin with" (Fremskrittspartiet 2017, emphasis added). These statements reflect a trend in citizenship policies and political rhetoric in Western European countries, namely that citizenship must be earned. It is considered a privilege, not a right (Joppke 2021, 160). In legal terms, a privilege does not belong to the recipient, but to the patron who bestows it. By underscoring that citizenship is a privilege, Njåstad legitimize their power to take away this status (cf. Macklin 2014). Revocation, then, simply means returning citizenship to its rightful owner. Such tropes of hospitality construe "fraudsters" as exceptional citizens, as rights are universal while privileges apply only to the few.

In the parliamentary discussions—particularly in the debate over statute of limitations—the government tended to construe the targets of citizenship revocation not only as fraudsters but also as hardcore criminals—even security threats. Some members claimed that citizenship acquired by "fraud" was equivalent to a "stolen privilege." This type of criminalizing discourse functions to keep the possibility of citizenship deprivation indefinitely open, effectively placing this particular of citizens in a state of exception, neither inside nor outside the law (Agamben 1998). By law, they are full-fledged members of the nation-state, yet the revocation provision simultaneously exposes them to *potential* deprivation of rights. Arguing with Agamben (1998, 51), citizenship law therefore remains in force without signifying subjects of denaturalization.

De-Politicization through Hyper-Legalism

The government legitimized the decision to sanction fraud more vigorously by discourses of moralization and criminalization, thereby (re)creating their exceptional

status before the law. Interestingly, these plainly *political* arguments were performed alongside and in contrast to a third argument: the attempt to *de-politicize* the exceptional practice by resorting to *hyper-legalism* (cf. Ghezelbash 2020). With reference to both the Norwegian Nationality Act and ECN, the government claimed that their sole course of action was to enforce the letter of the law.

Against the backdrop of the "Mahad case," critical journalists insinuated that the responsible minister, Sylvi Listhaug (Progress Party), had personally made the decision to deprive the Norwegian–Somali of his citizenship, a form of "state racism." The then prime minister, Erna Solberg (Conservative Party), fended off this criticism on behalf of the government in a blogpost, underlining the independent, decision-making role of the immigration administration and by grounding revocation in law:

> In the parliament session in 2004–2005, Stortinget processed the nationality act of today. There was an extensive discussion exactly on how these cases should be managed. A broad majority agreed on the current statutory provisions (…) Norway is bound by multiple international conventions and the conclusion in Stortinget was clear: the nationality act aligns with our commitments. To revoke citizenship granted on incorrect information does not contravene with the conventions. (Solberg 2017)

The prime minister here claims ostensible compliance with the letter of international and domestic law simultaneously as the government attempted to twist the original purpose of the fraud provision (ECN 7B). Previous statements by the government revealed its dual purpose: both to target naturalized citizens *and* to "signal" strictness to potential asylum seekers. The exceptional practice was thus deployed as deterrence strategy, which the provision (ECN 7B) was not designed to do.

This mantra was also expressed by the acting minister of Justice and Public Security, Per Sandberg (Progress Party), in his response to the Green Party MP, Rasmus Hansson, who characterized the increased denaturalization efforts as an "aggressive tyranny of law" (Stortinget, May 9, 2017, 3157). The minister inverted the critique against the Green Party and the rest of parliament, which he considered equally responsible for the exceptional practice:

> First a comment to Representative Hansson regarding the government's politics in this area: this matter [revocation provision] was unanimously passed in this parliament in 2005. Unanimously passed. So what the government actually has done is that we have followed up on what a unanimous parliament said in 2005. I respect the wish to change it, but to say that the government does something different than the parliament decided is quite wrong. (Stortinget, 9 May 9, 2017)

Minister Sandberg here rightly underscores the fact that the parliament uniformly agreed to pass the revocation provision. Sandberg uses the word "politics" yet claims that the only action the government has taken is to follow the command of the parliament. However, what Sandberg's statement cloaks is that rules cannot apply themselves independently (cf. Schmitt 1922/2006). Rules require a sovereign to decide *when*, how, and *to what degree* and *against whom* they should be enforced. The political decision to apply the law with greater force is thereby discursively excluded by the statement. When Karin Andersen (the Socialist Party) prompted Minister Sandberg to reflect on the proportionality between action (providing faulty information) and reaction (citizenship revocation), he reiterated the attempt to de-politicize citizenship deprivation:

> I think this is somewhat interesting: Yes, this government makes priorities, and we have done the right priorities, because to uncover and deport human beings who have given incorrect information to get residency in Norway is important. With all due respect – these rules and this practice that have existed under [the period of] this government was also in place under the red-green [government]. I did not hear

> SV [the Socialist Party] address this question at all during eight years in power. It is suddenly now this [question] has come up. (Stortinget, June 2, 2017, 3703)

On the one hand, the minister argues that the government prioritizes to uncover and sanction cases of naturalization fraud. On the other hand, he claims that the rule and practice of revocation was also present when the last government was in power.

This paradoxical reasoning—politicization and de-politicization—was also clearly expressed by the former Minister of Justice and Public Security, Sylvi Listhaug (Progress Party), in her argument against moving denaturalization power to the courts. If denaturalization power was transferred to the judiciary, the minister argued, this would challenge:

> (…) a fundamental trait of the division of tasks and responsibilities between the executive and judicial power. The proposal thereby challenges both the principle of separation of powers that the Constitution is based on and the traditional perspective on what the tasks of the courts should be. The courts should not be given the responsibility of executing *citizenship politics*, which [would] increase the risk of the courts being dragged into *political questions*, which again [would] impair their legitimacy and credibility as politically neutral instances for judicial control of the other branches. This will in reality be the consequence if the courts are to make decisions on revocation of citizenship (…). (Innst. 269 S [2016–2017], 9, emphasis added)

Reversing the minister's logic, citizenship revocation should remain within the hands of the executive because only that branch of government can execute it in a legitimate, credible, and neutral way. Placing denaturalization powers within the judiciary would imply a politicization of citizenship law.[7] The minister and other government representatives legitimized the decision to revive existing revocation law by underscoring its legality. Put differently: denaturalization belongs to realm of law, not politics. As such, the government took refuge in both international and domestic law for its political priority to "go after cheaters." In the same move, they opened a political field (revocation) while simultaneously shutting down the room for discussion by referring to the law as an autonomous, self-referential domain (cf. Agamben 1998).

Toward a Political Sociology of Exceptionalism in the Twenty-First Century

Why read fraud-based denaturalization as a case of exceptionalism? And what insights to sovereignty in contemporary liberal democracies does such a reading yield? By some standards, fraud-based citizenship deprivation is decidedly a norm, not exception: first, although the executive deployed the jargon of the exception ("necessity," "urgency") to justify the strengthening of law, the "refugee crisis" did not present an existential threat to the Norwegian state; moreover, citizenship revocation is an administrative routine, grounded in a specific provision in the Norwegian Nationality Act (§26), and the extraordinary reinforcement is authorized by the same law (§28); surely, immigration officials must comply with political signals from government, but only they can make individual decisions on revocation, exercising their authority as "petty sovereigns" (Butler 2004); and, finally, the analysis shows that parliament was successful in limiting the executive's denaturalization powers through democratic deliberations.

If the practice is not exceptional in existential, legal, administrative, or democratic terms, what makes it a case of exceptionalism? The executive desire to

[7] The Minister referred to principled concerns from the legal profession, namely the Supreme Court, the Director of Public Prosecutions, two (out of six) intermediate courts of appeal, the Norwegian Courts Administration, the Norwegian Association of Judges, and Oslo Courthouse. These institutions also argued that it would be impractical and costly to make the judiciary the court of first instance in revocation cases (Ministry of Education and Research 2019, 19).

increase the number of citizenship deprivations signals sovereignty in its purest form—the attempt to reduce citizens to "bare lives." The practice follows Agamben's logic of the exception: their potential exclusion is inscribed in law. Precisely, this inclusive exclusion is what makes fraud-based denaturalization a case of *legally mediated* exceptionalism. Running counter to Schmitt's exceptionalism, fraud-based denaturalization is based on hyper-legalist reasoning rather than pure decisionism. Liberal democracies are intimately aware of their commitments to international law and human rights (Birnie and Baubock 2020). Therefore, rather than disregarding international law and stripping people of citizenship arbitrarily, states apply clauses to the letter to subvert their original purpose for new political gains (Ghezelbash 2020).

While Ghezelbash focuses on asylum seekers, hyper-legalism has spilled over to the management of naturalized citizens as well. I would argue that Midtbøen's (2019) study of recent changes in Danish citizenship law illustrates another case of hyper-legalism. He demonstrates that the main rationale to introduce dual citizenship in Denmark was to facilitate citizenship revocation of alleged terrorists. Since it is considered illegitimate to make people stateless, Denmark introduced dual citizenship to comply with international norms on statelessness. The Danish government found a legal loophole that would facilitate exclusion of terrorists while at the same time keeping commitments to human rights and international law.

Schmitt would likely despise such seemingly mechanical obedience to law, as he favored pure decisionism over legal norms. Yet, to Agamben, hyper-legalism would likely signal the generalized state of exception, a space where law and politics are indistinguishable. At first glance, hyper-legalist reasoning seems to mirror Agamben's paradox of sovereignty: "I, the sovereign, who am outside [international] law, declare that there is nothing outside [international] law" (Agamben 2005, 15). A closer reading of the hyper-legalist logic, however, adds an important nuance to Agamben's perspective on exceptionalism. While Agamben sees law as detached from politics, operating in its own enclosed field, hyper-legalism suggests that the formulation of politics has been reduced to formalistic interpretations of legal texts. Rather than witnessing the collapse of law and politics (per Agamben), we are seeing states that increasingly deploy law to articulate exclusionary politics. The strategy of the Danish state clearly expresses this instrumentalization of international law: not to overstep but to "move towards the edges of the conventions" (Dahlin 2022). By repeating the mantra "we're only following the law," liberal democracies such as Norway and Denmark reduce accountability in their pursuit to exclude undesirable subjects, be it asylum seekers, purported terrorists, or "citizenship cheaters."

Moreover, I want to problematize Agamben's generalized claim that we are all equally disposed to exceptionalism. Such claims smooth over social distinctions and fail to address how sovereign power functions differentially to target and manage populations (Butler 2004). Surveying historical and contemporary practices of citizenship, we see that that spies, disloyal citizens, and political dissidents, often belonging to undesirable ethnic, racial, classed, and gendered groups (Beauchamps 2018; Gibney 2019; Troy 2019), have been main targets. Today, suspects of terrorism, often from Muslim-majority countries (Gibney 2019), criminals (Troy 2019), and "citizenship cheaters" (Fargues 2019) are construed as threatening and worthy of exceptional treatment. Conventional punishment does not apply to them and more drastic sanctions are thus imposed (Tripkovic 2021). Naturalized citizens are generally more susceptible to be subject to denaturalization, yet this line is increasingly smudged in the "war on terror." The United States has displayed both willingness and ability to exclude birth-right citizens if they present a threat to state security (Nyers 2006). Citizenship is not necessarily the dividing line between insiders and outsiders within the nation-state. Honig (cited in Nyers 2006) thus argues that "(…) we almost always make foreign those whom we persecute. Foreignness is a

symbolic marker that the nation attaches to the people we want to disavow, deport, or detain because we experience them as a threat."

Clearly, we are not all homines sacri, at least not in the same way. Threatening subjects, whether to moral integrity, racial hierarchies, law and order, or state security, have always been disproportionately exposed to sovereign violence, sometimes regardless of citizenship status. We should resist the Agambenian urge to collapse all social categories of difference (Huysmans 2008). Instead, we need to develop a political sociology of exceptionalism that focuses on the *particularities* of exceptional practices in liberal democracies. Such an approach could investigate the following questions: Which subjects are excepted? What legal means (suspension or excess) and arguments are articulated to create exceptional subjects? What is the role of other branches of government (including bureaucrats, parliament, and the judiciary) and society at large, in inciting, fueling, or halting exceptional practices? And how do subjects of exceptional practices maneuver this precarity? This brings me to my final point: that we need to differentiate between exceptionalism and "bare life." Although citizenship deprivation follows the logic of exception—marking particular subjects for exclusion—the outcome is not necessarily a "bare life" (cf. Seet 2020). As Foucault, Agamben's key intellectual interlocutor, reminds us, "where there is power, there is resistance." This article has highlighted the *parliamentary* struggles in determining the boundaries of executive power. Nevertheless, it remains crucial to examine the *human* struggles of those deemed immoral, unlawful, and disposable by the state.

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Circles of alienation: examining first-hand experiences of citizenship deprivation through the perspective of emotions and estrangement

Simon Roland Birkvad

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Circles of alienation: examining first-hand experiences of citizenship deprivation through the perspective of emotions and estrangement

Simon Roland Birkvad

Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

ABSTRACT

Many states have recently re-discovered citizenship deprivation as a tool to exclude undesirable citizens. Scholars have primarily discussed the implications of this policy (re)turn from perspective of the state and the migrant communities targeted, while leaving embodied experiences of denaturalisation unexamined. This article draws on a unique interview material with 28 individuals in a hard-to-reach group: people facing citizenship deprivation and statelessness or deportation from Norway. In 2015–2016, the Norwegian government stepped up efforts to uncover and sanction cases of naturalisation fraud. Legal reinforcement was coupled with government rhetoric that spread fear and insecurity in the targeted populations. As such, it is exemplary of affective governance. Inspired by Ahmed's economic and relational perspective on emotions, this article asks: what emotions circulate and stick in the affective economy of denaturalisation? How do these emotions shape individual bodies, families and communities exposed to denaturalisation? Exposure to denaturalisation gave shape to three constellations of emotions and estrangement: (i) pain, anger, and alienation from the national body, (ii) fear and destabilisation of families and communities, and (iii) exhaustion and self-estrangement. Undergoing the process of citizenship deprivation is therefore not only a deeply unsettling, embodied experience but also a process that reshapes social relations.

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Introduction

The revival of citizenship deprivation is now a well-documented fact. In attempts to mitigate the risks of 'home-grown terrorism' and protect citizenship from 'bogus asylum seekers', many states across Europe and North-America have introduced, amended or re-invigorated dormant laws to facilitate the stripping of citizenship (Birnie and Bauböck 2020; Fargues 2019). Scholarship on contemporary practices have largely focused on the legal, democratic, normative, and symbolic implications of this policy

CONTACT Simon Roland Birkvad s.r.birkvad@sosgeo.uio.no

(re)turn (e.g. Fargues and Winter 2019; Gibney 2020; Joppke 2016; Lenard 2018; Macklin 2014; Tripkovic 2021; Winter and Previsic 2019) as well as its disproportional effects on migrant communities (Kapoor 2018; Naqvi 2022). Yet one perspective has been left untouched by this flourishing literature: *first-hand, embodied experiences* of those targeted. Given the personal stakes of denaturalisation – permanent withdrawal of rights and statelessness or deportation – this neglect is remarkable.

This article seeks to address this research gap by exploring the life-worlds of naturalised Norwegian citizens facing citizenship deprivation. At the height of the so-called 'refugee crisis' in 2015–2016, the Norwegian right-wing government (consisting of the Conservative Party and the Progress Party) instructed the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) to re-examine suspicious applications for citizenship granted in the past. A special task force within UDI was established to process revocation cases. At the end of 2016, UDI had opened 500 cases, a number that was doubled by 2022 (Jensen 2022). Members of government also addressed potential targets of citizenship revocation directly through the media. In an op-ed in a national newspaper, a representative from the Progress Party (Helge André Njåstad) wrote: 'The Progress Party will never reward cheaters with Norwegian citizenship. Our message is simple; if you have lied your way to residency, you should never relax. You should know that you can be exposed and deported at any time' (Njåstad 2017).

The statement is emblematic of a broader trend of regulating inclusion and exclusion by appealing to affect and emotion (Ayata 2019). It displays how the attribution of emotions, such as suspicion, fear and insecurity, are central in how citizens are made alien (Beauchamps 2018; Franz 2015). In this article, I draw on a unique interview material with 28 individuals facing such state suspicion. The interview material is analysed through Sara Ahmed's (2004, 2010, 2014) work on emotions, community formation, and estrangement. According to Ahmed's economic and relational model, emotions circulate between bodies and signs. In this perspective, emotions are personal and social at the same time. Moreover, emotions are 'unequally distributed' (Bargetz 2015) – fear, for instance, 'sticks' to certain bodies more than others. The statement by the government representative works by aligning a national 'we' against a common threat (cf. Ahmed 2004): liars and cheaters. Following this logic, 'citizenship cheaters' are unworthy of rights and should be expelled from the national community. However, at the time of conducting the interviews, the outcome was in most cases not determined. The interviewees found themselves in a lengthy, bureaucratic process of denaturalisation, which had yet to reach a conclusion. Their ambiguous legal position makes it worth asking: *what emotions circulate and stick in the affective economy of denaturalisation? How do these emotions shape individual bodies, families and communities exposed to denaturalisation*?

Reading the interview material through Ahmed's economic and relational understanding of emotions, I examine how different emotions were embodied and expressed, and how they shaped actions and relations to collective bodies. The analysis highlights three findings. First, some of the interviewees expressed *pain and anger* in being *alienated* from the national body. Through pain and anger, they critiqued the state's denaturalisation policies for excluding ethnic minorities and 'non-whites' from the national community. Secondly, I found that *fears* of deportation and government surveillance circulated, which *destabilised families* and targeted *communities*, especially the Somali community in

Norway. These fears restricted their lives, making some consider self-deportation. Finally, many interviewees expressed *exhaustion* as they found themselves in a protracted bureaucratic process, with no immediate end in sight. This exhaustion was coupled with a sense of *self-estrangement*, feeling at odds with their very place in the world. As such, exposure to citizenship deprivation led to alienation in three concentric circles of life: they became increasingly estranged from the nation, their families and communities and themselves.

The article unfolds in six sections. First, I describe the legal and political backdrop of the intensified denaturalisation efforts by the Norwegian government. Secondly, I situate the revival of citizenship deprivation within a broader framework of affective governance. In the third section, I present the data material as well as methodological reflections and challenges connected to understanding the circulation of emotions in qualitative interviews. The fourth section situates the interviewees within the administrative process of citizenship revocation and highlights some of the legal challenges they faced. The fifth section outlines the findings in three parts. In the final section, I conclude by comparing the legal and emotional precarity of denaturalisation targets to other disadvantaged groups in the migration-citizenship nexus.

Naturalisation fraud in Norway: law, politics, and process

The politicisation of naturalisation fraud

Most countries have a provision in their citizenship legislation that regulates fraud (Birnie and Bauböck 2020). Compared to citizenship deprivation on grounds of terrorism, fraud-based denaturalisation has garnered little public as well as academic attention (Fargues 2019). In Norway, the fraud-provision was unanimously passed by Parliament in 2005 as part of a larger revision of the citizenship law. The Norwegian Nationality Act (NNA) stipulates that citizenship can be revoked if it is granted on incorrect or incomplete information, provided that the applicant has furnished the incorrect information against their better judgment or has suppressed circumstances of substantial importance for the decision (26(2)). At the time of its institution, this provision was considered a dry, legal technicality. During the 2015–2016 'refugee crisis', however, naturalisation fraud became the centre of public attention. The government then instructed UDI to prioritise cases of fraud. This was one of several policy measures in which the government instituted to curb the number of incoming asylum seekers arriving in Norway. When these numbers of asylum seekers successfully decreased, however, UDI was left with excessive resources which were then allocated to revocation cases. A special unit within UDI was now dedicated to uncovering cases of naturalisation fraud (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020).

As the number of investigated cases grew (500 at the end of 2016), the newspapers caught on to the practice. Most cases included immigrants of Somali descent who were accused of concealing their identity or country of origin. The case of Mahad Abib Mahamud received wide media coverage. Mahamud was deprived of Norwegian citizenship after 15 years in Norway. The authorities suspected him of originating from Djibouti, not Somalia, which he had originally claimed when he applied for asylum. Ethnic Palestinians were the second largest immigrant group targeted by

revocation. In these cases, the immigration authorities had allegedly uncovered that persons who have claimed protection in Norway on grounds of being stateless had access to Jordanian citizenship. The media highlighted a case of a Palestinian family of three generations, who were collectively targeted by citizenship deprivation, two decades after arriving in Norway. Based on these mediatised stories, parties on the centre-left submitted legislative proposals to reduce the executive's authority and to strengthen the position of those accused of naturalisation fraud. Most importantly, the Socialist Party, the Green Party, and the Red Party proposed to prohibit the state from opening revocation cases after a certain number of years after naturalisation (a 'statute of limitations') and to shield children from revocation. A broad coalition including the Socialist Party, the Center Party, the Liberal Party, the Labour Party, and the Green Party also suggested to transfer the decision-making power from the executive to the judiciary (Birkvad 2023).

None of these proposals were passed in Parliament but the government introduced three minor changes to strengthen the legal position of those accused of fraud (Ministry of Education and Research 2019).[1] First, the bill spelled out in law that children (and grandchildren) would not automatically be denaturalised if this was to happen to either their parents or grandparents, albeit there are exceptions to this rule.[2] Secondly, instead of introducing a statute of limitations in revocation cases, the bill implemented a 'proportionality assessment'. In making this assessment, UDI shall weigh the seriousness of the case against the person's connection to Norway (Ministry of Education and Research 2020). On the one hand, in cases where the person knowingly and actively has used more than one identity or has committed a serious crime, revocation should be considered proportional. On the other hand, citizenship cannot be revoked if the revocation decision disproportionally interferes with the concerned person, or their immediate family members. Here, UDI uses information about the person's participation in the labour market, language skills and educational attainment to measure their 'integration' and 'connection' to Norway. Additionally, UDI assesses the person's connection to Norway against her connection to her country of origin. The risk of *long-term* statelessness as a consequence of a revocation decision is also considered in the proportionality assessment.[3] The final change that those accused of naturalisation fraud would be guaranteed personal attendance in appeal cases processed by the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) and receive free legal aid during this process (Ministry of Education and Research 2019), albeit only covering a limited number of hours.

The citizenship revocation process

While these changes were debated in Parliament, the government instructed UDI to pause all case processing. After a three-year standstill, the backlog amounted to 1,000 cases (Jensen 2022). In other words, many cases got stuck in the administrative process. For the person targeted, the process typically begins when they receive a *decision* or a *notification* of possible revocation in the form of a letter. If they receive a decision, they have three weeks to submit a written appeal with the assistance from a lawyer. If the person receives a notification letter, it typically states that 'the foreigner' is suspected of furnishing incorrect information that was decisive for the granting of citizenship. If UDI finds it necessary, the person in question is summoned to one or more administrative

interviews to further inform the case. In the interviews, the defendant is questioned based on perceived contradictory information in their files. Local police officers often conduct the interviews on behalf of UDI (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020). The burden of proof lies on the person, not the state, as most cases of citizenship revocation falls under administrative law. This means that the accused must prove that it is *more* than 50% likely they are speaking the truth about their identity, country of origin, region, etc.[4] Based on the collected information, civil servants within UDI (often holding degrees in law or the social sciences) then decide whether to dismiss the case or revoke citizenship. The person can appeal the revocation decision to UNE. The appeal is considered by a board leader (who hold qualifications equivalent to a judge) and two laypersons in a closed meeting. In appeal cases, the burden of proof lies with UNE. Revocation cases can be tried before a court, but the person must cover the expenses on their own.

The stakes of citizenship revocation proceedings are high, but the outcome is not necessarily deportation. Roughly there are three different outcomes when the immigration authorities examine a case: the case can be dismissed if they find no sufficient grounds to revoke citizenship; citizenship can be revoked, and the person can apply for a new residence permit based on the correct information; or citizenship can be revoked, and the person can be deported if they are citizen of another state (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020). Official statistics reveals that so far only 30 percent of the revocation cases initiated by the state have resulted in citizenship deprivation *and* deportation (Utlendingsnemnda 2022).[5] Does this mean that the government's denaturalisation campaign was ineffective? Not necessarily. In this article, I will argue that the denaturalisation campaign was effective insofar as operating on the *affective* register of its targeted populations. To make this argument, I will situate the politics of denaturalisation within the broader framework of affective governance in the next section.

Affective governance and circulating emotions

In the last 10–15 years, we have witnessed an 'affective turn' in citizenship and migration studies. This turn can be read as a feminist, postcolonial and queer critique of the 'rational understanding of citizenship' (Ayata 2019). By focusing on the role of affect in the production of inclusion and exclusion, this turn seeks to destabilise citizenship as a 'purely rational and administrative exercise of state authority' (Di Gregorio and Merolli 2016; Fortier 2016). Affective citizenship provides a lens for seeing 'how some feelings attach themselves to citizenship and to how citizenship itself can evoke certain feelings' (Fortier 2016, 1038). In this view, emotions are deeply felt and embodied as well as social, relational, and public. Feelings attached to citizenship are unevenly distributed along the lines of gender, race, and class. Some feel safer than others and some citizens are deemed safer by others. The distribution of power therefore works not only through material and discursive forces, but also through affective governance (Fortier 2016, 1039).

With reference to Honig (2001), Fortier (2017) argues that affective governance is fundamental to the state-citizen relationship. The state exhibits an ambivalent attitude towards newcomers, as they are seen as sources of both *desire* and *anxiety*. Fortier (2017) examines the distribution of affect in integration and naturalisation policies. The guiding principle behind policies of integration and naturalisation, Fortier argues,

is the assumption that citizenship is desirable. While the UK (and other states in Europe and North America) rely on this assumption of desirability, they also express anxiety about the apparent weak desire for citizenship. The state wants to separate the 'givers' – legitimate, deserving migrants – from the 'takers' – bogus applicants, who displays the wrong desire for citizenship. In short, not all desires for citizenship are desirable for the state (Fortier 2017).

While affective governance is hardly a new phenomenon, some claim that it has proliferated in recent decades, fuelled by neoliberalism, securitisation of migration and right-wing populism (Bargetz 2020; Bigo 2002; Isin 2004). As formal equality increases in tandem with increasing naturalisation rates, states produce new *internal* hierarchizations, pitting 'true' citizens against 'technical' citizens (Volpp [2002], cited in Ayata 2019). In the 'war on terror' declared by many Western states, the line between 'essential' and 'accidental' citizens are (re)drawn (Nyers 2006), both legally and *affectively* (Franz 2015). When states try to appease the majority through securitisation measures, it is often at the expense of the insecurity of racialised minorities. Even those legally immune to deportation, such as US citizens may experience fear of deportation, as Asad (2020) has evidenced.

Denaturalisation campaigns in the US (Lenard 2020), the UK, France (Fargues 2019) and Norway are likely to increase such fears, making these important sites of affective power (cf. Fortier 2016). As mentioned previously, the existing scholarship on the revival of citizenship deprivation has focused on its legal, democratic, and normative implications (e.g. Birnie and Bauböck 2020; Gibney 2020; Lenard 2018; Macklin 2014), but left its affective facets under-examined. Beauchamps (2016; 2018) historical study of citizenship deprivation in France is, however, an instructive exception. Building on Sara Ahmed's scholarship, Beauchamps examines the role of affect and emotions in governing mechanisms of belonging and repression. Historically, French authorities have associated undesirable subjects, such as dissidents, with fear and suspicion to justify denaturalisation (2016). Beauchamps' study draws on Ahmed's notion of 'affective economy', which is helpful for my analysis of denaturalisation in Norway as well.

According to Ahmed (2004), emotions circulate between bodies and signs.[6] She argues against the notion that emotions are purely individual and private matters (Ahmed 2004). Instead, she argues that emotions are shaped in contact with objects (2014, 6). Ahmed's economic model of emotions 'suggests that while emotions do not positively reside in a subject or figure, they still work to bind subjects together' (2004, 119). She says:

> Emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take shape of, contact with others'. (2014, 10)

Emotions can bind some subjects together and simultaneously exclude others. Citizenship rhetoric works inclusionary by appeals to love and affection for the nation (binding some subjects together). Conversely, citizenship rhetoric works exclusionary by projecting fear on threatening others, for example purported terrorists and bogus asylum seekers and citizenship cheaters. According to Ahmed, such subjects become

fearful through the circulation of signs of fear (2004, 127). Fear 'sticks' to bodies that *could be* terrorists or bogus asylum seekers. It is this 'could be' that facilitates the power to detain suspect bodies and restrict their movement (2004, 135).

In my analysis, I take three key lessons from Ahmed. The first lesson is that emotions circulate economically and are unequally distributed. They tend to 'stick' more to certain bodies. Secondly, bodies (both individual and collective) take shape through emotions. Thirdly and related to the second lesson, emotions are relational. They move us closer or farther away from other 'objects'. Here I understand 'objects' as other *subjects* or *imagined objects*, for example the 'nation' as an imagined community (Ahmed 2014, 8; Anderson 2016). In the following, I describe the labour of approaching research subjects in an economy of insecurity and fear.

Methodology and data: reflections on the role of emotions in qualitative research

Establishing contact with individuals and families facing denaturalisation turned out to be very difficult. Subjects of denaturalisation were not formally organised and do not constitute a meaningful sociological group (cf. Dahinden, Fischer, and Menet 2021). Therefore, I concentrated recruitment efforts in the Somali, Palestinian and Afghan communities in Norway, as the majority of revocation targets originate from these countries. Initially, these attempts produced meager results. Intermediaries told me that people were reluctant to discuss citizenship revocation with outsiders because it was a stigmatised and sensitive topic to them. In the Somali community in Norway, fear and mistrust of Norwegian authorities also circulated (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020). My role as an independent researcher was questioned, as some feared my research was associated with the immigration authorities (cf. Carling, Erdal, and Ezzati 2014). Thus, it is likely that my position as an 'apparent outsider' – a public university employee, representing the white majority – was a barrier to gaining their trust. The breakthrough came when *Utrop* (a multicultural Norwegian newspaper) and *Norsom News* (a Norwegian-Somali newspaper) posted ads on their digital platforms, which especially generated interest from people in the Somali community. At the same time, immigration lawyers, civic organisations, and gatekeepers from my previous research projects (Birkvad 2019; Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020) helped me find interviewees.

After nearly two years of recruiting and interviewing, I had reached 28 individuals in total (16 men and 12 women).[7] The participants were all born abroad and had immigrated to Norway at all stages of life. The length of residence in Norway varied from 11 to 25 years. The interviewees (or their parents) originated from Somalia (18), Palestine (4) and various countries in Asia (7).[8] Four participants faced revocation by extension of their parent's case (Ismael, Aisha, Yasmine and Toufik) and were not suspected of fraud themselves.[9] Some interviewees told me that their entire family faced revocation, while others claimed they risked family separation, as only the parent(s) risked revocation and deportation. Three out of four interviewees also had family members who were *indirectly* affected by their ongoing revocation case (see Table 1). Applications for various permits (family reunion, permanent residence permit and citizenship) were put on hold until the revocation case of the reference person was decided.

Table 1. Overview of research participants.

Pseudonym	Country of origin	Generation	Years in Norway	Case status	Duration of case	Deportation notification	Interviews with state authorities	Affected family members[a]
Maryam & Ismael (mother & son)	Somalia	Immigrant & 1.5	15–20 & 10–15	Waiting for initial decision	2 years	Yes	2	0
Hadiya & Aisha (mother & daughter	Somalia	Immigrant & 1.5	20–25 & 15–20	Waiting for initial decision	<0.5 years	Yes	3	1
Zakaria)	Somalia	Immigrant	20–25	Notified	2 years	Yes	N/A	2
Yasmine	Somalia	1.5	10–15	Waiting for initial decision	5 years	Yes	1	3
Adam & Suraya (spouses)	Country in Asia	Immigrants	15–20 & 10–15	Waiting for initial decision	<0.5 years	Yes	1	3
Yacub	Palestine	Immigrant	20–25	Waiting for decision on deprivation	5 years	Dismissed	1	0
Khaled	Palestine	Immigrant	20–25	Waiting for decision on deprivation	5 years	Dismissed	0	0
Zahid	Somalia	Immigrant	15–20	Waiting for initial decision	0.5 years	Yes	3	2
Jibril	Somalia	Immigrant	10–15	Notified	4 years	Yes	0	3
Masood	Country in Asia	Immigrant	20–25	Deprived (stateless)	___	Yes	1	0
Emre	Country in Asia	1.5	20–25	Dismissed	___	No	0	2
Sarah & Abdi (spouses)	Somalia	Immigrants	10–15 & 15–20	Deprived, waiting for appeal	5 years	Yes	1	5
Leila	Somalia	Immigrant	10–15	Waiting for initial decision	5 years	Yes	1	2
Nadia	Somalia	Immigrant	20–25	Deprived (stateless), requested reversal	8 years	Yes	N/A	1
Dina	Somalia	Immigrant	20–25	Waiting for initial decision	0.5 years	Yes	3	3
Shakir	Somalia	Immigrant	20–25	Waiting for initial decision	6 years	Yes	1	0
Yusuf	Somalia	Immigrant	15–20	Waiting for initial decision	5 years	Yes	2	1
Samir	Palestine	Immigrant	10–15	Waiting for initial decision	0.5 years	Yes	0	3
Karima	Country in Asia	Immigrant	20–25	Waiting for initial decision	0.5 years	Yes	0	0
Toufik	Palestine	1.5	20–25	Waiting for appeal	9 years	Yes	0	3
Ali	Country in Asia	1.5	10–15	Waiting for initial decision	0.5 years	Yes	3	2
Muhammed	Somalia	Immigrant	20–25	Waiting for initial decision	2 years	Yes	2	2
Jamilah	Somalia	Immigrant	15–20	Notified	<0.5 years	Yes	0	2
Amina	Somalia	Immigrant	15–20	Notified	<0.5 years	Yes	0	N/A

[a]Children, spouses, or other relatives.

The interviews were conducted in their homes (in Oslo and beyond), at the University of Oslo, in cafes, via telephone and video calls. I asked them about their daily lives, migration trajectories, experiences with the Norwegian immigration system, naturalisation, the revocation process and its effects on their families and ethnic communities, as well as their views on the legal and political dimensions of citizenship fraud. Although the interview guide had no explicit focus on emotions, the interviews were filled to the brim with them. Some, I realised, were not seeking legal but emotional care. Since they associated negative emotions with the topic, they rarely or never talked about it. On several occasions, interviewees burst into tears, either expressing despair or cathartic relief from speaking about it. Feelings of anger and frustration were also directed at me, as I was seen to represent the white majority incapable of understanding their experiences. These examples illustrate that the qualitative interview is a 'situated affective encounter' (Ayata et al. 2019): a relational processes in which both the researcher and researched affect each other. During the two years of fieldwork, I followed my participants' feelings of frustration and fatigue but only to a certain point. Unlike the participants, I could withdraw from the field (Wajsberg 2020). I faced no threat of revocation and deportation, as one interviewee put it. These interview encounters, even those marked by animosity, hold analytical significance by revealing broader relations of power. They displayed inequalities between researcher and researched in terms of exposure to citizenship revocation as well as broader structures of racism.

The affective intensity of the interview encounters drew my attention to emotions as an analytical prism. According to Gabriel and Ulus (2015, cited in Ayata et al. (2019), emotions can be observed in different ways: 'people might openly state how they feel, they might recount a story or anecdote intended to explain their feelings, or they might indicate feelings through their actions and bodily expressions'. Ahmed (2014) adds *text* itself as carrying and shaping emotions. Taking public discourse as her object of study, Ahmed shows how figures of speech (e.g. metaphors and metonyms) are saturated with affect. I take inspiration from both methods of studying emotion in my analysis. I read the interview as a corporeal, idiosyncratic encounter between interviewer and interviewee, where emotions are performed and circulated through body language and shifts in intensity (e.g. tone of voice, crying, gesticulation). Moreover, I interpret the o*utput* of this encounter (the written transcription) as an affective text and pay attention to how specific words carry emotions.

All interviews (except two) were transcribed and subsequently coded in NVivo.[10] For this article, the material was sorted into 19 categories that either referred to explicit emotions (e.g. 'fear', 'exhaustion') or points of contact with the authorities that elicited strong emotions (e.g. the letter of notification and police interviews).[11] I also examined the interrelations of categories, specifically how emotions shaped their bodies (e.g. references to bodily distress) and their effects on their social relations (family, diasporic communities and the nation). Based on several rounds of inductive coding, grouping, and re-grouping, I ended up with three findings: (i) pain, anger and alienation from the national body, (ii) fear and destabilisation of families and diasporic communities, and (iii) exhaustion and self-estrangement. Before I elaborate on these three findings, I will situate the interviewees within the bureaucratic process of citizenship deprivation.

Situating the interviewees within the bureaucratic process of citizenship revocation

The interviewees were in different stages of the revocation process (see Table 1): four interviewees had recently been notified of revocation; twenty-four interviewees were waiting for the first decision by UDI (twenty of these had undertaken one or several administrative interviews); one couple, Sarah and Abdi, were waiting for their appeal to be processed by UNE; two individuals, Masood and Nadia, had been deprived of citizenship and were currently living in Norway as stateless; lastly, Emre's revocation case had been dismissed.

A few interviewees admitted to having furnished incorrect information in applications for asylum, while the majority contested the claims of dishonesty and fraud made by UDI. However, my intention in this article is not to assess their truth claims, but to shed light on citizenship revocation from their perspective. Nearly all interviewees found the bureaucratic process itself unpredictable and difficult to navigate. The interviewees highlighted several problematic aspects. As citizenship revocation belong to the realm of administrative law, the burden of proof rested on their shoulders. Despite answering all questions in the administrative interviews and providing evidence to support their case, they found it difficult to shake off the suspicion. Moreover, several interviewees said the police did not disclose the source of suspicion explicitly during the administrative interviews. Jibril (10–15 years in Norway, Somalia) noted that, 'we cannot defend ourselves against something we have no idea what is'.[12] The communication with UDI after the administrative interviews was also described as poor by many. They were given little if any concrete information about the status of their case and its timeline (also found in Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020). The duration of their ongoing cases – on average, four and a half years – gave room for further frustration and uncertainty. Despite promises of due process from the government (Ministry of Education and Research 2019), many expressed profound insecurities about their legal positions within these processes. In the next sections, I shed light on the constellations of emotions and alienation produced from the interviewees' encounters with the immigration bureaucracy.

Emotions and estrangement in processes of citizenship revocation

Pain, anger, and alienation from the national body

Legally and symbolically speaking, denaturalisation means transforming citizens into foreigners (Winter and Previsic 2019). In notification letters and decisions, UDI uses the legal term 'foreigner' (*utlending)* to refer to the recipient. This label caused pain for those who identified as Norwegians. For instance, Yacub (20–25 years in Norway, Palestine) spoke at length about how the label affected him:

> I just think about the letters you receive (…). It's not hurtful. I know I'm a foreigner, but to type it, is that really necessary? '*You foreigner*', we know how insulting that is. '*You foreigner*', that's not nice! Why do UDI use these words when (…) I'm more Norwegian than they are! (…) you need to get something [in return], say 'thank you for your contribution'. I'm not the person who just sits at home and does nothing in Norwegian society (…) I know I won't be deported, but still, this process, you have no idea how much it took from me.

Although Yacub said the label 'foreigner' was not hurtful, he called it insulting. The 'sticky word' (cf. Ahmed 2004) discredited his contributions to Norwegian society, which he listed as working in a frontline occupation during the COVID-19 pandemic and doing various types of volunteer work in his local community. He was 'happy' about not being deported yet he felt 'hurt inside'. It was not the fear of deportation that bothered him but rather the tedious process, which he said constituted a significant financial burden and required him to have a strong psyche. He elaborated:

> Imagine, if we sit in a room together and I say to you: 'You are an idiot, idiot, idiot', every day, 'you fucking foreigner, fucking foreigner, fucking foreigner'. Then what happens to you? Eventually you will tell yourself: 'I'm a fucking foreigner, fucking foreigner. I must [go] out, out, out'.

To Yacub, the legal term 'foreigner' was a reminder of outsiderness. Although he tried to resist, the word and its negative connotations stuck to him. After he found out his citizenship was at stake, Yacub was reminded of what a relative of his, Khaled, had said to him some years ago:

> Remember, Yacub, you must not think that you are Norwegian [*nordmann*]. And he was right. I'm not Norwegian. But I was thinking and acting like a Norwegian. And that was wrong (…) it woke me up. I'm a foreigner. I'm not like Harald, I'm not like Håkon, I'm not like Karl.

To his relative, Khaled (interviewed separately), the notification letter was less of a shock, as he had worried in advance that this day might come. Khaled had lived in a large Norwegian city most of his time in Norway, and according to Yacub, been immersed in a 'foreign milieu' and had always 'felt foreign'. Unlike Khaled, Yacub proudly identified as Norwegian before facing denaturalisation. Yacub said he had 'plenty of Norwegian friends' and considered himself 'one of them'. His body, in this sense, was more open to being wounded. As he saw no immediate end to the process, his wound was kept open and inflamed by repeated bureaucratic and self-imposed stings ('foreigner', 'idiot'). The notification of citizenship deprivation woke him up, as if from a dream. He painfully realised that he was not equal to Harald, Håkon and Karl; all names connoting racial-ethnic belonging to Norway.

For Zahid (15–20 years in Norway, Somalia), the revocation process initiated against him was *additional* evidence of alienation from the national body. His citizenship was questioned by the immigration authorities because they suspected that he was either a citizen of a neighbouring country (because a close family member was citizen of another country) or that he originated from another region in Somalia (based on remittance records). But according to Zahid, these were nothing but empty allegations. During the three consecutive days of questioning, he turned the questions back to the police officer:

> 'Why are we sitting here? (…) [Is it] because I'm a black Norwegian and I got my passport in a legal way? [Is that] why you are asserting your white supremacy? [To demonstrate] that you are more right[eous] than me? Why are you interviewing me? Can you just answer me?' She couldn't answer (…) how will we be equal Norwegians when an immigrant Norwegian is suspected and interviewed by a white Norwegian … what kind of law is this? Why do they say we're equal, that we're the same? It's pure nonsense. That's what they want, differential treatment.

According to Zahid, the crucial difference between the police officer and himself was not the mode of citizenship acquisition (natural-born vs. naturalised) but the colour of their skin. In this narrative of racial antagonism, he played the role as a 'black Norwegian' who had lawfully acquired citizenship, fiercely opposed by a 'white Norwegian', who had the backing of the law. He seemed to argue that the citizenship law was deployed not to shed light on inconsistencies in their immigration records but to expel 'black Norwegians' from the national body. Rather than seeing the law as 'an expression of [his] intimate will', Zahid constructed it as a 'violent imposition' (Honig 2001, cited in Fortier 2017, 15), wilfully enforced to make him suffer. Thus, in encountering the immigration authorities, his 'proximity to whiteness' became a 'point of alienation' (cf. Ahmed 2010, 156). To him, such encounters unveiled the failed promise of equal citizenship, as the law exclusively expressed the will of white Norwegians.

Fear and destabilisation of families and communities

Although laws regulating citizenship deprivation are 'race-neutral', research shows that migrant and diasporic communities are disproportionally targeted (e.g. Gibney 2020; Naqvi 2022). The intensification of denaturalisation in Norway was part of a broader policy package, including revocation of residence permits and cessation of refugee status. People of Somali descent were overrepresented in revocation cases and the cessation paragraph only applied to that immigrant group (Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020). The interview material showed that the fear of deportation – *deportability* (de Genova 2002) – not only disturbed the individual psyche but *circulated* between individuals and families, particularly within the Somali community. Exposure to denaturalisation gave shape to tense, stressed and restless bodies, which were hyper-alert to signs of deportation. Examples of such signs, or 'situational triggers' (Enriquez and Millán 2019), were seeing police officers in the streets and 'suspicious' people in their workplaces, reading news stories about revocation or hearing public statements by anti-immigration politicians on TV. Jibril (10–15 years in Norway, Somalia) described how fear surfaced in different spheres of life:

> We left our home country because of terrorism, and now we experience a new form of terrorism (…) Their method is simply to scare you. You are afraid every day, constantly. You ask yourself (…) when will you be kicked out? The kids think: when will we be apprehended at school? (…) The kids have nightmares. My wife, too. If you hear a sound, someone knocking on the door, then you think the police are here. If they [the kids] see random police officers drive or walk past them, then you think that they're after them, that they will be apprehended, kicked out.

According to Jibril, the Norwegian state governed through 'scares' and 'terror', emotions that could be triggered by a simple knock on the door. The shift of personal pronouns also indicates that fear did not reside in him but moved sideways between members of his family (cf. Ahmed 2014): if 'they', his children, saw police officers in the street, 'you' thought that officers were after 'them'. This fear did not only engender hyper-alertness during the hours of the day but also haunted them in their sleep.

The connection between sleep deprivation and fear of citizenship deprivation was underscored by several interviewees. Sarah, Abdi (10–15 and 15–20 years in Norway, Somalia) and their children had their Norwegian citizenship revoked but waited for

their appeal to be processed by UNE. Sarah said she had been admitted to the hospital recently. She was tense, restless and couldn't sleep, as she feared deportation to a country that would 'destroy them'. These excerpts indicate that fear, bodily tension, and restlessness made them increasingly turn inwards, enclosing themselves from the outside world. Nadia (20–25 years in Norway, Somalia) had experienced an unannounced raid by the police ten years ago, which marked the starting point of a lengthy, complicated denaturalisation process that ultimately resulted in citizenship stripping and statelessness. According to her husband, Nadia had installed two additional safety locks on their door. He said: 'She was a sociable person, [but] after all this she became closed off and had no contact with friends and minimal contact with family'.

Shutting out friends and family also implied turning away from people in the Somali community. To some, this turning away was caused by mistrust and fear of information being leaked to the authorities. The backdrop to these concerns was the 'Mahad case'. According to UNE, this case was opened based on an *anonymous* tip from a person within the Somali community. Among Norwegian-Somalis, rumours soon spread that several revocation cases were based on 'insider tips' (Fjeld and Befring 2017). These rumours partially de-centered the object of fear from the state to people from the same community. Abdi (15–20 years in Norway, Somalia) reflected on the implications of such de-centering of fear:

> (…) we do not trust each other in the community. We are scared of each other. We are not united. We are unable to defend ourselves with a common voice. So that makes us exposed (…) to all sorts of attacks.

In this excerpt, fear works by tearing the Somali community apart, at least, the idea of the Somali community as a collective body. According to Abdi, such dissolution was detrimental to collective mobilisation against the state.

The fear of being surveilled by the state (or members from their community) made some interviewees limit the use of social media, including communication with friends and family abroad (see also Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020). Effectively this fear shaped a sense of curtailment of individual freedom. Some likened it to 'imprisonment' and 'detainment', which led some to consider leaving Norway, regardless of the outcome of their case. Dina (20–25 years in Norway, Somalia) had decided to move from Norway with her daughter. She couldn't bear living with 'worries for many years', as she put it. Muhammed (20–25 years in Norway, Somalia) claimed he knew friends who had already left Norway to escape the sense of containment. In his account, these people had uttered that they could 'breathe easier' because they could connect with relatives on Facebook, no longer fearing its repercussions. Such stories demonstrate the potent effects of emotions. Emotions *literally* make bodies move (Ahmed 2014). In this case, fear and worries induced self-deportation.

Exhaustion and self-estrangement

Worries among the interviewees about being perpetually tied up in the bureaucratic revocation process were not unfounded. Revocation cases take between one and nine years to process, according to the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE 2022). Many of the interviewees had waited a long time for the first decision on revocation, some up to six years. The

lengthy wait was described as exhausting. Some believed the bureaucracy tried to wear them out by imposing waiting as a tool of power (Khosravi 2019). According to Shakir (20–25 years in Norway, Somalia), being entangled in the bureaucratic process was like being bit by a poisonous snake. He said: 'When it [the state] bites you, it doesn't eat you right away. You will die from the poison (…) it's inhumane'. Rather than a clear-cut, final decision depriving him of citizenship, he felt as if he was gradually dying from the poison inflicted by the Norwegian state.

The bureaucratic process was tiresome, stressful, and left bodily marks. Diarrhoea, migraine, heart palpitations, and elevated blood pressure were physical symptoms reported by the interviewees. Leila (10–15 years in Norway, Somalia) was a single mother, living in a remote part of Norway. She spent most her time working and caring for her youngest child, who suffered from multiple serious illnesses. One of Leila's biggest worries was that her child would not get the medical help they needed in case of deportation to Somalia. The aggregated 'psychic load' had made Leila lose weight, as she explained:

> I think about my children all the time. The day I received the letter [of revocation] I weighed over 100 kilos. Now I weigh 70 kilos, without even exercising, only because of rumination and sleep deprivation. People ask me, 'are you ok? What happened to you?' But they are not aware of my situation, so I don't tell them what's going on.

Following an emotional outburst later in the interview, she said: 'I'm sorry, when I think about my situation, my emotions take over. Because I am (…) really tired. Only God knows how tired I am'. She had kept her plights to herself. The statement underscored the invisibility of the pain that she made visible by sharing her feelings in the interview. To bear witness to pain is to authenticate it (Ahmed 2014, 29). This visibility is crucial because deportability tends to isolate and silence people (Horsti and Pirkkalainen 2020).

The interviewees described their bodies slowing down in tandem with the denaturalisation process coming to a halt (as mentioned above, the processing of revocation cases was paused between 2017 and 2020). Despite feeling exhausted, Leila was determined to continue working: 'I go to work, do my tasks, but (…) I function like a robot'. Ismael (10–15 years in Norway, Somalia), who faced revocation and deportation to Somalia by extension of his mother's revocation case, expressed ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, he said he was motivated by anger. After they were notified about revocation, he had got a more 'meaningful job' because he wanted to make a positive change in society. Working did not rid him of burdensome thoughts and feelings altogether, but only gave him temporary relief:

> What's the point? It seems so comfortable do be dead, like … it's fantastic. I don't see why people are dreading death (…) it's so quiet and peaceful (…) because I'm so freaking tired (…) And my mother is, too. We are extremely tired. It feels like I'm 100 years old but I'm only in my 20s (…) I feel like a zombie (…) Just living, but not living.

'Robots' and 'zombies' are forceful metaphors that signify mechanically moving bodies, exhausted of energy and purpose. These metaphors too point to the particularity of the interviewees' legal precarity. Although they experienced a form of 'sticky time' (Griffiths 2014) associated with prisoners, asylum seekers and immigrant detainees, their lives were not completely 'put on hold', nor were they confined in spatial terms. Quite the contrary:

most interviewees carried on with their daily routines (cf. Brekke, Birkvad, and Erdal 2020). They went to work and attended classes, but they were not entirely present. Maryam, Ismael's mother, said: 'Sometimes I'm at work, I don't know where I am'. Zakaria (20–25 years in Norway, Somalia) described a similar feeling: 'You have to keep working and keep studying (…) [but] you lose focus. You're not quite in place'. These excerpts describe a feeling of dissonance between the location of their body and their emotions. Being pushed towards the 'pale of law' (Arendt 2017) unsettled their sense of being in the world. Statements of not being 'in place' suggest that their bodies were 'out of place' (Ahmed 2010). Having their legal standing questioned over time led to exhaustion and self-estrangement.

Outlining the circles of alienation and their implications for existing and future research

Whereas historians have brought human struggles of citizenship deprivation to life through archives and legal documents (e.g. Beauchamps 2018; Frost 2021; Weil 2012; Zalc 2020), this article has examined first-hand experiences of denaturalisation in the twenty-first century. The interviewees were not physically expelled by the Norwegian state, but still deeply entangled in processes of citizenship revocation. By drawing on Ahmed's economic and relational view of emotions, I have examined what emotions circulated amid these processes and how these emotions shaped social relations and actions. The analysis distinguished between three constellations of emotions and alienation: (i) pain, anger, and alienation from the national body fear, (ii) destabilisation of families and diasporic communities, (iii) exhaustion and self-estrangement.

First, some interviewees described feelings of anger, pain, and alienation from the national body. Zahid, for instance, expressed anger as he read citizenship deprivation as *yet another* expression of racism. Anger, which we usually think of as a destructive emotion, also has creative potential (Ahmed 2014). Through anger, Zahid mobilised a critique of what he considered the racially coded promise of equal citizenship. Being targeted by citizenship deprivation only alienated him *further* from Norway as an 'imagined community' (Anderson 2016). However, for those who had identified as Norwegian, being targeted by citizenship deprivation was a painful shock, capable of shifting their affective orientation towards the nation. A case in point is Yacub, who had invested considerable time and energy to be socially accepted as Norwegian. Even though the deportation order against him was dismissed, he felt rejected and estranged from Norway as his national home.

Secondly, the state's intensified efforts to expose 'citizenship cheaters' stirred up fear of surveillance and deportation. The interviewees described how fear circulated immediately after the 'Mahad case' broke the news and the government announced its pursuit of 'cheaters'. The object of fear glid from the state to potential adversaries within the Somali community. Since fear was no longer contained by a single object – the state – mistrust and suspicion grew (cf. Ahmed 2004, 125). The potential of being targeted by the law (Agamben 1998), fearing both surveillance by the state and people from the same community, gave shape to tense, restless bodies. Some went into hiding and became increasingly isolated, while others self-deported, paradoxically escaping the country that gave them refuge in the first place.

Finally, the lengthy wait for legal closure was described as emotionally exhausting. As their claims for Norwegian citizenship were questioned, their place in the world became ambiguous, even sometimes negated (cf. Belton 2015). Some of the interviewees claimed their lives became increasingly mechanical and 'zombie'-like, followed by a creeping sense of estrangement from themselves and their social surroundings. As such, these experiences resemble Ahmed's conception of alienation as a *structure of feeling*, which feels like 'a weight that (…) holds you down and keeps you apart' (2010, 168). In other words, the constellation of exhaustion and self-estrangement was not only a personally embodied burden (holding them down) but also led to social isolation (keeping them apart).

These findings lend themselves to comparison with other disadvantaged groups in the migration-citizenship nexus. Targets of denaturalisation share the plight of stateless people in feeling 'out of place' and misaligned with their place in the world (Belton 2015). Studies from the UK has shown that fears of deportation and surveillance have destabilised families and migrant communities heavily targeted by citizenship deprivation (Naqvi 2022) and passport removal measures (Kapoor and Narkowicz 2019). Research on the US context have also noted that fear of deportation is widespread in Latino communities. Even people with relatively secure legal status may express fears of deportation as an effect of their proximity to undocumented family members or friends (Abrego 2019; Asad 2020; Golash-Boza 2019).

Feelings of uncertainty and exhaustion are commonly found among migrants undergoing time and energy consuming asylum (Griffiths 2014) and naturalisation procedures (Fortier 2021). Fortier (2021) argues that integration and naturalisation procedures make and unmake citizens and migrants, indefinitely holding many applicants in the metaphorical 'waiting room of citizenship'. Unlike applicants for citizenship – as well as stateless people, undocumented migrants, and asylum seekers – the participants in this study *had* already passed the waiting room. As naturalised citizens, they were legally on par with the majority population, but now faced utter expulsion. As such, their experiences disrupt the narrative of linear progression from 'alien' to 'citizen' (cf. Fortier 2021). This degradation, or the prospect of it, provoked feelings of pain and anger, leading to (intensified) disaffection for the nation-state. Interestingly, this situation provided a space for denaturalised subjects to express radical critiques of the state, which hopeful applicants in the waiting room for citizenship may be more reluctant to do.

To sum up, 'what do emotions *do*' (Ahmed 2014) in processes of denaturalisation? Fear and exhaustion tended to isolate and estrange community members from one another, which made some consider self-deportation, while pain and anger either led to resignation or motivated acts of resistance against the state. Still, as the 'revival of citizenship deprivation' gathers force and spreads across the world (Birnie and Bauböck 2020), more research is needed on how subjects navigate processes of denaturalisation and what role emotions play in these processes. In what ways do such emotions conform, challenge, or exceed state powers? The distribution of such emotions seems to be animated by different positions in hierarchies of race-ethnicity, gender, and class (cf. Bargetz 2015). Therefore, it is important that future research address the effects of denaturalisation policies across social categories of difference.

Notes

1. At that time, the government included the Conservative Party, the Progress Party, the Liberal Party, and the Christian Democratic Party.
2. If UDI finds that the child does not exhibit a so-called 'strong connection to the realm', their citizenship can still be revoked. The child's length of residence in Norway, language skills, schooling and participation in leisure activities are used to measure their connection to Norway, or lack thereof. Children under the age of 18 cannot lose their citizenship if they by that become stateless and in no simple way can acquire citizenship in another country (NNA, 26(3)).
3. Norway is bound by the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the 1997 European Convention on Nationality, but according to the latter convention (letter 7B), cases of fraud are excepted.
4. In cases that fall under criminal legislation, the case must be proven beyond any reasonable doubt.
5. Many cases are unprocessed by UDI. But since the new rules were implemented, UNE has processed 117 appeal cases. UNE reversed 28 percent (33 cases) of UDI's decisions on revocation and upheld 72 percent (84 cases) of the decisions. Among those receiving a revocation decision, 43 percent (36 cases) received a deportation order (either permanent or temporary), 37 percent (31 cases) were granted new permits, and 20 percent (14 cases) resulted in neither deportation nor new permits. The latter pertain to cases where parents received a deportation order, but not their children. In these cases, the consequence was that the entire family left Norway (Utlendingsnemnda 2022).
6. Some distinguish between affect and emotion, but I follow Ahmed in her argument against making such sharp distinctions, as it risks perpetuating the cartesian mind/body split.
7. Including three (Muhammed, Jamilah and Amina) persons, who were interviewed in above-mentioned studies.
8. To increase anonymization, I have categorized the residency in five-year intervals and lumped together different countries in Asia into one category (see Table 1). I refer to the country of origin reported by the interviewees.
9. All participants have been assigned pseudonyms.
10. A research assistant helped with transcribing, while coding was done by the author. The project was pre-approved by The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (reference number 329494).
11. I divided the interview material in two. I examine responses to the accusation of naturalization fraud in another article.
12. To add context to the quotes, I present the interviewees' residence time in Norway and their country of origin.

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III

III

Sinners, Saints, and Racialized Scapegoats: (Mis)interpellation and Subject Positions in the Face of Citizenship Deprivation

Under review

Simon Roland Birkvad
Department of Sociology and Human Geography
University of Oslo