

# From Humanitarian Needs to Border Control: Norwegian Newspaper Narratives and Conceptions of Justice during the European Migration Crisis

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## Abstract

Migration has been a topic frequently present in political debates and the mass media in recent years, especially following the European and EU migration and refugee crisis. In this article, we address this issue by analysing newspaper debates in Norway and exploring different conceptions of global justice in these media narratives. Migration is by definition a cross-border issue that has a direct effect on the interests of states as well as individuals, and the question of global justice is thus highly relevant. Three core media narratives are: the *humanitarian*, the *statist*, and one on *EU integration*, which particularly highlights Norway as an integrated non-member of the EU. In the humanitarian narrative, a notion of impartiality of universal individual rights was prevalent, while in the statist narrative and to some extent in the EU integration narrative, a territorial and state-oriented conception of justice as non-domination was visible. Concerns about human rights were prevalent mainly in matters far away from Norway, but less so when the so-called migration crisis hit Norway directly.

## Keywords

Norway, EU non-member, media narratives, border control, state, humanitarian needs

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On 26 November 2015, the Norwegian government decided re-instate physical border controls and to suspend the Schengen Agreement. This was an unprecedented move in Norway's relationship with the EU, but followed similar actions taken by neighbouring countries Sweden and Denmark. This decision thus testifies to the strong interconnectedness and transnational character of migration issues in contemporary Norway. The background of the decision to reinstall border controls was the refugee crisis of 2014 and 2015, which also struck Northern Europe. Norway experienced a very substantial increase in asylum seekers compared to previous years. Over 31,145 applications for asylum were filed in 2015 (an increase from 11,983 in 2014), which is the highest number of applications in one year ever recorded (IMO 2016, 9). The surge in asylum applications was dealt with politically, administratively, and locally after some initial problems with capacity and reception conditions. Subsequently, the number of asylum applications fell dramatically – dropping to 3560 asylum applications in 2017 (UDI 2017).

The debate on migration and integration had been at the forefront of European politics for some decades when the refugee and migrant crisis occurred (Geddes and Scholten 2016). While the 1980s and 1990s were the decades of multiculturalism and theories of diversity, the last two decades have yielded debates centred on the economic, cultural, security and identity-oriented effects of migration to Europe, understood by some under the term 'securitisation' (see Huysmans 2006). It is in this context that the EU, its member states and strongly affiliated non-members such as Norway had to face an influx of refugees and asylum seekers, predominantly from the war-ridden region of the Middle East.

Migration affects not only the states involved, but crucially also the refugees and migrants themselves and the citizens of the host state. It involves issues such as rights, norms, values, and duties. In this sense, migration concerns questions of justice in a broad sense. Refugees and asylum seekers are individuals who seek protection in a country other than that of their origin and citizenship. This is a human right in international law. The ways in which policies are devised and refugees received can tell us something about whether national migration systems are just or unjust.

Consequently, migration and associated issues have a tendency to become politicised. Migration goes to the core of the political community as it involves the reception of new members into society, first temporarily and later potentially in the long-term (Walzer 1983).

With new members, questions arise about the political community's shared values, identity and about what signifies it as a "community of strangers" (Castiglione 2009, see also Taylor 1985). Migration has become politicised in Norway, even though it has not always been a country of migration, compared to, say, Germany, the United States or the United Kingdom (Joppke 1999). In recent years, migration has been at the forefront of public debates in Norway. These debates have centered around asylum and family reunification policies, the effects of intra-EU labour migration, and broader issues concerning societal and cultural integration of migrants and refugees. What is peculiar about Norway in a European perspective is that, although not a member of the EU, it is highly interwoven with EU migration policies and institutions: Norway is a member of the Schengen Agreement, has implemented the Dublin Regulation, and participates in other areas of the EU's justice and home affairs policies (see Eriksen and Fossum 2015).

In this article, we study Norwegian media narratives on migration and how they can be understood through different conceptions of justice. The politicisation of foundational issues for a political community often leads to them becoming *mediatized*, that is, "mass mediated" and in some respects a driver for political and societal change (see Hjarvard 2008; Michailidou and Trenz 2013). Moreover, there is considerable support in the literature for focusing on media narratives as an important aspect of ongoing national and European debates on migration (see e.g. Innes 2010; Wood and King 2013; Holmes and Castaneda 2016). There is, however, little research on such issues for Norway. Media narratives on migration do not figure prominently despite much research on migration, politics and society. One notable exception is by Tine Figenschou and Audun Beyer (2014) who analysed the extent to which different elites in Norway exert definitional power and drive the discourses of Norwegian migration debates. What is lacking in research on Norwegian migration debates, however, is an analyses of the media narratives linked to specific policies and societal debates on the subject. As a result, this article aims to address these lacunae through empirical material furnished by Norwegian newspapers and their coverage and commentary on migration during different moments of the 2014-15 refugee and migration crisis.

The main findings of this article are that Norwegian migration and refugee discourse is marked by three core narratives. The first is a *humanitarian* narrative focusing on the needs and basic rights of migrants and refugees when they reach European shores. The second is a *statist* narrative focusing on state control of borders in a time of increased migration and refugee flows.

The third is an *EU integration* narrative in which the future of European integration, relations between member states and issues of refugee control are addressed. The analysis shows how these narratives tend to change as the focus changes from Norway to regional or global matters. When news media in Norway addresses the refugee agreement between the EU and Turkey of March/April 2016, the narrative is predominantly humanitarian as it focuses on the needs and rights of migrants affected. Yet, when the focus shifts away from European or geopolitical issues such as the EU-Turkey deal to refugees in Norway, the narrative changes significantly. The focus is less on human rights and the needs of the individual refugee, and more on border and control issues, as well as technical solutions. This is an interesting finding, given Norway's self-understanding as a humanitarian champion (De Carvalho and Lie 2015).

Such media narratives are interesting in and of themselves as images of the current state of public debate, yet we discuss them further by juxtaposing them analytically with three conceptions of global justice. Outlined in more detail in the Introduction to this Special Issue, the three conceptions of non-domination, impartiality, and mutual recognition cover different individual and collective aspects of migration issues, pertaining to individual rights and state obligations. We find that there is no single conception that dominates Norwegian media narratives on migration. In the humanitarian narrative a notion of impartiality of individual rights came to the fore, while in the statist and EU integration narratives, a territorial and state-oriented conception of justice as non-domination prevailed.

In the next section, we provide some methodological notes on how we gathered and analysed the data for this article. We then provide a brief background on Norway as a migration country. In the main section, we present the analysis of and reasoning behind what we found to be the main narratives of Norwegian newspaper debates on refugees and migrants. Moreover, we analyse these narratives through the lens of different conceptions of global justice and how this is indicative of justice discourses related to migration across borders in Europe. Conceptual reflections on the Norwegian narratives are followed by a summary of the arguments and some concluding remarks.

## **Methods and definitions**

### *Choice of events*

This article maps and analyses the main narratives on refugees and migrants in the Norwegian public sphere based on data collected from four time periods or ‘events’ between 2014 and 2016.<sup>2</sup>

- 1) European Parliament elections on 22-25 May 2014;
- 2) The sudden increase in refugees crossing the northern Norwegian border from Russia in fall 2015 (16 -30 Nov. 2015), known as the Storskog event;
- 3) The EU-Turkey ‘Agreement’ to reduce the flows of ‘irregular migrants’ from Turkey to Europe of 18 March 2016;
- 4) An ‘eventless’ week in which there were no major events in Norwegian or European politics related to migration or refugees (15-30 Sept. 2016).

As Norway is not an EU member, one could question the choice of the European Parliament elections as an event for data collection. Yet, Norway is strongly integrated in several fields of EU politics, among them migration and asylum policy. In other words, the European Parliament elections are highly relevant for the Norwegian public debate and are therefore also interesting to study in the Norwegian case.

We chose the situation on the Russia-Norway border station Storskog in Northern Norway because of the extensive attention it received in the Norwegian media and political debate when about 5000 asylum seekers, most of them from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Ethiopia tried to cross it in the fall of 2015. The number of asylum seekers at the border went from zero to 200 in one day, and the Norwegian government was unsure of how to handle the situation. Many of the asylum seekers had stayed legally in Russia for some time, and Norwegian border authorities argued that they did not have a real need for protection. The border authorities therefore sent many of the asylum seekers back to Russia, where they were rejected by Russian authorities. Thus, the situation became highly political and led to negotiations between Norway and Russia on how to handle the refugees. As a result, the Norwegian Parliament changed the asylum law, so that the border authorities could now send asylum seekers back to Russia without actually treating their applications. This, along with a temporary suspension of the Schengen Agreement in several Nordic countries, led to a reduction of asylum seekers and refugees in Norway.

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<sup>2</sup> Data was collected two weeks before and one week after the ‘event’.

### *Choice of newspapers*

Most newspapers in Norway currently do not have a very strong political profile, but this is a rather recent development – since the 1980s (Allern 2007). The major newspapers have a more or less neutral or independent political line, although they do have some preconceptions for historical reasons. We tried to choose newspapers from different sides of the political spectrum; of the four newspapers in our sample, *VG* is a tabloid newspaper firmly placed in the centre, without any strong affiliations, and with the largest circulation. *Aftenposten* was formerly a conservative newspaper linked to *Høyre* (H, Conservative Party), but can now be considered an independent, centrist newspaper. *Klassekampen* is the largest daily on the left side with traditional links to the Communist movement after 1968, but now read widely as an independent, yet radical newspaper. *Vårt Land* is a relatively small newspaper linked to the broader Christian community and to the party *Kristelig Folkeparti* (Christian Democrats).

### *Search terms and data gathering*

As the focus was on migration and refugee discourse in the context of the refugee crisis, coding was performed by choosing keywords that could be utilised to gather as much reliable information as possible. Table 1 summarises the search terms and the number of articles selected for each time period. For each period, with the exception of the European Parliament elections, approximately 25 percent of the articles from each of the four newspapers were selected for our analysis. It is important to note here that big newspapers like *Aftenposten*, *VG* and *Klassekampen* produced a significantly higher number of articles in each period than *Vårt Land*. For the European Parliament elections, the number of articles were so low that we chose to use the entire sample of 13.

**Table 1: Search terms and number of articles**

	EP elections (8 May - 5 June 2014)	Storskog event (16 -30 Nov. 2015)	EU-turkey deal (4-25 April 2016)	‘Eventless’ week (15-30 Sept. 2016)
Keywords	<i>Europaparlament</i> [European Parliament], <i>valg</i> [election], <i>innvandring</i> [immigration]	Storskog, <i>asyl</i> [asylum], <i>innvandring</i> [immigration], <i>flyktning</i> [refugee], Schengen	<i>flyktning</i> [refugee] and <i>avtale</i> [agreement], EU and Tyrkia [Turkey], <i>flyktningavtale</i> [refugee agreement]	<i>Flyktning</i> [refugee], <i>asyl</i> [asylum], <i>innvandring</i> [immigration/ immigrant], <i>krise</i> [crisis]

<i>Aftenposten</i>	8	7	21	5
<i>Klassekampe</i>	1	6	22	7
<i>n</i>				
<i>VG</i>	3	6	19	10
<i>Vårt Land</i>	1	1	4	4
	13	20	66	26
				total 125

### *Definition of justice claims*

Global justice implies that there are certain conceptions of justice that are universal and have a cross-border reach, that is, they are at play in a polity's external relations. As such, the justice conceptions are relevant for migration and refugee policies as these policies concern trans-border and transnational relations involving individuals, political and legal institutions, states, and ultimately universal human rights. Eriksen (2016) has outlined three theoretical conceptions of justice – non-domination, impartiality and mutual recognition – dealing with all these relations.

*Justice as non-domination* is based on the classic notions of so-called 'negative freedom', that is, of justice as the absence of arbitrary domination of individuals on the part of political and legal institutions. In this article, we will use this conception in cases where the justice claim in the migration and refugee debate focuses on the state or state like-entities.

*Justice as impartiality* imparts a notion of justice based on the idea that the dignity of individuals is linked to their autonomy: in a 'Kantian' sense this means that individuals should be able to give themselves the laws they are to obey. This 'self-legislation' implies a conception of justice that is not primarily bent on the idea of negative freedom or on political and legal institutions, but on the equal rights and liberties of individuals regardless of state borders. In other words, we will investigate whether the media has focused on the human rights and freedoms of refugees as individuals.

*Justice as mutual recognition* posits that there is more to rights between individuals and polities than self-legislation in a bounded community. In this conception, justice is premised on the idea of deliberation as a wrong-correcting mode of interaction between individuals, based on reason-

giving. In this sense, justice is not pre-political or resulting from substantive considerations, but rather an intersubjective category in a community of equal individuals. In other words, equal worth translates for instance into respect for vulnerable individuals and groups. Rights are, then, at the centre of justice. These should, however, not be seen only as protection of private interests, but rather what equal rights-holders grant each other as they govern themselves as a community through law. On this basis, we investigate whether media narratives have focused on the rights of asylum seekers and migrants as part of a universal community of deliberation despite lack of full membership through citizenship.

### **Norway, refugees and migration**

Until the 1960s, Norway did not receive any significant flows of migrants or refugees. The 1956 Hungarian uprising and the following power transfer to Soviet-friendly actors led to some refugees entering Norway, but the flow of migrants and refugees was not especially large and accepting these groups was viewed as a political and legal obligation in the political climate of the time (Joppke 1999). Norway is a signatory to both the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (1948) and the UN Refugee Convention (1951). In this sense, Norway adheres to the basic principles of international refugee law, for instance, the right to apply for asylum in another country. The principle of *non-refoulement*, that is the right not to be returned to one's country of origin in case of serious threat to one's life or freedom, is also supported by Norway. Moreover, the regulation of foreigners and their access to Norwegian territory was part of the budding Nordic cooperation of the 1950s.

After the 1960s, however, there was a significant shift in the numbers of migrants that entered Norway. Over the next five decades, the character of migration changed quite dramatically. This happened in conjunction with a broader European trend of increased labour migration both internally in Europe as well as from countries outside Europe (Messina 2007). The new wave of labour migrants almost exclusively sought low-skilled jobs and the migrants were welcomed, as there was a surplus of jobs in Norway's budding oil economy.

After some years, labour unions and political actors started to press for the curtailment and regulation of labour migration to protect the labour market for Norwegians. In 1975 the Norwegian Parliament passed an *innvandringsstopp* (immigration stop) concerning labour migrants. As a result, the migrants coming to Norway after this were mainly refugees and asylum seekers that came through the UN refugee quota system. The latest migration wave to



Norway has occurred in the last two decades. First, there were refugees and asylum seekers during and in the aftermath of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Second, between 2014 and 2016, Norway witnessed another increase in refugees as a result of the Syrian civil war and increased geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. This led to extensive debates on asylum policies, reception of asylum seekers, and the future of integration policies.

Another important development has been Norway's participation in European integration. Although not an EU member, Norway became a part of the internal market through the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement in 1994, which granted free movement of persons and non-discrimination based on nationality. Consequently, EU citizens gained the right to move freely to Norway in order to work or study. This created a new concept of migration in that there was a distinction between intra- and extra-EU migrants.

As a result, there was a considerable increase in labour migration from the EU to Norway after 1994, most notably from countries in Central- and Eastern Europe (NOU 2011, 164). Moreover, Norway entered into an association agreement to the Schengen area in 1996 and was operatively integrated in 2001. Equally important, Norway became part of the EU's asylum system in 2001, with the latest Dublin Regulation (the so-called Dublin III) transposed into Norwegian law in 2014. This means that Norway adheres to the principle of 'first country' and is committed to returning asylum seekers to the European country where they first registered for evaluation of their asylum applications. Consequently, Norway's migration policies as well as concepts of migrant and refugee have become Europeanised in the last two decades (NOU 2012).

The latest turn of events regarding migration and Norwegian society and politics came with the so-called refugee or migration crisis. In the autumn and winter of 2014-15 there was a significant increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers that entered Norwegian territory, from 11,480 in 2014, to 31,150 in 2015 (UDI 2014, 2015). This led to an overburdening of the asylum system so that extraordinary measures had to be taken to register and accommodate the refugees. The influx mostly came from the Middle East through new routes, such as the one through Russia to the northern Norwegian border crossing of Storskog. The Norwegian government responded to the influx by temporarily reinstating border controls and thus suspending the free border regime of the Schengen Agreement.

### **Norwegian newspaper narratives on migration and refugees**

Our analysis finds that there are three main narratives on the European migration crisis in the selected Norwegian newspapers. The first is a *humanitarian* narrative focused on the micro perspective of the refugees and asylum seekers, in terms of reception conditions and future life prospects as a result of the handling of the crisis, as well as the status of their human rights as refugees and asylum seekers. The second is a *statist* narrative focused on borders, territorial control, institutional handling of refugee flows, and the state of the political community amidst the refugee crisis. The third is a *EU integration* narrative in which newspaper articles emphasize the fragile status of European integration and EU institutions, as the European asylum system is marked by fragmentation and internal contrasts between member states.

We present the analysis of each of these three main narratives in Table 2, before summarising and bringing out broader tendencies in the data, including a reflection on the movement from humanitarian issues to statist issues as the ‘object’ of reporting came ‘closer to home’.

**Table 2: Overview of main narratives in the Norwegian case**

<b>Narrative</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Justice claim</b>	<b>Main occurrence</b>
Humanitarian	Protection of rights, human beings in focus	Impartiality	EU-Turkey deal, eventless week
Statist/border control	Protection of borders, limitation of immigration, handling of massive refugee flows	Non-domination	Storskog event, EU-Turkey deal, EP elections
EU integration	Effects on the EU of migration crisis	Non-domination	EU-Turkey deal

### **The humanitarian narrative**

In our analysis, we found the humanitarian narrative to be most prevalent, especially in the weeks before and after the EU-Turkey deal in March/April 2016. This narrative focuses on the difficult situation of refugees and how they will be or have been affected by the agreement between Turkey and the EU. In this narrative, it is often the refugee, journalist or non-governmental organisation (NGO) that makes specific claims, while the refugees are the objects of the claims. The solution offered is twofold. First, to provide support for saving lives and safeguarding the minimum well-being of refugees. Second, the human side to the migration

issue is related to policy-making and system issues, with an emphasis on the need to create a tenable system of migration control that focuses on the well-being of the refugees themselves, not just the countries.

This category can be divided into two parts: one narrative focuses on the living conditions of the refugees on the ground, how they are treated in refugee camps and how they are affected by the EU-Turkey deal, or the other events researched. A second narrative focuses more on the human rights of refugees and the refugee convention in particular, and how these rights have been challenged by the handling of the refugee crisis.

### *Conditions on the ground*

The media coverage of the agreement between the EU and Turkey focused to a large degree on the living conditions of the refugees, the pressure on the European asylum system and the need to do something about this situation. The overall narrative is that Europe has a duty to act and aid the refugees in need. In this narrative, the refugees themselves are most often the object of the news articles. The European refugee crisis is depicted as having far-reaching human consequences for the refugees and migrants themselves. Linked to this narrative of the ‘bare bones’ of the refugee register, some articles also address the issue of human rights, and whether these are protected and upheld as a result of crisis management. We found that there is a tendency in these articles to focus on individual refugees’ stories. These are often part of on-site journalistic reports from the areas where refugees are dwelling: at the borders of the EU or in refugee camps. For example, one article in *VG* (2016c) argues that the conditions for refugees in Europe are so bad that many refugees choose to go back to their home country. In this article, a northern Iraqi refugee in Germany claims that he starved, and another from Afghanistan claims that “Jeg trodde Europa ville gi meg et godt liv, men jeg opplevde bare fiendtlighet og smerte [I thought Europe would mean a good life, but I was met with suffering and pain]”. After the EU-Turkey deal, the media narrative moved toward the potential effects it would have on the status and conditions of refugees. For example, in an article in *Klassekampen* (2016a), a spokesperson for the UNHCR states that the new deal will not lead to less refugee flows – it will only lead the refugees to search for new and more dangerous routes: “Slike ruter presser flyktninger ut i større fare. Vi forventer at flere mennesker vil dø [These new routes will put refugees in greater danger. We expect that more people will die]”. In another article, several spokespersons from Norwegian NGOs criticise the deal, arguing that it will lead to a new humanitarian catastrophe, and that it is only a short-term solution to the refugee crisis:

“Kortsiktig og ondskapsfullt [The agreement is short-sighted and evil]” (VG 2016d), says a representative from Doctors Without Borders.

The humanitarian narrative was clearly less prevalent in the other time periods studied, but to some extent visible in the Storskog event (November 2015) and the ‘eventless week’ (September 2016). The media coverage of the Storskog incident largely followed a statist and border control narrative, despite its clear human angle. To the extent that there was a humanitarian narrative in the Storskog case, the concerns were linked either to local issues or to relations with Russia. For example, one article focuses on how the refugees coming to Norway through the Arctic have been integrated into the local communities and on how important it is for them to have a job (VG 2015a). Another article focuses on the fact that it is not safe for the refugees to go back to Russia, because they will not get fair treatment of their asylum applications there (*Klassenkampen* 2015b). The NGOs interviewed in the article therefore argue that the refugees should not be returned to Russia because that would entail putting them in danger. In the eventless week, much of the media coverage on migration and refugees focused on humanitarian concerns. Several articles were critical of how both Norway and the EU were handling the refugee crisis, and argued that Europe had a responsibility to do something about the situation.

### *Human rights*

In both the EU-Turkey deal and the Storskog event, the focus on international law and the rights of refugees was prevalent. Although we consider this part of a humanitarian narrative, these articles focus to a lesser extent on the living conditions of the migrants and more on the legal implications for refugees in general. This narrative is particularly important with regard to the EU-Turkey deal, where NGOs, academics and some national politicians argued that the deal violated international law. According to an article reporting on the European Court of Human Rights, Turkey may not be a safe third country. A return country needs to meet certain minimum requirements when it comes to the living conditions of refugees, and according to a law professor, this might not have been the case in Turkey (*Klassekampen* 2016c). Additionally, the agreement grants some refugees more rights than others – Syrians can seek asylum in Europe, but Afghan and Iraqi refugees are returned to Turkey with immediate effect. The idea presented in these articles is that the right to asylum should not depend on nationality, but on the need for protection, highlighting a notion of justice that adheres to a principle of impartiality. For example, in one article, a spokesperson for the Norwegian Refugee Council

argues that the new deal will challenge the right of seeking asylum and portrays the EU as simply buying its way out of the refugee crisis rather than solving it (*Klassekampen* 2016a).

Before and after the change in the Norwegian asylum law as a result of the increasing number of refugees crossing the border from Russia into northern Norway (Storskog event), many NGOs, journalists and academics argued that Norway was violating international law. The argument in these articles is that Russia, as with Turkey, should not be considered a safe third country. The reason is that the refugees will not be given fair asylum application procedures. Thus, returning refugees to Russia without treating their asylum application in Norway is according to this understanding a violation of international law. A representative of the Norwegian Bar Association (*Advokatforeningen*) states:

Russland har tapt 2000 saker i Den europeiske menneskerettighetsdomstolen. Landet er blant annet dømt for å returnere asylsøkere til Syria og Usbekistan. Norge gir fra tid til annen asyl til russiske statsborgere. Da er det et paradoks at vi sjablongmessig vil returnere asylsøkere dit. [Russia has lost 2000 cases in the European Court of Human Rights. The country is, among other things, convicted of returning asylum seekers to Syria and Uzbekistan. From time to time, Norway gives asylum to Russian citizens. It is therefore a paradox that we should return asylum seekers to this country.] (*Klassekampen* 2015a).

A law professor adds that it would be a clear violation of international law if the refugees were sent back to Russia just because they transited through this country (i.e. did not have a residence permit in Russia) (*Klassekampen* 2015a).

### ***Justice claims in the humanitarian narrative***

Justice claims are part of any debate or discussion in which issues such individual rights, membership, residence, and distributive consequences of political choices are at stake. In the humanitarian narrative, the focus in Norwegian newspaper debates was mainly on the needs and rights of migrants as *individuals*. Their human dignity and the bare bones of human needs also figured in this narrative. Claims were made regarding the basic universal human rights of individual refugees, as well as the moral duties of political actors in meeting them. Moreover, the idea that the right to asylum should not depend on your nationality, but on your need for protection, was also prevalent in the narrative. This points in the direction of *justice as impartiality* as the main justice claim in this humanitarian narrative. Claims were also directed

at states and political institutions as carriers of a legal and moral responsibility for the rights and welfare of refugees. This also speaks to a notion of justice as impartiality where the main claimants of justice are individuals.

### **The statist narrative**

A topic prevalent in the media coverage of all cases was the need to find a way to *manage* the refugee flows, either at the EU level or the nation-state level. The narrative here was that the large number of refugees had led to challenges for the countries (e.g. managing applications, integrating and housing refugees, and more general economic and security concerns) and that states therefore saw a need to control their borders and limit the number of refugees. In this statist or control border narrative, the claimants are often national politicians, bureaucrats, EU level politicians or journalists. In most cases, the object of the narrative is the state (e.g. its regulations) or the refugees. We will divide this narrative into a systemic narrative and a narrative about limiting immigration.

### ***The systemic narrative***

Within the statist narrative, most news stories concern both the national and EU level struggles to handle the massive refugee flows. These articles do not necessarily claim that the refugees themselves pose a threat, but rather that the states or the EU do not have a proper way of handling the flow of refugees. Many of these articles also focus on very technical and practical measures for handling refugee flows, such as quota systems, changes to the laws, changes to the European Asylum System, numbers of refugees, etc. The systemic narrative seems to be more prevalent during the Storskog event (November 2015), but less so six months later, during the build up to the EU-Turkey deal in April/May 2016.

There were many articles with a systemic and political character during the Storskog event. Most revolved around the changes in the Norwegian migration law, the number of refugees crossing the border and more practical issues of handling the large refugee flows, as well as the different opinions among politicians or in European countries. For example, one article explains the more technical regulations of the Schengen area and how EU countries are agreeing to strengthen their outside borders. It describes discussions about creating a joint EU register for people traveling to and from Europe by air (VG 2015a). Other articles focus on the disagreement between Russia and Norway regarding the refugees crossing the border. While Norway argued that it did not need to give due regard and a normal processing of applications to the asylum

seekers coming through Russia because it is considered a safe country, Russia refused to take many of these asylum seekers back. These articles look only at the numbers of refugees, the disagreement between Russia and Norway and the more systemic aspects of refugee law, and do not talk about the difficult situations of the refugees themselves. It is particularly interesting that in the case of the EU-Turkey deal, many Norwegian newspapers focused on the humanitarian crisis and the human perspective of the refugee crisis, but when the refugees were at the Norwegian border, this humanitarian perspective was nearly non-existent. This tendency towards reducing refugees to statistics thus seems to be more prevalent when crisis strikes close to home.

### *The limiting immigration narrative*

Another sub-category of the statist narrative can be found in articles that focus on economic or security concerns, ranging from the limitation of immigration to more anti-immigrant arguments. The latter is more prevalent in the case of the European Parliament elections (May/June 2014). All the articles in that sample talk about anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic groups in other parts of Europe (i.e. EU member states), not in Norway.

The anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic articles subscribe to a narrative that immigrants take their jobs (economic) or are a security threat (e.g. terrorism, violence, etc). However, it is important to note that most of the Norwegian news coverage of the EP elections focus more on explaining the situation in Europe and the consequences for the European Parliament, than giving any support to this narrative. For example, several articles look at the low voter turn-out in the elections, and the underlying reasons for the Eurosceptic and anti-immigrant movements. Here, there is a significant mention of the financial crisis and the refugee flows as the main reasons for the 2014 election results in Europe.

In the EU-Turkey case, the narrative about refugees or immigrants causing problems is to a limited extent visible in some articles – here often from a Norwegian perspective. A few articles focus either on the Conservative government's actions to limit immigration, or more specifically on the Progress Party's (*Fremskrittspartiet*, FrP) actions and/or statements. In one article about the temporary border controls in Norway, a representative from the Progress Party says that it would be irresponsible to remove the border controls and refers to the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of refugees in Europe that could be war criminals or members of the Islamic State (*Klassekampen* 2016d). In an op-ed from 2016, the Prime Minister (H) and the

Immigration and Integration Minister (FrP), state that the government will take measures to reduce the number of asylum seekers that come to Norway because they constitute a challenge to the Norwegian welfare state. They want what they call a “bærekraftig innvandringspolitikk [sustainable immigration policy]” whereby Norway provides aid to the areas where the humanitarian crises take place rather than accepting refugees (VG 2016e). In an article in *Klassekampen* (2016e), the Immigration and Integration Minister argues that immigration in Norway should be as low as possible, and that there should be no common rules within the EU. The argument is that Norway needs strict rules in order to limit illegal immigration.

### ***Justice claim in the statist narrative***

Migration is a phenomenon at the interface between individuals and states, as well as law and morality. For receiving states, large-scale migration poses questions of border and population control, as well as social and political community issues. It is therefore not surprising that a statist narrative was visible in Norwegian news media. The framing of statist issues was very much concerned about the potential breakdown of border control and the state losing control over its territory, not about the individual migrant or refugee. Indeed, the narrative did not focus on *discrimination* with respect to certain groups of migrants, which would have caused an arbitrary hierarchy of migrants. We can therefore argue that there was a state-centric justice claim involved in the narrative, namely that of *non-domination*.

### **EU integration narrative**

The refugee crisis is a multifaceted European crisis, involving law and politics on different institutional levels, but crucially also questions related to individuals, citizenship, and the political community. It can, moreover, be understood as an institutional crisis (see Olsen 2018a) which becomes a “steering crisis” when the legitimacy of political institutions comes under strain, and normative issues of democracy, legitimation, and future institutional solutions emerge (see Habermas 1988). Such a political and institutional perception of the complexity of the migration crisis became vividly recognisable in what we can call an *EU integration* narrative in Norwegian newspaper debates. In this narrative, the European integration project was questioned as a result of the migration crisis.



The refugee crisis seems to have been perceived not only as a crisis of migration, of migrants and of refugees themselves, but also as a crisis of integration. In all three newspapers, there was a clear focus on what the ramifications of the refugee crisis would be for the European integration project at large. Still, it is very interesting to note that the EU integration narrative did not contain any reflections on Norway's deep integration with EU migration policy through membership in the Schengen area and implementation of the Dublin Regulation. If EU migration policy is at the verge of breaking down, this would have major ramifications for the Norwegian migration system as well.

The EU integration narrative was especially visible in media coverage of the EU-Turkey deal. The deal was framed in the context of a Union lacking institutional resources and tools to handle the refugee crisis internally, and needing to resort to external actors to gain some control over refugee flows. This in turn was interpreted as a sign of weakness as well as uncertainty in Brussels with respect to Turkey's role in Europe and specifically in the system of integration. *Aftenposten* (2016), for instance, highlighted this dilemma as a double standard on the part of the EU. Moreover, Norwegian media discourse focused on the geopolitics of the EU as a 'power' that cedes instruments of migration control to Turkey.

Doubts about the European integration project were also visible in other periods. Interestingly, there was some reporting on integration issues in the eventless weeks. Especially *Klassekampen* ran some stories on the purported "breakdown" of solidarity and cooperation within the EU, with specific emphasis on the regulation of refugee quotas to the various EU member states. The focus is largely put on the widely divergent views on the migration system of different actors in different EU countries (*Klassekampen* 2016e). This is described as a complication for any negotiations and efforts to reach agreement on this contested issue. *VG* (2016a) contributed to this narrative as well, through opinion pieces that highlighted the need for the EU to deliver sustainable solutions for the future, especially on migration. Moreover, *VG* suggested that the EU might have to go further in the direction of what has been called "differentiated integration" (2016f). This would amount to a new rationale of European integration, in which a coalition of "the willing" would lead to more supranational integration among a core group of member states.

### ***Justice claims in the EU integration narrative***

States are also the most important in the integration narrative. European integration is after all integration of independent and sovereign states. The narrative is largely focused on the problems of cooperation between different member states and the uncertain status of European integration in this context. Thus, there is not much in this narrative that refers to claims of justice, besides the possible argument that debating (the lack of) solidarity in the handling of the refugee crisis raises some issues of justice in relations between states. This reveals a notion of *justice as non-domination*, especially in relation to the EU-Turkey deal, which involves the possibility of power asymmetry and hegemony, even though it is an agreement between two un-coerced signatories.

It can be argued that, on a general level, European migration and asylum policies approximate a notion of justice as non-domination. Yet, the analysis of the Norwegian newspaper narratives does not exhibit such strong traits of justice as non-domination. Indeed, the in the EU integration narrative that we see in the news reporting, the EU is seen as one entity, rather than an organisation of member states where there might be domination by one or more states over others. A reason for this lack of pronounced non-domination in the narrative may be found in Norway's peculiar status of being on the inside through close cooperation, yet on the outside in (formal) political terms (see e.g. Olsen 2018b). Therefore, despite the close integration with the EU asylum system, what we find in the media narratives is a profound outsider's view of the EU, where the decisions and policies taken in the EU do not affect Norway. As a result, issues of justice concerning the (Norwegian) state perspective do not come to the fore.

### **Concluding remarks**

Migration has been a topic frequently present in political debates and the mass media in recent years, especially following the European and EU migration and refugee crisis. In this article, we have addressed this issue by looking at newspaper debates in Norway. Although an outsider in terms of EU membership, Norway is very much an insider with respect to EU migration policies through participation in EU asylum and migration cooperation. In this context, we found that newspaper debates in four Norwegian dailies revealed three main narratives on migration: a humanitarian narrative, a statist/border control narrative, and an EU integration narrative.

The issues and themes addressed in these narratives vary considerably in three different events and periods linked to the refugee crisis. They cover a spectrum ranging from the vulnerability

of refugees and migrants and their rights, to the classic understanding of states and their special responsibility for territorial control. But they also question the sustainability of European integration and EU institutions amidst a considerable steering crisis and the collapse of cross-national solidarity. Consequently, the analysis highlighted how these different narratives bring out varying conceptions of justice related to the refugee crisis. In the humanitarian narrative, there were claims to justice as impartiality in the manifold discussions on the basic human rights of the refugees as individuals. Especially in the statist/border control narrative and to some lesser extent in the EU integration narrative, the main onus was put on the issue of states and state relations, often calling for recognition of the need for stable rules and equitable policy solutions, all pointing in the direction of justice as non-domination.

There are especially two interesting tendencies in the narratives extracted from the empirical data: one concerns ‘internalisation’ of migration issues and the other regards the special framing of EU integration in Norwegian debates. As for the first, it is particularly interesting that Norwegian newspaper debates tend to internalise what are essentially *cross-border* issues and phenomena. The border control narrative is a case in point. This narrative centred to a significant degree on the steering and capacity problems of the state, largely overlooking the clearly multilateral issue at stake. Migration concerns human beings, citizens, political institutions, local authorities, nation-states and supranational organisations. However, the narrative focused on the *Norwegian* experience with managing migration and refugees, often not taking into account its embeddedness in European and global processes. The humanitarian narrative is partly an exception to this interpretation, yet even when reporting and discussing the rights of individual migrants and refugees on the move, a statist narrative was present.

As for the second, it is interesting that in Norwegian media discourse on migration issues, the EU is for the most part framed as an “outsider” where “we” witness a potential breakdown of border controls and migration policy. The framing of this narrative eschews the deep Europeanisation of Norwegian migration policy and the spillover from possible EU policy failure to Norway as an integrated non-EU member. Moreover, the EU integration narrative does not to any significant degree highlight the fact that Norway has little or no say in actual EU policy decisions. In other words, Norwegian newspaper narratives seem to portray Norway as more of an outsider to the EU migration crisis than is actually the case. It is beyond the scope of this article to explain why this is so, yet it can be argued that it is characteristic of Norwegian debates on the EU and its crises, in which the nuances of Norway’s affiliations with the EU are

pushed into the background. The perspective is more ‘intergovernmental’ than ‘supranational’, to use phrases from the EU integration literature. Despite the strong interconnectedness of migration policies in Europe, the domestic viewpoint dominates.

To conclude, the empirical analysis of this article and the two main tendencies outlined show that there is an on ongoing process of ‘renationalisation’ (see Olsen 2014) in Europe, whereby attention is shifted from cosmopolitan issues and globalism, to issues of state security, territorial politics and a ‘stand alone’ nation-state. We do not know the root causes for media debates turning ‘inward’ on the migration issue, but this is certainly something of a paradox since migration is a topic steeped in cross-border and transnational consequences for individuals, societies and states.

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