

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

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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

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