Risk, the Media, and Detention

Margaret S. MALLOCH and Elizabeth STANLEY (2005). "The detention of asylum seekers in the UK: Representing risk, managing the dangerous." <u>Punishment & Society</u> 7(1): 53 - 71.

Margaret Malloch and Elizabeth Stanley here present one of the first in-depth bodies of research linking media-reinforced stereotypes of asylum seekers, political propagandizing, fear of security and material threats, NIMBY-ism, and the rise of the detention estate in the UK. They point out that, despite apparent public support for detention, the fact that local residents protest plans for nearby detention centres illustrates a sense of "xeno-racism" (58), as well as people trying to "assert their own management of risk (to perceived threats to employment; threats to services; criminal threats; threats of the 'other' changing the local landscape)." (62) In other words, the management of risk is supported at official, government levels but detention is not really trusted as an instrument of security at the local level. Malloch and Stanley critique a concept central to detention theory and policy that is increasingly gaining traction in popular and policy circles: namely, that detention of asylum seekers is justified because asylum seekers are unknowable intruders who may be liars, violent conmen, benefits cheats, inassimilable strangers, or worse.

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