



# Workshop on ethnographies of border controls

**Date:** 05 - 06 December 2013

**Venue:** Spelbomskan, Aula Magna, Stockholm University

## **First session: Economies**

### **The Incorrigible Subject: The Autonomy of Migration and the Political Economy of the Border**

**Nicholas De Genova, King's College (London)**

The material and practical techniques and technologies of contemporary regimes of border policing and immigration law enforcement are only finally apprehensible in relation to another “concrete” reality: the embodied materiality of “irregular” or “illegal” migrants. These humble border crossers represent the incorrigible subject of virtually all contemporary border regimes, in response to which the multifarious objective infrastructures and practices of border patrol must be understood to be reaction formations. As autonomous subjects, with their own aspirations, needs, and desires, which necessarily exceed and overflow any regime of immigration and citizenship, migrants’ mobility projects enact an elementary freedom of movement to which borders are intrinsically a response. However, rather than perceive merely the appearance of borders as purely exclusionary apparatuses, it is crucial to see the contradictory processes of subordinate inclusion that are also mediated and indeed facilitated by border controls. Here, we must recognize the incorrigible subject of the autonomy of migration to be also the incorrigible subject of political economy: living “concrete” labor – the inextricable source of economic value.

### **Hardwiring the Frontier: Technology and Troublemakers in Europe's Illegality Industry**

**Ruben Andersson, Stockholm University**

Migration controls at the external EU borders have become a large field of political and financial investment in recent years – indeed, an ‘industry’ of sorts – yet conflicts between states and border agencies still mar attempts at cooperation. This paper takes an ethnographic look at one way in which officials try to overcome such conflicts – through technology. In Spain’s North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, advanced and ag-

gressive border fencing has pulled in a range of actors around a supposedly ‘impenetrable’ divide. In West Africa, the secure ‘Seahorse’ network hardwires border cooperation into a satellite system connecting disparate African and European forces. And on EU level, the ‘European external border surveillance system’ or Eurosur papers over the power struggles between agencies and states through ‘decentralised’ information-sharing – even as the system’s physical features (nodes, coordination centres, interfaces) deepen the fight between them. Concluding on this note, the paper argues for a closer ethnographic look at the contradictory effects of the materialities of the border – infrastructure, interfaces, vehicles – in Europe’s fraught ‘fight against illegal migration’, and their often distressing human consequences.

## **Second session: Militarisations**

### **“When You Go There You Will Understand”: An Ethnography of Police-Military Relations in the Evros Borderland**

**Polly Pallister-Wilkins, University of Amsterdam**

Border practices have shifted over the last two decades under changing security paradigms focused on populations constituted as a threat. Militarised border practices built around defence against militaries have given way to border policing nowhere more so than in Europe. However the Greek-Turkish border remains highly militarised. Here traditional defence practices take precedence over border policing occurring simultaneously resulting in a hierarchy of operational practice, tensions and conflicts between the Greek military and the border police. Based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in the Evros region, this paper explores this militarised border under the shifting border practices of new security paradigms, historical antagonisms between Greece and Turkey, the role of the military in Greek socio-politics and the conflicts and challenges posed for the civilian border policing operations of the Greek police and their European colleagues as they seek to police and secure the border against irregular migration.



## Waiting for José: The Minutemen's Pursuit of America

Harel Shapira, University of Texas at Austin

In an age of globalization, the border has become a lightning rod for the politics of belonging. On the one hand, the border is a legal boundary; but it is also a physical and symbolic object that promotes new kinds of social practices, shared projects, and collective identities. Through an ethnographic study of the militia group known as the Minutemen, this talk examines the U.S. / Mexico border as a place organized around and constitutive of a set of experiences. Although we may think of the border, and the Minutemen's presence on it, as simply an expression of racist ideology, it is much more. By patrolling the border and engaging in the practices of soldiering – from putting on camouflage, to calling each other by their old military handles, to being part of a masculine space – the Minutemen seek to escape the state of meaningless existence that defines their current lives as aging veterans, put their old skills to use and reclaim a lost sense of purpose and meaning. In this way, the Minutemen's border politics are not just organized around a set of attitudes or beliefs about immigration, but about a way of being in the world, a way of being in the world which the border enables.

## Third session: Removals

### The Flight of the Deported: Deportation, Aviation and Politics

William Walters, Carleton University

This paper addresses a significant gap in political studies of deportation, borders and migration. Building on my earlier thematization of 'viapolitics' I argue for a focus on the activity of transportation, the infrastructures, procedures, authorities and vehicles by which the 'removal' of 'deportees' is effected. I focus on deportation by air with a focus on UK practices of transportation. In the UK there have been a number of controversial incidents, some fatal, involving the forced removal of migrants on planes. I examine two dimensions of transportation practices. First, a microphysics of power which draws attention to the corporealities and relations of force which underpin bordering practices, and in particular how these take new forms when confronted with the material specificity of air travel. Second, I explore some aspects of the aeropolitics of deportation: how the very materiality of the plane, and the logistics of its governance have provided a surface for certain tactics of protest, resistance and blockage. Recognizing the very existence of these tactics and this aeropolitics will reveal that the flight of the deported is a complex motion, at once ethical, political and logistical.

## Rescue, Return, In Place: Regulating Return Migration in Indonesia

Johan Lindquist, Stockholm University

In this paper I describe how border control in Indonesia extends from the border back to the point of initial departure for three different groups of return migrants, namely documented migrants, deportees, and victims of counter-trafficking. Each of these three categories of migrants are registered and transported via diverse transit points such as special air and seaport terminals, holding camps, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and hospitals back to their home villages. These forms of encapsulated escort via specified corridors have come to develop during the last 15 years—ostensibly in the name of "protection" (*perlindungan*)—and are primarily organized by the Indonesian state, but come to involve a wide range of NGOs and international organizations, most notably the International Organization of Migration. From an international perspective, the scope of this institutionalized border regime appears unique, while offering a contrast to European and North American cases. In closing, I consider a few different ways that we might understand the formation of the Indonesian border regime.

## Fourth session: Bureaucracies

### Protecting the Nation from Liars: The Quest for Truth among Agents in the Dutch Agency for Repatriation and Departure Service

Barak Kalir, University of Amsterdam

This paper is based on ethnographic work among agents in the Dutch 'Repatriation and Departure Service' (RDS). RDS facilitates 'voluntary departures' of 'illegal foreigners', and involves a specialised police unit in the case of individuals who do not 'collaborate'. The paper focuses on RDS agents' self-perception as protectors of the Dutch nation-and-state from 'undesired and illegal subjects' and on their practices in defining whether someone should be deported forcefully. The point of departure here is that agents exercise much discretion in their handling of potential deportees. It is common for agents to demand from their 'clients' to 'tell the truth' and to 'be willing to collaborate'. Given the current legal landscape on migration, this demand for truth-telling and collaboration is a paradoxical and an impossible one for many migrants in an irregular status. That they, therefore, often choose not to collaborate (at least not fully) is, in turn, vindicating the stereotypical views of RDS agents. This paper thus problematises the centrality of truth as the ultimate ground for prudence in the case of potential deportees. It argues that truth-telling is increasingly seen as a value that not only distinguishes between 'authentic' and

insincere claimers of rights, but also between ‘deserving’ and ‘non-deserving’ political subjects. By focusing on truth-telling, state bureaucrats can avoid any critical thoughts about the validity and logic of the system which they serve.

### **Fair and Consistent? Exploring Court-Based Factors in Asylum Appeal Decision Making in UK Immigration and Asylum Tribunal Hearing Centres**

**Andrew Burridge (with Nick Gill and Melanie Griffiths), University of Exeter**

Asylum seekers, legal practitioners and NGO activists have long spoken of differences in the characteristics and practices of the various Asylum and Immigration Tribunal hearing centres located across the UK. Recent Freedom of Information Act requests have revealed significant disparities in asylum appeal success rates between the various hearing centres. This research explores how centre-specific factors and cultures affect the running and experience of asylum appeals, and how inconsistency interplays with the notion of judicial fairness. To date, much of the research conducted in the UK on judicial asylum decision-making has drawn from written determinations and focused on legal issues regarding credibility and memory. There has been far less ethnographic or observation-based work on the immigration tribunal. This research discusses the role of asylum appeals hearings and the Tribunal as an extension and interrelated part of border control and detention practices, such as the use of *detained fast track* procedures, and the arbitrary nature in which such decisions are enacted, similar to those witnessed at international border crossings. It also considers the manner in which asylum seekers and their legal representatives (if they have such support), negotiate these centre-specific and judicial disparities through the employment of a variety of different strategies.

### **Fifth session: Regimes**

#### **Gaps in overlapping worlds: Greek, Turkish and EU border regimes in the Aegean**

**Sarah Green, University of Helsinki**

Ever since the European Union began reorganising the political, legal and economic relations amongst different European countries, questions have arisen about what happens at the interface between countries, and whether this involves one, or more than one, way of establishing the difference between ‘here’ and ‘somewhere else’. Obviously, this has implications for movement, exchanges and transactions across and between places. Drawing on the example of the Aegean, which simultaneously contains parts of the Greek-Turkish border and an EU border, the paper explores what the overlap between these

two border regimes implies for the location of the Aegean. This example suggests that at times, the two border regimes create parallel worlds that do not affect one another; at other times, the EU regulations encompass the Aegean, and draw the region into relation with a much larger border regime that stretches across the entire Mediterranean and beyond (e.g. through the EuroMed program).

### **Borders of Responsibility: Migrant Deaths on the Mediterranean and the Politics of Human Rights Supervision**

**Karolina Follis, Lancaster University**

This paper is about the spring 2011 case of a migrant boat, when 63 of 72 passengers died in the course of a two-week drift at sea. Despite communicating distress, they were left to die by passing NATO vessels and maritime authorities. I examine how the Council of Europe, the continent’s main human rights body, responded to this disaster. How did the official rapporteur choose to frame the event? Based on research at the CoE, I show how she arrived at a politically acceptable account of responsibility for the loss of life. Beyond examining this particular CoE investigation, the paper inquires more broadly into the practice and politics of human rights supervision in instances of complex institutional and moral failures. It argues that the only human rights practice capable of challenging the European border regime is one that embraces a robust notion of responsibility which combines both duty and blame.

### **Sixth session: Criminalisations**

#### **Minority Report Redux: Finnish Crimmigration Practices of Detention and Expulsion**

**Magdalena Kmak, Erik Castrén Institute of International Law and Human Rights at the University of Helsinki**

This paper focuses on the practices of immigration detention in Finland as measures of the Finnish border regime. Its primary aim is to analyse the practical application of the article 121(3) of the Finnish Act on Aliens (2004), according to which ‘an alien may be ordered to be held in detention if (...) 3) taking account of the alien’s personal and other circumstances, there are reasonable grounds to believe that he or she will commit an offence in Finland’. By taking this provision under scrutiny the paper first address the relationship between criminal law and administrative detention of foreigners in Finland and approaches it from the perspective of crimmigration control. Secondly the paper argues that this relationship exemplified by article 121(3), constitutes a transitory stage between disciplinary and control societies. Here the measures of sovereign power (banishment) and disciplinary power (punishment) become the means of new technologies of managing not only

immigration but society in general.

### **Capital Addictions: Claiming Refuge in the Necropolitical Scene**

**Gilberto Rosas, University of Illinois**

This paper, part of larger work in progress, explores the routinization of warfare, and related techniques of domination of Mexico's Drug War as it plays out ethnographically between El Paso, Texas, regularly rated as one of the safest cities in the United States and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, regularly cast as one of the deadliest cities in the world. The paper analyzes how the El Paso economy has boomed in these catastrophic conditions, as thousands of Mexican citizens have fled Juárez, their stories of flight, as well as Other flows of power and wealth.

### **Participant bios (in alphabetical order)**

**Ruben Andersson** is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University. His PhD from LSE was concerned with migration controls and humanitarian intervention along the Spanish-African border. The book based on this material, *Illegality, Inc.: Clandestine migration and the business of bordering Europe*, will be published in 2014 by UC Press.

**Andrew Burridge** is an Associate Research Fellow at the University of Exeter, working with Dr. Nick Gill on a project investigating the causes of disparities in asylum appeal success rates in the UK. Previously Andrew has conducted extensive research for his PhD in the Mexico-U.S. borderlands, which was concerned with migrant deaths and securitization practices in southern Arizona, based at the University of Southern California. While at the International Boundaries Research Unit at Durham University, his research investigated the developing practices of border management conducted by the EU agency Frontex, particularly at the Greek-Turkish border. He is co-editor of the recent publication *Beyond Walls and Cages: Prisons, Borders and Global Crises* (UGA, 2012).

**Nicholas De Genova** is Reader in Urban Geography at King's College London. He is the author of *Working the Boundaries: Race, Space, and "Illegality" in Mexican Chicago* (2005), co-author of *Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship* (2003), editor of *Racial Transformations: Latinos and Asians Remaking the United States* (2006), and co-editor of *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement* (2010).

**Karolina Follis** is Faculty Fellow in the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion and Security Lancaster at Lancaster University. She is a political anthropologist working on borders, citizenship and human rights. She is the author of *Building Fortress Europe. The Polish-Ukrainian Frontier* (Penn Press 2012).

**Sarah Green** is Professor in Social Anthropology at the University of Helsinki. Her books include *Notes from the Balkans* (Princeton 2005), which won the American Anthropological Association's Douglass Prize for best contribution to Euro-peanist Anthropology. In 2008, Professor Green launched an international research network, EastBordNet, dedicated to developing new approaches towards the study of borders on the eastern peripheries of Europe.

**Barak Kalir** is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Amsterdam and co-director of the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies. He is the author of *Latino Migrants in the Jewish state: Undocumented Lives in Israel* (Indiana University Press 2010) and co-editor of *Transnational Flows and Permissive Polities: Ethnographies of Human Mobilities in Asia* (Amsterdam University Press 2012).

**Magdalena Kmak** is a Lecturer in International Law and post-doctoral researcher at the Erik Castrén Institute of International Law and Human Rights at the University of Helsinki. She is a co-director of a project on Law and the Other in Post-Multi-cultural Europe and a member of the Centre of Excellence in Foundations of European Law and Polity Research. Her research interests encompass international and European refugee and migration law, human rights, public international law, critical criminology, governmentality and nomadism.

**Johan Lindquist** is Associate Professor in the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University. He is the author of *The Anxieties of Mobility: Migration and Tourism in the Indonesian Borderlands* (2009) and co-editor of *Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity* (2013). His current book manuscript has the preliminary title, *Mediating Migration: Brokering Knowledge and Mobility in Indonesia and Beyond*.

**Polly Pallister-Wilkins** is an Assistant Professor of International Relations at the University of Amsterdam. Her previous research looked at the resistance against the separation barrier in the Occupied Palestinian Territories while her current research focuses on the political sociology of walls within 'bordering' practices more generally. Her most recent ethnographic work has been in the Evros borderland in Greece where she has investigated both the newly built border fence and the daily working practices of Greek and FRONTEX border guards.

**Gilberto Rosas** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Latin@ Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. Rosas graduated from the University of Texas in 2004 with a doctorate in Anthropology and a doctoral portfolio in Mexican American Stu-

dies. Much of his scholarship emerges from his ethnographic research on the production of criminalities in the Mexico-US borderlands. His interests range from questions of state and governance, to race, difference, violence and power, to migrations and borders. His book came out in the summer 2012 with Duke University Press, titled *Barrio Libre: Criminalizing States and Delinquent Refusals of the New Frontier*.

**Harel Shapira** is Assistant Professor and Fellow, C.B. Smith, Sr. Centennial Chair in U.S.-Mexico Relations at the University of Texas at Austin. Professor Shapira is an ethnographer who writes about right wing politics in the United States. He is the author of *Waiting for José: The Minutemen's Pursuit of America* (Princeton 2013) and is currently conducting research on gun owners in Texas.

**William Walters** is cross-appointed in the Department of Political Science and the Department of Sociology/Anthropology at Carleton University, Canada. His most recent book is *Govern-mentality: Critical Encounters* (Routledge 2012). His research interests include infrastructures of migration, and the material politics of secrecy and disclosure.

