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Sussex Centre for Migration Research

Transnational migration Theory and method of an ethnographic analysis of border regimes

Working Paper No 55

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April 2009

where the regime of mobility control is itself challenged by the fluid, clandestine, multidirectional, and context-dependent forms of mobility. At first glance, this may seem like a heroic glorification of migrant ruses and tactics best suited to the neoliberal ideal type of the homo economicus. However, we consider this epistemological question as central to the understanding of migration as a movement 'that possesses knowledge, follows its own rules, and collectively organises its own praxis' (Boutang 2007).

The work of the new migration economics as well as research on transnationalisation (cf. Basch et al. 1994) has shown that the conception of the migrant as an economic and, as a rule, male Robinson Crusoe cannot be sustained (cf. Hess 2005; Kofman and Sales 1998). These studies stress the importance of households, families, and other networks as the context within which migration takes place. So migrants never reach the border on their own.

In the following we want to describe the Aegean border zone as a social, conflictual space composed of diverse actors, forces, discourses, interests and economies. We will start with ethnographic accounts of Turkey as a central transit space and hot spot of migration along the so called eastern route. Subsequently, we will follow the border crossing strategies to Greece.

'Sheep trade' – Wild sheep chase in the Aegean

In contrast to the well known tourist destinations along the Turkish Mediterranean coast, Ayvalik is an almost sleepy resort that lies only a few kilometres from the Greek island of Lesbos. But when we visited Ayvalik in 2003, right away our host told us that only last week a ship had sailed out with 23 migrants on board but had capsized somewhere nearby. Only three survived. 'The coastguard doesn't bother to raise the sunken and stranded ships anymore because there are so many of them. I can bring you to one,' he told us. The journey didn't lead to a stranded ship

but to another person who knew the 'sheep trade' from personal experience. Just a few years previously the man had helped 800 migrants board a tanker. It happened the way it always does. He got a call from Istanbul letting him know his help was needed. They actually succeeded in transporting the 800 people to the sparsely populated coast and from there to the tanker which was to take them directly to Italy. A day later he got the news that the tanker had been captured.

When the transport service began in the late 1980s it was very small and personal; then, in the middle of the 1990s, the Kurds began to show up – and now people arrive from just about everywhere. In the beginning they all travelled by public transport; then they were brought with minibuses, and eventually with three or four big buses – until the police began to notice. So now they are moved in trucks, 'squashed together like sheep', as he put it. Another fisherman told us a similar biography of smuggling. What started out as a favour lead to more and more people asking him for 'help', until eventually, three years ago, he was arrested. However, he was convinced that 'people will always try and escape and others will always help them'. With the increase in the level and sophistication of control technologies, the situation has become much more difficult – the main effect being that small smugglers like the fisherman are losing the race and well-organised smuggler networks are taking over. As another smuggler in Greece told us while recounting his experience with border crossings, 'the payment only comes at the end of the deal'. This represents the security that the customers or their relatives have. The deal is always a verbal one. When the captain has been contacted and the agreement made then the date is set, the 'heads' are counted, and finally the price and method of payment is determined. The price varies according to the number of 'heads' and the type of journey. The captain can earn up to €15,000 per 'transport'. 'Sometimes, during the summer, we are finished in five minutes.'

When we visited, about 450 people – guarded by eight policemen – were stuck in the camp. Most of those detained knew that they would have to stay there for three months and then go to Athens. They asked for telephone cards and telephone numbers of NGOs in Athens. When asked if they needed anything else, it was surprising to hear Minu's certainty: 'Yes, an English grammar book. ... We want to go to Canada, you know!'

Apo was another inmate of this so-called 'reception centre'. He told us that he was a 'guest worker' who had lived with his relatives in southern Germany since the beginning of the 1980s. In the 1990s he had gone back to the Turkish mountains to fight with the PKK. When the PKK called a cease-fire he had withdrawn to Iraq. He had already spent some months trying to return to Germany, eventually managing to reach the Aegean island of Lesbos from the Turkish coast. He could not return directly to Germany, since according to the stipulations of the German Aliens Act, his legal residency was no longer valid due to his long absence. So although he had already lived in Germany for 25 years, Apo would now be illegal there. Although he would qualify as a political refugee, he did not want to apply for asylum on Lesbos – the procedure was too uncertain and time-consuming. The acceptance quota in 2004 was only 0.6 per cent and waiting periods of up to two years are not uncommon. If Apo applied for asylum in Greece, he would also have to be registered in Laurio, a camp for victims of political persecution (from Turkey in particular) that was erected south of Athens about 10 years ago. If he were to be registered in Greece as a refugee, however, his first arrival data would be registered in the Schengen Information System (SIS). According to the Dublin Convention on Asylum, which regulates first country provisions, this would rule out travelling on to Germany, since in case of arrest he would have to reckon with his being sent back to Greece. However, as Apo wishes to live in Germany, he accepts the risks entailed in crossing borders illegally. He is

counting on being able to leave Greece illegally with the help of his family networks.

On Crete, we found a repetition of this scenario in the 'Hotel Royal', directly opposite the rather oppressive US military base. The spokesperson for the detainees, who had been a teacher in Egypt, told us that half of the detained migrants are Palestinians who have applied for asylum, while the other half do not wish to make an application. They were, in fact, only in Greece by mistake. They really wanted to go to Italy. Their one request was for help in freeing 'their brother' who had been identified during an interrogation as a 'trafficker' – 'just because they needed someone to blame'. However, according to a naval officer in front of the hotel, 'the four traffickers' had not actually been apprehended yet.

When viewed from a theoretical perspective of repression, the camps would appear to provide the ultimate proof for the efficacy and the misery of 'Fortress Europe'; however, the stories told by Mike, Resa, Minu and Apo provide exemplary evidence of the porosity and failure of this self-proclaimed omnipotent 'fortress'. Moreover, their active embeddedness within criminal networks of cross-border mobility, as well as their perseverance and the multi-directional flexibility with which they manage their biographies, prompt an alternative understanding of both the impermeability of borders, as well as the function of trafficking. In what follows, we want to exemplify this in regard to the function of camps. When viewed through Mike's, Resa's, Minu's and Apo's eyes, camps are tolerated transit stations, even though these spaces seem to oppose the very core of migration – excessive mobility. Camps are spaces outside of all spaces, heterotopias in Foucault's words (2005), while still existing in reality. What makes the "imperceptible politics of migration" as Papadopoulos et al. (2008) call it, so powerful is that it incorporates, digests, and absorbs these spaces through the excessive movements of mobility.

Transit camps

The Europeanization of migration policy and the installation of the liminal institutions of camps clearly illustrate current tendencies in the transformation of sovereignty. This process of the Europeanization of migration policy, not only attempts to erect a rigid executive segment for policing migration, but it also constructs a space for a new form of regulation of migration. While statist–legalist thinking understands undocumented and illegal migration as a criminal crossing of borders, it is, in terms of its local realities across Europe, a complex field amenable to management and control.

Apo, Reza and all the other trans-migrants caught at the borders are confined to the camps on the islands until their nationality

practice this phase lasts from one to three years.

This administrative practice documents a political calculus that is an open secret: the migrant will waive his interview, remain illegal, and move on. Until 1992, the responsibility for both the recognition of the right to asylum and the financing of initial reception lay primarily with UNHCR. The

since it excludes the question of the regulation of labour power and focuses exclusively on a legalist understanding of the function of camps. Such approaches reverse Agamben's concept: the question now centres on the mode of articulation between deportation camp and the restructuring of the global labour market in contemporary capitalism. In his critique of Agamben, Sandro Mezzadra (2007) recasts the figure of the contemporary camp as a type of 'decompression chamber' which functions to disperse the pressure on the labour market, sectorally, locally and extritorially.

If one is to believe the official estimates of Europol, 500,000 undocumented migrants enter Europe annually via the South-European/Mediterranean route. This represents one fifth of the total estimate of undocumented immigration to Europe. Under such conditions, the camps of South-East Europe are omnifunctional institutions of migration policy, since they 'produce' the flexible separation of residence and labour rights, and the outsourcing of the reproduction costs of undocumented labour. In no sense are they places of totalitarian immobilisation. Their relative porosity and the temporary nature of residence gives them the function of stopover points. The camps are fields of various forces which permeate the migration politics of the EU countries along various axes. Within them, migrants are subject to what appears initially to be a rigid system of mobility control, but which they seek to bypass where they can with microscopic 'sleights'. The camps represent less the paradigmatic incarceration milieu in the age of authoritarian neo-liberalism than the spatialized attempt to temporarily control movement, i.e. to administer traffic routes, to render regulated mobility productive. Their porosity is thus an expression of an institutionalised border porosity that evolves through relations of power, where the actions of the migrants and their carriers play just as much a role as the clearly discernible population policy intentions of the EU. Therefore, in the final

section, we want to ask if it is possible to think camps 'from below'?

Deceleration: The temporal control of mobility

With the aid of Paul Virilio (1980), the catastrophic functionalism of Agamben's position can be challenged insofar as one opposes the political disciplinary connotations of camp confinement and exclusion by using the figure of decelerated circulation of mobility. That is, viewing the camps from below reveals a constant flow of mobility, and camps as the spaces which most drastically attempt to regulate the speed of this circulation and to decelerate its velocity. Rather than stopping the circulation of mobility, camps reinsert a socially commensurable time in the migrants' movements. They bring illegal and clandestine migration back into society by rendering it visible and compatible with a broad regime of temporal control. Decelerated circulation means that migration is not regulated through space, but through time.

The Schengen camps are less panoptical disciplinary prison institutions than, following Virilio, speed boxes. Camps as they appear in 'Fortress Europe', Zelimir Zilnik's film, are markers on the map of travel; communication and information centres; rest-houses, and, not infrequently, small banks of undocumented mobility. Against the background of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1976), it would also seem important to examine the figure of decelerated circulation in the light of how it alters the relation of time, body and productivity. The centrality of temporal as against spatial regulation for understanding migration today also becomes clear when we consider how the time regime of the camp is distinguished by the disassociation of the body from its direct economic utilisation. Previously, mobility was rendered productive by territorializing movements and inserting them into a spatial regulation of bodies. Consider for example the workhouse, or the first foreign-worker hostels of the Gastarbeiter era,

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