

Workshop Invitation

Decentring Deportation: Circulation and Population Control beyond Europe and the United States

Deportation has become a highly prominent and at the same time fiercely contested instrument of population control and national securitisation, especially since the end of the Cold War and in the aftermath of 9/11. Moreover, deportation has become globalised. Not only are its effects apparent around the world, but it is circulating as a political idea and regulatory practice. As a consequence, notions of global centres and peripheries have become destabilised. Countries which have traditionally been and continue to be prominent destinations of deportations are at the same time emerging as new centres of removals. Turkey and Mexico are two important cases in this point. A variety of factors have led to the multiplication of regimes of deportation around the world and the appearance of new deportation trajectories. Important among them is, of course, the interest European countries, the United States, and Australia have in preventing migrants and asylum seekers from entering their territories. Prominent examples are the EU-Turkey Statement of 2016, which closed the Eastern Mediterranean Corridor, and the pressure placed by the United States on Mexico to restrict migration from Central America, which resulted, among other things, in the US funding of the Mexican Programa Frontera Sur, implemented in 2014. As a consequence, new deportation regulations as well as formal and informal practices are currently emerging in many countries, based, not least, on the circulation of border-crossing knowledge and institutional cooperation. However, contemporary deportation regimes as a form of population control are entangled with historical trajectories and thus show a wide variety of national, regional, and even local manifestations.

The newly developed research project “Decentring Deportation” at the University of Bern, Switzerland, and the Liechtenstein Institute is dedicated to the analysis of the global career of deportation. The project is framed by a concern to understand deportations in a globalised world in the “Capitalocene”. This includes the question of the extent to which deportations form part of the production of a “surplus population” that is not only deportable and exploitable, but even unwanted and ultimately “not needed”. Additionally, migrants are considered a “threat” to the domestic law and order of sovereign nation states. In an entangled post-colonial world that is criss-crossed by massive and enduring social inequalities, the question of justice within the politics of mobility becomes central to the analysis of deportation regimes. “Decentring Deportation” is particularly interested in the spatial circulation not only of deportees but also of regimes of deportation across national borders and the related transformations of deportation regimes at different scales. With its focus on the circulation and mobilities not only of people but also of knowledge, values, and resources, the project aims at a profound understanding of the changing forms of governance, norms, and techniques as well as of the visible and invisible, formal and informal practices involved in regimes of deportation. Combining geography, history, social anthropology, and law studies, our analytical point of departure is a decentring approach that conceptualises deportation as a transtemporal, transformational and translocal phenomenon. Empirically, the analysis proceeds from the case studies of Mexico and Turkey.

The planned workshop aims to discuss conceptual, methodological, and empirical issues of such a decentring approach to the study of deportation. We would like to invite you to join this discussion and contribute a paper with reflections on the potentials and limits, the theoretical framing and the methodological challenges of such an approach and to critically comment on the project's way of focusing on border-crossing and transforming circulations. The workshop will take place on the **18th and 19th of February 2021** as a hybrid event in Bern and online. The papers are planned to be published in a special journal issue.

Prof. Alberto Achermann, law studies
Dr. Gertrude Saxinger, social anthropology
PD Dr. Stephan Scheuzger, global history
Prof. Sabine Strasser, social anthropology
Prof. Susan Thieme, geography