



WORKSHOP ABSTRACT

Everyday Activism and Citizenship from Below: Responses to EU Border and Migration Regimes

Organizer: Monika PALMBERGER, Elissa HELMS

E-Mail Address: monika.palmberger@univie.ac.at

Abstract: This panel delves into the realm of everyday activism, volunteering, and forms of resistance (Dickinson et al. 2008; Nolas et al. 2017), understood as citizenship from below (Isin 2008) and as a response to the EU border and migration regimes (Rosenberger et al. 2018). Building on a feminist perspective, we understand citizenship as constructed, gendered and as a process (Lister 1997). In this panel we explore everyday activism - online and offline - by migrants and non-migrants alike in which citizenship is enacted through struggles for rights, regardless of individuals' legal status.

Within the intricate fabric of activism, individuals from various backgrounds, including migrants, civic activists and those without any form of institutional affiliation or connection, partake in diverse forms of activism, broadly defined. These may include the appropriation of public spaces and virtual realms as well as the appropriation of private homes, which may be reconceptualized as political spaces (Merikoski 2021). We will thus consider forms of 'lived citizenship' (Kallio et al. 2020) - drawing attention to embodied practices in which individuals navigate rights, responsibilities, identities and a sense of belonging through everyday interactions with others in physical proximity and virtually - into account as well as other forms of political activism and solidarities, including social media campaigns and protests at the EU's external borders.

We invite ethnographic and theoretical contributions that shed light on the multifaceted dynamics of everyday activism and forms of resistance, particularly in response to border and migration regimes at the EU external borders. We welcome diverse perspectives and methodologies that illuminate the complexities of activism across different contexts and settings and across online and offline environments, including the appropriation of public space, the reconceptualization of private homes as political arenas, and actions that trouble the very concept of activism in relation to state practices.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Tuesday, September 24, 2024 | Slot 1 | Room 1

Sarian Jarosz: 'I don't care if it's legal' State hostility and criminalization of border solidarity infrastructures at the Polish borders after 2021

Ignacio Fradejas-García: Resistance and Contestation to Immobilization Regimes in the

EU: The Case of the Canary Islands Migratory Route

Charlotte Naab: Emergent Solidarities - the Anti-/Politics of Migrant Support in Gran Canaria

Tuesday, September 24, 2024 | Slot 2 | Room 1

Beatriz de Figueiredo: "Tutto per Tutti" — Building Migrant Solidarity in the Neapolitan Commons

Asja Hrvatin: Autonomous Social Work as Tool for Dismantling Fortress Europe

Piotr Goldstein: Everyday Migrant Activism Meets Activism Across the Life Course: Insights from 10+ years of research with (everyday) migrant activists

Cyrille Cartier, Romana Pozniak: Radicalizing with care in an art cooperative: (in)visible care and care labor as political acts

SESSION PAPERS

'I don't care if it's legal' State hostility and criminalization of border solidarity infrastructures at the Polish borders after 2021

Sarian Jarosz

'I don't care if it's legal. I am here to help!' State hostility and criminalization of the border solidarity infrastructures at the Polish borders with Belarus and Ukraine in 2021-2023

How do the activists from the border solidarity infrastructure(s) navigate the criminalization of solidarity and conditions of a state of emergency at the Polish-Belarusian border?

Research on border regimes is never beyond categories, as it does not emerge in the political void. In the following work, I aim to capture the legislative hostility and absence the Polish state has created in the relief efforts at the Polish-Belarusian and Polish-Ukrainian borders; and collect and examine the experiences of those, who navigated this void and hostility, aim to provide humanitarian aid to the irregular migrants instigated by the Belarusian and illegally pushed back by the Polish law enforcement representatives. I conclude that the 'smooth' chronological transition from the aspirations and motivations; through the collective efforts to maintain and impregnate the new solidarity infrastructure of Grupa Granica against the state hostility; and finally, to the emergence of 'activist burnouts', withdrawals and testimonies of discouragement allow to trace how the trajectories and capabilities of informal infrastructure and individual activists itself may ramify, as the infrastructure itself navigates towards efficiency and professionalism, and the activists hit their 'limits of compassion and care'.

key words: criminalization of solidarity, Polish-Belarusian border, state of exception, activist burnout, pushback;

Resistance and Contestation to Immobilization Regimes in the EU: The Case of the Canary Islands Migratory Route

Ignacio Fradejas-García

Precarious migrants must cope with various restrictions and exceptional policies while challenging anti-migrant images and crisis discourses. In this paper, we examine how precarious migrants –including asylum seekers and refugees– resist and contest the increasingly restrictive regimes of (im)mobility in the European Union (EU) (Salazar & Glick Schiller, 2014), and how different kinds of agency and resistance can be drawn from the challenges posed by diverse sub-regimes of undesired immobilization of precarious migrants. Drawing on ethnographic work performed in the Canary Islands in 2021 and 2022, when a migration crisis was proclaimed, and continuing our previous analysis “from below” through the concepts of infraespeculation (Fradejas-García & Loftsdóttir, 2024b) and infrapolitics of mobility (Fradejas-García & Loftsdóttir, 2024a), this paper analyses various practices performed by migrants and their activist allies, that, intentionally or not, resist and/or navigate the constraints imposed by the racialization and criminalization of the EU regimes of immobilization in the borders (and within) the EU.

Bibliography

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Emergent Solidarities - the Anti-/Politics of Migrant Support in Gran Canaria.

Charlotte Naab

Adapting to the increasing surveillance of the Mediterranean and the externalization of the EU-border control to North Africa, more and more migrants cross the dangerous Atlantic from West Africa and Morocco towards the Canary Islands. In response to the growing population of neglected migrants and the rise of anti-migrant sentiments, the small working-class neighborhood "La Isleta" in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria initiated a solidarity network. Individuals of all ages and often without any prior political engagement got together to organize food supply, private shelters, language classes, and community events. Such practices have become common in assisting irregularized migrants around the world and have blurred the line between solidarity and humanitarianism, leading many researchers to a conceptual synthesis. While this might be ontologically right, a theoretical conflation of solidarity and humanitarianism risks overlooking activists' self-critical discourse and crucial un-/learning processes.

By applying the analytical concept of Anti-/Politics (Fleischmann 2021; King 2016;

Ranci re 1999) I will show that transversal solidarity is a process of trial and error and as such continuously „emergent.“ This perspective unveils the political, transformative potential of solidarity (e.g. the prefiguration of new communities) and the anti-political, repressive risks of humanitarianism (e.g. paternalism and white saviorism). My ethnographic research (2021) found that migrant supporters in Gran Canaria prioritized achieving horizontality, which they believed required migrants' autonomy. Yet structural conditions (e.g. illegality, racism, poverty) as well as socio-cultural differences (e.g. of norms and values) hampered such endeavors. Building horizontality on what I call “crooked grounds“ became one of the main challenges of migrant support in Gran Canaria. In my presentation, I will provide several ethnographic examples that show both the imaginative and challenging aspects of the emergent solidarities with migrants.

"Tutto per Tutti" — Building Migrant Solidarity in the Neapolitan Commons

Beatriz de Figueiredo

Migration governance in Europe has been a controversial topic. In times of growing right-wing populism, civil society initiatives try to counter the state's strategies of migration management, often described by mechanisms of surveillance, racialization and marginalization. This paper explores how migrant rights are pursued in the context of an urban common in Naples, based on ethnographic fieldwork with Movimento Migranti e Rifugiati Napoli (MMRN), a social movement that works from inside one of the eight recognized self-managed squats in the city — Ex-OPG “Je so Pazzo”.

This study traces the politics and mechanisms by which solidarity is built, the effects it has on the urban fabric and the tensions that are inherent to such political projects. In the double space-making and subject-making abilities of the urban common in question, it locates a solidarity-based approach to “bottom-up” migration governance that highlights the intertwining of migration and capitalism. The argument outlines how MMRN centers migrants in anti-capitalist struggles, framing migrant rights through the language of labour, namely as disposable, commodified and illegalized labour. The space of the commons emerges, then, as a site for contesting the uneven distribution of inequality under neoliberal capitalism and for constructing new political subjectivities enabled by horizontal, continual enactments of mutual aid. The horizon of solidarity is, however, undercut by the internal power hierarchies it must contend with and work through to be effective in its claims; it is constantly being done and undone.

This paper contributes to the intersection of migration and urban studies by providing an ethnographic account of a (somewhat) successful case of migrant solidarity building. By juxtaposing discussions on the construction of the commons with insights on the structuring of Race and Class, it seeks to imagine new ways of “being together” in the current political moment, against the extractive EU migration regime.

Autonomous Social Work as Tool for Dismantling Fortress Europe

Asja Hrvatini

bell hooks (1990) develops a concept of the margins as a place of radical exclusion, violence and oppression and Otherness as well as a place where the lived experience enables the possibility of resistance, solidarity, autonomy of survival strategies. The concept can be easily used to explain the context of the people on the move: borders are

places (and contexts) of violence, pushbacks and explicit oppression, while they are simultaneously places of liminality, transgression, subversion that enables those on the margins to intervene in the power relations of the centre

Focusing on the concept of autonomy of migration (Papadopoulos and Tsianos) and the agency that it entails, we are researching border crossing and the encounters between people on the move and privileged people from the centre that facilitate border crossings doing autonomous social work as a conscious radical practice aimed at deconstructing privilege and the EU border regime.

We see autonomous social work as a tool of imperceptible politics (Tsianos), embodying (political) practices of care. It is important to note, however, that for the autonomous social work to not reproduce power relations and fall in the trap of a white saviour complex or romanticizing the migrant subject, the encounters require risk (of criminalization, illegalization) and choosing the margins as a (political and material) position.

What are the principles of autonomous social work? What are the practices it entails? What are its challenges? How is it different from other (humanitarian, institutionalized) support practices? How can we expand spaces and context of the margins to embed imperceptible politics in a context outside of borderlands?

Welcome to the margins, we greet you as liberators (hooks).

Everyday Migrant Activism Meets Activism Across the Life Course: Insights from 10+ years of research with (everyday) migrant activists

Piotr Goldstein

This paper brings together the findings of several research projects. It takes as a point of departure research on quiet 'everyday' activism that happens outside of the framework of NGOs, foundations, and protest movements (Goldstein 2017). Individuals engaged in such activism often decide to act single-handedly, work in informal groups, or enact their activism during one-off ad-hoc initiatives. Drawing on findings from Serbia & Poland, the project aims to understand how these individuals situate their 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2008) performed beyond, against, or in parallel to their other social engagements.

This focus is combined with findings of a long-term ongoing visual ethnography of (everyday) activism of migrants and ethnic minorities (Goldstein & Lorenz 2019, 2022; Goldstein 2021a, 2021b). The activism of my research partners is often invisible because they engage in causes beyond those important to their own community. What is more, their activism happens outside any minority or migrant community structures, and, at times, it takes forms that, compared to the activism of those who can afford more grand forms of activism, seem insignificant.

Finally, I draw on those two perspectives in my current research on transborder commuters and recent migrants in the Polish-German border zone. Tracing their life stories and histories of their often "everyday" activism allows us to notice and better

understand the broad spectrum and discreet forms of their social engagement on both sides of the border. It also sheds new light on their relationships not only with their compatriots and the host community but also with Ukrainian refugees, who are still an often overlooked but important actor in the Polish-German border region.

Radicalizing with care in an art cooperative: (in)visible care and care labor as political acts

Cyrille Cartier

By relying on participative, ethnographic experiences within a Zagreb-based engaged-art organization, Živi Atelje DK and its Women to Women collective, this paper aims to explore care as part of the ambivalent, overlapping, interconnected relationship between material and immaterial labor. Particularly, the authors will focus on the centrality of care and care labor as a continuous political act, a form of everyday activism practiced within the art cooperative, while empirically illustrating what feminist critique has been articulating for decades: the gap between so-called productive and reproductive work (care), promoted by the regime of capitalist valorization of labor, systematically renders invisible and undervalues the centrality of care in creating and maintaining relationships and conditions for the functioning of society. The art organization attempts to bring together people of diverse experiences, origins and migration paths, including various degrees of exposure to the border regime and violence, to work, as it says, on horizontal community-building, healing, and exploration of identity through artistic practices. By focusing on examples from the organization and its Women to Women collective, the authors will illuminate not only the functional role of caring but also the (political) potential of subversion in attempts to re-valuate care, including the usage of the same quantifying mechanisms normally used in the regime of material/productive labor. The authors will also explore how, even though the cooperative aims to encourage transformative relationships based on mutuality and respect, acts of care can also be their opposite, exploitative, divisive and reinforce unequal power relations. Finally, the goal of this presentation is to tease out the nuances of how care can transform, be informed by, or itself be an act of political engagement.