



DISRUPTION
NETWORK
LAB

NOVEMBER
27-29 2020

BORDERS OF FEAR

MIGRATION, SECURITY & CONTROL

MEDIA COVERAGE

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**Borders of Fear: Migration,
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Borders of Fear



27. November 2020, 16:00 Uhr

BORDERS OF FEAR - MIGRATION, SECURITY & CONTROL

BORDERS OF FEAR deckt Fehlverhalten im Kontext von Migration auf, indem die Ursachen und Praktiken des Errichtens von Mauern und Grenzen untersucht werden, die zu physischer und kultureller Gewalt, Verfolgung und Menschenrechtsverletzungen führen. Im Rahmen der Konferenz wird der Diskurs über Grenzen sowohl auf konkreter Ebene als auch als Strategie kultureller Gewalt durch rechtsgerichtete Propaganda untersucht. Grenzschießungen, die Errichtung von Flüchtlingslagern und die Ausweitung von Sicherheitsmaßnahmen werden ebenso analysiert wie Narrative über Migrant*innen und geächtete Menschen in Europa und dem Westen, die durch grenzpolizeiliche Überwachung und die Datazierung der Gesellschaft beeinflusst werden.

Kulturelle und physische Grenzen bilden häufig den Rahmen für Diskriminierung, Gewalt und Menschenrechtsverstöße und für die Rechtfertigung von Rückführungen und Abschiebezentren, wo Menschen jahrelang eingesperrt werden und von Schleuser*innen ausgebeutet werden.

BORDERS OF FEAR bringt ein breites Spektrum von Sprecher*innen zusammen, um Ungerechtigkeiten, die an geächteten Menschen und Migrant*innen verübt werden, herauszustellen, und deren Stimmen bei dieser gemeinsamen Reflexion zu sozialer Gerechtigkeit und globalem politischen Bewusstsein anzuhören.

Das Disruption Network Lab ist eine fortlaufende Veranstaltungs- und Forschungsplattform, die sich auf die Schnittmenge von Politik, Wissenschaft, Kunst, Technologie, Menschenrechten und Gesellschaft konzentriert. Das Disruption Network Lab e. V. organisiert seit 2014 partizipative, internationale Veranstaltungen mit dem Ziel, die Meinungsfreiheit zu stärken. Sie setzen sich für die global Marginalisierten ein!

Infos zum Termin

27. November 2020 , 16:00 Uhr

Live aus dem Kunstquartier Bethanien

Mariannenplatz 2, 10997 [Berlin](#)

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Die Online-Konferenz "**Borders of Fear**" vom [Disruption Network Lab](#) wirft einen Blick auf die weltweite Verfolgung von und Gewalt gegen Flüchtende und Migrantinnen. *Aktivistinnen*, Forscher*innen und Betroffene diskutieren vom 27.11. bis 29.11.2020 in Livestreams. Weitere Infos hier: <https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear>

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BORDERS OF FEAR (Migration, Security & Control): nuova conferenza del Disruption Network Lab

By **Lucia Conti** - 3 November 2020



BORDERS OF FEAR

Dal **27 al 29 novembre** il **Disruption Network Lab**, con la **media partnership del Mitte, Exberliner, Furtherfield e Taz die tageszeitung**, organizzerà a Berlino la web-conference **BORDERS OF FEAR (Migration, Security & Control)**.

Il tema centrale della conferenza saranno le persecuzioni perpetrate nei contesti di migrazione e nell'ambito della cosiddetta difesa dei confini.

L'iniziativa è finanziata da **numerosi soggetti istituzionali**, in primis il **Dipartimento per la cultura e l'Europa del Senato di Berlino**.

L'evento è inoltre in collaborazione con **Emergency, Transparency International, r0g_agency e Migrant Media Network**.



BORDERS OF FEAR

Muri, barriere, violenza fisica e violazione dei diritti umani che diventano violenza culturale e strumento di propaganda politica: tutto questo verrà dibattuto da giornalisti, attivisti, avvocati, ricercatori e intellettuali critici, che si confronteranno per gettare una luce su queste specifiche dinamiche di abuso.



Yoseph Zemichael Afeworki, speaker

Da un lato verrà analizzato il fenomeno della chiusura delle frontiere, della creazione di campi per rifugiati e della contestuale escalation delle politiche di controllo che si attivano in questi casi.

Dall'altro, con la competenza specifica che il Disruption Network Lab esprime, si analizzerà invece il modo in cui la "datificazione" della società sta influenzando la narrativa su migranti e rifugiati, in Europa e in generale in Occidente.



Sally Hayden, speaker. Photo by Salem Rizk

Secondo **Amnesty International** i termini "rifugiato", "richiedente asilo" e "migrante" sono spesso usati per descrivere persone che hanno lasciato i loro Paesi di origine e oltrepassato altri confini. Ogni categoria è trattata in modo diverso in base alla legge, ma ci sono molte persone che non sono tecnicamente rifugiate e che tuttavia potrebbero correre gravi rischi, se costrette a tornare indietro.

La nostra percezione di ciò che accade in diverse aree del mondo, dal Nord Africa al Medio Oriente, ma anche più in generale, è pesantemente influenzata dalle strategie geopolitiche e finanziarie in atto e da una concezione "bianca e occidentale" del cosiddetto "diverso".



La **Brexit** ha dimostrato ampiamente come l'arrivo di un numero di migranti relativamente ampio in aree storicamente soggette a un basso tasso di immigrazione, rende facile per i populistici monopolizzare il

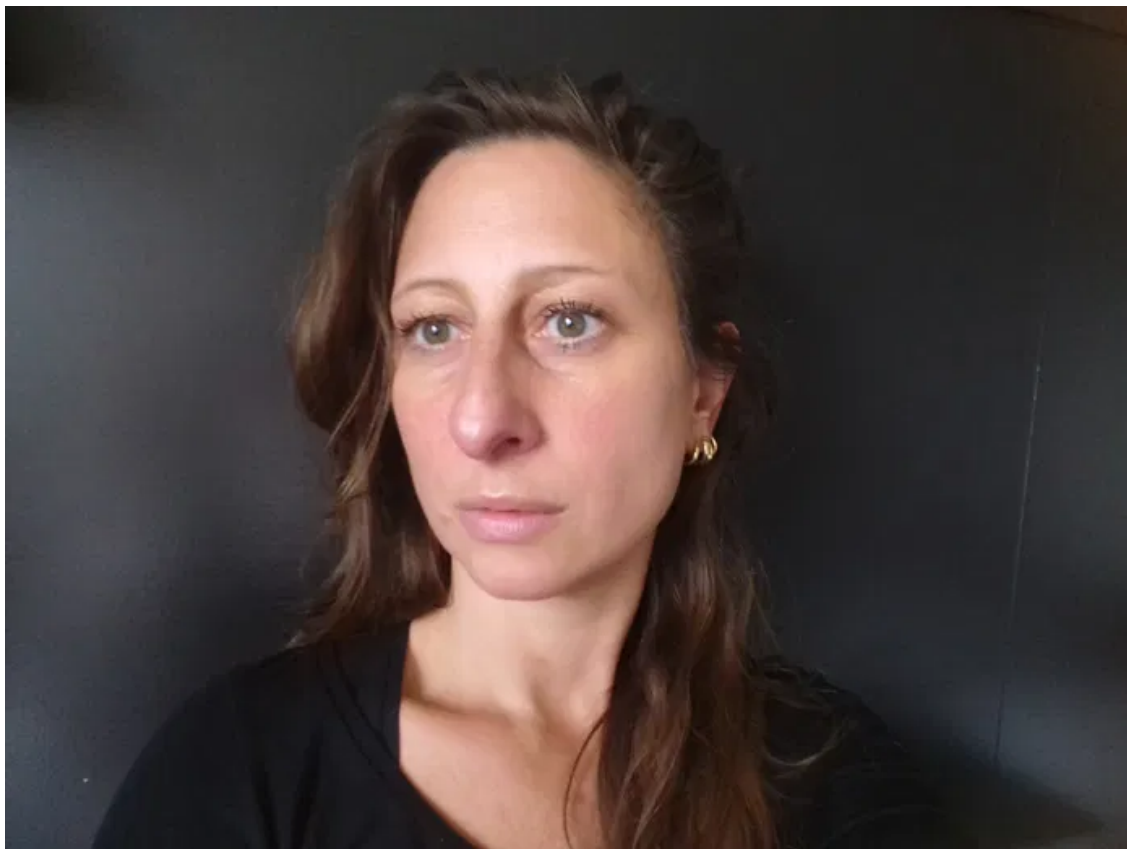
dibattito e far percepire la migrazione come la causa del fallimento sociale e del peggioramento dello stile di vita.

La **xenofobia** diventa a questo punto un modo per semplificare un dibattito complesso.



Contemporaneamente la propaganda anti-immigrazione fa percepire come legittimi la costruzione di muri e l'inasprimento della sorveglianza e dei controlli alla frontiera.

Questi confini, sia fisici che culturali, diventano un contesto di discriminazione, violenza e giustificazione dei **respingimenti** al confine e dei **centri di detenzione**, in cui i migranti sono rinchiusi per anni o sfruttati dai trafficanti.



Gaia Giuliani

Il 27 novembre BORDERS OF FEARS solleverà un dibattito su tutto questo con l'aiuto di numerosi esperti, ma farà anche direttamente ascoltare la voce degli stessi migranti e rifugiati, che parleranno del tema e delle loro esperienze.

Questo è il [programma completo](#) dell'evento, [questa la lista degli speakers](#) e [questo è l'evento Facebook ufficiale](#).

La web-conference sarà preceduta da [un meetup tenuto da Lorin Decarli](#), volontario e ambasciatore di [EMERGENCY Deutschland](#), nonché autore per Il Mitte della rubrica "[Raccontare la pace](#)".

Related

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Lucia Conti

Le condizioni inumane dei richiedenti asilo a Samos. Intervista con Franziska Schmidt, speaker di BORDERS OF FEAR

By **Lucia Conti** - 13 November 2020



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by jstewart

Le condizioni inumane dei richiedenti asilo a Samos. Intervista con Franziska Schmidt, speaker di Borders of Fear

di **Lucia Conti**

Franziska Schmidt è membro del comitato di coordinamento della **Refugee Law Clinic di Berlino**, un'associazione di studenti legati alla **Humboldt Universität** e che offre consulenze legali gratuite ai rifugiati e ai migranti che si trovano sul territorio.

Dal 2018, tuttavia, Franziska e altri membri della Refugee Law Clinic hanno deciso di focalizzarsi soprattutto sull'hotspot di **Samos**, isola greca in cui restano spesso bloccati in condizioni drammatiche i richiedenti asilo che cercano di arrivare in Europa.

Il **27 novembre** Franziska Schmidt parteciperà come speaker alla conferenza online **BORDERS OF FEAR**, organizzata dal **Disruption Network Lab** di Berlino. La conferenza, che si terrà dal 27 al 29 novembre, affronterà proprio il tema del rispetto dei diritti umani nei contesti di migrazione.



Franziska Schmidt

Cos'è esattamente la Refugee Law Clinic di Berlin?

Il concetto di "Law Clinic" viene dal mondo anglosassone, sostanzialmente sono contesti in cui studenti di giurisprudenza fanno esperienza nel counseling e danno consigli gratuiti a chi ne ha bisogno, una situazione che si presume avvantaggi tutti. Ci sono vari ambiti in cui questo avviene, per esempio in relazione al diritto dei consumatori o alle norme che disciplinano internet.

Su questa scia, nel 2014 alcuni studenti della [Humboldt-Universität di Berlino](#), inclusa me, hanno fondato la Refugee Law Clinic Berlin, cercando di specializzarsi in materia di immigrazione e asilo. Attraverso un ciclo formativo che consiste di lezioni, internship presso avvocati specializzati nel settore e workshop, studenti di giurisprudenza, ma non solo, possono unirsi attivamente al progetto. Al momento abbiamo circa 70 counsellor, che operano regolarmente a Berlino e nel Brandeburgo.





Come nasce il tuo impegno nell'isola greca di Samos?

Nel 2018 un team della Refugee Law Clinic ha deciso di focalizzarsi sulle necessità dei migranti e richiedenti asilo presenti nell'hotspot di Samos.

Al tempo a Samos c'erano solo 3 NGO, ma nessuna di sostegno legale. Di conseguenza abbiamo deciso di intervenire con un apposito team che consiste di un coordinatore, un avvocato greco e alcuni legal counsellor, coadiuvati da interpreti che parlano persiano, arabo e francese.



L'hotspot di Samos

Cosa puoi dirci della tua personale esperienza di Samos, che dal 2018 ti assorbe completamente?

La prima cosa che mi ha colpito è il fatto che le persone che arrivano lì e vengono dalla Siria, dall'Iraq, dall'Afghanistan o da altre zone di conflitto, vedano la guerra come qualcosa di assolutamente normale.

Soprattutto quei ragazzi che magari sembrano meno vulnerabili perché giovani, forti e in salute, hanno alle spalle esperienze atroci, inclusa la tortura, e a volte neanche ne parlano. Quando li prepariamo per le interviste (*per ottenere l'asilo, ndr*) dobbiamo in qualche modo tirare fuori queste esperienze e far capire loro quanto siano rilevanti, perché hanno ormai normalizzato l'orrore. Uno scambio tipico è: "Hai mai vissuto l'esperienza dei bombardamenti?" "Ovvio!" "Ma devi dirlo!".



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by [jtstewart](#)

Un'altra cosa che mi ha colpito molto è la forza delle donne e delle persone LGBTQ, che hanno sperimentato terribili violenze legate alla loro condizione e sono sopravvissute a così tanto orrore restando forti.

E poi ci sono tutti quei migranti africani che nel corso del loro cammino verso l'Europa passano dalla Turchia, sperimentando anche lì abusi drammatici. Ed è per questo che li esortiamo a raccontare anche questo, nella preparazione delle loro interviste. Specialmente per gli africani, l'esperienza turca è orribile.



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by [jtstewart](#)

Di cosa parliamo, in particolare? Quali sono gli abusi che queste persone subiscono in Turchia?

Ho ascoltato storie tremende. Moltissime donne sono vittime di violenza o sfruttamento sessuale, mentre gli uomini sono sfruttati in relazione alla loro forza lavoro, ad esempio nelle fabbriche.

In molti casi i datori di lavoro sequestrano i documenti dei migranti e li costringono ad accettare ogni condizione o mancato pagamento, con la minaccia di chiamare la polizia e far scattare la deportazione. Questo è traffico di esseri umani.



Queste persone fanno viaggi lunghissimi e rischiosi, fuggendo da esperienze traumatiche e gravi pericoli, prima di arrivare a Samos. Poi finalmente ci arrivano. Cosa accade, a quel punto?

Queste persone arrivano a Samos piene di speranza. Hanno vissuto esperienze inimmaginabili e sono sopravvissute e pensano che l'Europa sia vicina, con i suoi ideali di solidarietà e rispetto dei diritti umani. E poi, intervista dopo intervista, assistiamo al deterioramento delle loro speranze, mentre le procedure che determineranno il loro destino si allungano e queste persone finiscono bloccate sull'isola, in un campo sovraffollato, a volte per più di un anno e mezzo.

Alla fine sono distrutte, il loro stato psicologico crolla ed è devastante assistere a tutto questo. A volte ci sentiamo dire cose come "A questo punto tanto varrebbe tornare in Afghanistan", o in Siria, e noi non possiamo fare nulla.



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by [jtstewart](#)

Samos è in Europa e la Grecia fa parte dell'Unione Europea. Cosa dovrebbe fare l'Europa, a riguardo?

Potremmo evitare di esportare armi, tanto per cominciare. Ma potremmo anche non ammassare queste persone in un campo facendole aspettare per un'eternità. Questo sarebbe anche più facile da realizzare, se ci fosse la volontà di farlo.

Quali sono gli errori commessi dall'Europa relativamente alle politiche sull'immigrazione?

La politica dell'Unione Europea in materia per me è davvero incomprensibile. Mi chiedo come si possa fare un accordo con la Turchia e promettere a questa nazione 6 miliardi di euro! La Turchia non è mai stato un partner affidabile e quando ha riaperto i confini non mi sono neanche stupita. Senza contare che trovo assurdo, ad esempio, che si possano deportare in Turchia dei siriani, sapendo che non verrà data loro la possibilità di ottenere l'asilo.

E poi c'è il problema del Trattato di Dublino, che sposta tutto il peso e la responsabilità delle procedure di asilo sulle spalle dei primi Paesi di ingresso. Parliamo di Italia, Spagna, Grecia, che sono Paesi già in crisi.



Photo by adamansel52

Non esiste un modo per tentare di ridistribuire questa responsabilità, al di là di un'ipotetica revisione del Trattato di Dublino?

Formalmente anche altre nazioni, oltre ai primi Paesi di ingresso, potrebbero essere responsabili di alcuni procedimenti, per esempio in materia di ricongiungimenti familiari.

Immaginiamo che un minore approdi in Grecia e voglia raggiungere la madre in Germania. In questo caso, anche secondo il trattato di Dublino, è la Germania a dover provvedere. Ma quello che funziona sulla carta non funziona nella pratica e di fatto pochissime richieste per il ricongiungimento familiare sono state seguite con successo dalla Germania. Il tasso di rigetto è altissimo. E questo vale anche per altre nazioni.



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by jtstewart

Ci sono altre responsabilità, che ascrivi all'Europa?

C'è il caso dell'Agenzia europea della guardia di frontiera e costiera, nota anche come Frontex, che agisce sotto la responsabilità dell'Europa e che è stata coinvolta in fatti molto gravi.

Ti segnalo a questo proposito **l'inchiesta del settimanale tedesco Der Spiegel**, che ha evidenziato il coinvolgimento dell'Agenzia nei respingimenti illegali avvenuti sempre più frequentemente nel mar Egeo, da quando la Turchia ha aperto i confini. Ed è un fenomeno sotto gli occhi di tutti, perché l'area da controllare non è vastissima.



Photo by Kripos_NCIS

Stai dicendo che l'agenzia europea finge di non vedere?

Come minimo. Ma l'inchiesta dello Spiegel dimostra che a volte è stata addirittura coinvolta attivamente nei respingimenti illegali.

E intanto una narrativa che presenta i richiedenti asilo come degli invasori da respingere si fa strada, e viene usata persino da Ursula von der Leyn, presidente della Commissione europea.



L'L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by jtstewart

Al di là della preparazione dei richiedenti asilo alle interviste, il vostro lavoro implica anche il ricorso alla Corte Europea dei diritti dell'uomo?

Faccio una premessa. A gennaio, l'anno scorso, il campo era già sovraffollato. Era stato costruito per contenere 648 persone e molto presto sono diventate migliaia. Negli ultimi tre mesi il numero è passato da 4000 a 8000, praticamente raddoppiando. Le persone debordano nella cosiddetta "giungla", lo spazio che circonda i vecchi confini del campo, che ormai non contengono più la folla.

Niente funziona più, ci sono bambini che vagano da soli e senza supervisione, donne incinte che vivono nelle tende senza assistenza medica. Abbiamo cercato di aiutare le persone in termini di consigli giuridici e assistenza medica, ma non ha funzionato. A quel punto abbiamo fatto appello alla Corte.



L'hotspot di Samos

Che procedura avete seguito, esattamente?

In base all'[articolo 39 del Regolamento di procedura della Corte](#) può essere richiesta un'*interim measure*, vale a dire una misura provvisoria, che si applica solo quando esiste un rischio imminente di danno irreparabile alla persona. In questi casi la Corte può ordinare al singolo governo, nel nostro caso quello greco, di provvedere e rimuovere il rischio.

Ci siamo avvalsi più volte dell'articolo 39 e questo ci ha permesso, ad esempio, di aiutare una donna incinta che viveva in una tenda, senza assistenza medica, e rischiava di partorire lì. In questo caso l'*interim measure* è stata concessa e al governo greco è stato ordinato di garantire alla donna una sistemazione adeguata e la dovuta assistenza medica. Abbiamo fatto lo stesso in molti altri casi, soprattutto quando si trattava di donne incinte e persone bisognose di cure mediche.



Samos hotspot, Photo by [jstewart](#)

Che ruolo ha in tutto questo il sito [Ihaverights](#)?

Dalla primavera del 2020 è lo strumento che abbiamo usato di più, perché a causa del Coronavirus non abbiamo potuto preparare le persone per interviste che non hanno comunque avuto luogo, tutto si è bloccato.

Ad ogni modo anche dall'estero continuiamo a chiedere misure d'urgenza sulla base di profili che ci vengono segnalati dalle NGO mediche o dalle stesse persone che pensano di poter avanzare la richiesta.

Il sito Ihaverights serve anche a questo. Non sappiamo quanto a lungo durerà il lockdown del campo, so solo che alla fine dell'anno le persone che vivono nell'hotspot dovranno muoversi in una nuova struttura, stavolta chiusa, più simile a un centro di detenzione, e sarà ancora più difficile per noi avere contatti diretti con loro. Di conseguenza è importante fare in modo che queste persone Ci raggiungano comunque online e ottengano il nostro aiuto.



Samos hotspot, Photo by [jstewart](#)

Hai parlato, inevitabilmente, di Coronavirus. Qual è la situazione, al momento?

Fino a settembre non c'era neanche un caso di Coronavirus a Samos, anche se la Grecia era in lockdown. Poi a luglio si sono aperti i confini, un sacco di turisti sono arrivati a Samos e poche settimane dopo il Coronavirus è arrivato sull'isola. A settembre è apparso il primo caso nel campo e a quel punto il virus si è diffuso, perché non c'è modo di mantenere il distanziamento in quel contesto.

Oltretutto il Corona si è diffuso subito dopo l'incendio del campo di Moria, sull'isola di Lesbo, e poi c'è stato un pesante terremoto. Una settimana fa a Samos è bruciata anche la sezione del campo di lingua francese e bengali. È una situazione difficilissima.



Samos hotspot

Ti occupi anche di migranti lgbtq+. Puoi spiegarci quali fattori rendono la situazione di queste persone particolarmente difficile?

Essere perseguitati sulla base dell'orientamento sessuale è una ragione per vedersi riconosciuto il diritto di asilo. Ma ovviamente in questi casi si verificano altri problemi.

Per esempio in un campo sovraffollato c'è mancanza totale di sicurezza, vivi a stretto contatto con persone della tua stessa comunità o di altre che possono essere un rischio per te, perché magari esprimono l'omofobia diffusa di alcuni Paesi.

Inoltre in questo contesto c'è una mancanza totale di impianti sanitari, le porte dei bagni e delle docce sono spesso rotte, non c'è illuminazione e di notte non si sa che cosa accada in giro. Di conseguenza persone identificate come LGBTQ sperimentano violenze sessuali, come del resto anche le donne. E anche

se le vittime trovano la forza di denunciare gli abusi alla polizia, non succede nulla. A volte le denunce non vengono neanche verbalizzate.

E poi c'è quello che queste persone passano, quando vengono intervistate nel corso della procedura per ottenere l'asilo.



Cosa accade in questi casi?

È chiaro che l'orientamento sessuale non si può provare con un test, e allora arrivano una serie di domande tese a verificare la veridicità delle dichiarazioni e c'è anche il rischio che chi intervista faccia domande improprie. Mi riferisco a domande sulla vita sessuale, per esempio.

E quindi persone che hanno passato la vita a proteggersi da attacchi e violenze si trovano a essere intervistate da un estraneo e magari davanti un interprete della loro stessa comunità, al fine di ottenere il diritto di asilo. Un diritto che può essere negato facilmente, al primo passo falso.



Samos, Grecia

Cosa vuoi dire a chi ci legge, a Berlino e altrove?

C'è un detto tedesco, *aus den Augen, aus dem Sinn*, che significa che se non vedi qualcosa non ci pensi. Dobbiamo evitare questo. Non so se in Italia avete un detto simile...

Sì, è "lontano dagli occhi lontano dal cuore"

Mi piace! Il concetto è proprio questo. Spingendo il problema fuori dai suoi confini, l'Europa lo spinge lontano dalla nostra vista e quindi dalla nostra mente o cuore, che sia.

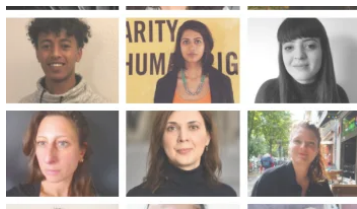
Ma dobbiamo sapere che questo accade, accade anche se non lo vediamo. A Samos, nell'Egeo, in Italia e in Spagna. E il problema su come l'Europa tratta i richiedenti asilo permane. Bisogna continuare a parlarne, a fare domande, a mettere in discussione le soluzioni proposte, come il **Nuovo Patto per la Migrazione e l'Asilo**, a mio avviso facilmente criticabile su più punti. Questo dobbiamo fare.

Può interessarvi anche **EMERGENCY-Raccontare la pace. Quanto costa la guerra?**


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Sally Hayden, giornalista investigativa: "Il nostro mestiere è essenziale alla democrazia". A Berlino sarà speaker di BORDERS OF FEAR

By **Lucia Conti** - 14 November 2020



Foto scattata da Sally Hayden a Shagareb, un campo per rifugiati eritrei nel Sudan orientale, 2017. Molti in seguito hanno viaggiato verso la Libia nel tentativo di raggiungere l'Europa

Sally Hayden, giornalista investigativa: "Il nostro mestiere è essenziale alla democrazia". A Berlino sarà speaker di BORDERS OF FEAR

di **Lucia Conti**

Sally Hayden è una giornalista investigativa e fotografa freelance, con un focus specifico sulla migrazione, i diritti umani e le crisi umanitarie.

I suoi reportage dall'Europa, dal Medio Oriente e dall'Africa sono stati pubblicati su moltissimi eminenti organi di stampa tra i quali il **Guardian**, la **BBC**, **TIME**, **New York Times**, **Washington post**, **Al Jazeera** e **CNN International**.

I suoi articoli sono stati tradotti in nove lingue e Sally Hayden ha realizzato i suoi servizi in Siria, Nigeria, Iraq, Sudan, Libano, Giordania, Cambogia, Malawi, Ruanda e molti altri Paesi, non esclusi quelli europei (Malta, Italia, Ungheria, Irlanda).

Il suo lavoro sulla Nigeria e su Boko Haram è stato usato come riferimento dal **Dipartimento di Stato americano**, mentre nel 2019 la rivista Forbes **l'ha inserita nella lista degli under 30 più influenti** nel campo dei media in Europa.

Al momento Hayden sta lavorando a un libro sui centri di detenzione in Libia, che verrà pubblicato all'inizio del 2022.

Il **27 novembre** parteciperà come speaker alla conferenza online **BORDERS OF FEAR**, organizzata dal **Disruption Network Lab** di Berlino. La conferenza, che si terrà dal **27 al 29 novembre**, affronterà il

tema del rispetto dei diritti umani nei contesti di migrazione.



Sally Hayden e Yoseph Zemichael Afeworki, altro speaker di BORDERS OF FEAR

Il 27 novembre sarai ospite del Disruption Network Lab di Berlino per BORDERS OF FEAR. Di cosa parlerai e perché è così importante seguire questo evento?

Parlerò del mio lavoro, che consiste nel documentare i problemi subiti dai rifugiati in tutta l'Africa. In particolare parlerò di quello che accade ai rifugiati che cercano di arrivare in Europa, inclusi quelli che vengono intercettati nel mar Mediterraneo e costretti a tornare in Libia, dove vengono rinchiusi a tempo indeterminato in centri di detenzione gestiti dalle milizie.

Il COVID-19 ha costretto molto europei a rendersi conto di cosa significhi non poter attraversare certi confini, ma i rifugiati, i richiedenti asilo e i migranti delle nazioni impoverite lo hanno sempre saputo e ne hanno sempre sofferto.

Penso che la conferenza sarà un modo interessante di sottolineare proprio questo.



Foto scattata da Sally Hayden a **Shagareb**, un campo per rifugiati eritrei nel **Sudan orientale**, 2017. Molti rifugiati hanno in seguito viaggiato verso la Libia nel tentativo di raggiungere l'Europa

Viaggi continuamente in tutto il mondo, documentando fatti, dinamiche ed eventi che appartengono alla cronaca e alla storia. Che cosa hai avuto modo di scoprire sul campo che non avresti scoperto senza diventare un testimone diretto?

Riguardo ai rifugiati, credo che non avrei mai capito fino in fondo quanto costoso e difficile possa essere vivere anche in uno di quei Paesi considerati "sicuri", definizioni che in molti casi è spesso politica.

Le persone possono infatti finire in situazioni in cui sono costantemente sfruttate dalle forze di sicurezza, indebitate, in costante lotta per la sopravvivenza, per l'assistenza medica, per il lavoro o per opportunità accademiche. Qualche volta è più facile spostarsi che restare.



Foto scattata da Sally Hayden ad Aleppo, Siria, 2017. In quella circostanza Hayden ha realizzato un reportage sui rifugiati siriani rimpatriati dall'Europa e in seguito arrestati e torturati.

Tra i tuoi numerosi impegni professionali, hai anche tenuto corsi di scrittura per lo staff della BBC alla BBC Academy. Qual è a tuo avviso il ruolo del giornalismo investigativo e del fact-checking in quella che è stata chiamata l'era della "post-verità"?

Io credo fermamente nel giornalismo e lo ritengo essenziale alla democrazia.

I giornalisti dicono la verità al potere e ci sono così tanti poteri a cui non si chiede conto di nulla e invece lo si dovrebbe fare.

È parte del nostro lavoro fare in modo di cambiare ciò che alcuni sostengono non si possa cambiare, mostrando totale disinteresse nel cambiamento dello *status quo* mentre altri invece soffrono e muoiono per questo, senza che le loro voci vengano ascoltate.



Foto scattata da Sally Hayden ad Aleppo, Siria, 2017. In quella circostanza Hayden ha realizzato un reportage sui rifugiati siriani rimpatriati dall'Europa e in seguito arrestati e torturati.

"Le mie fonti sono in tutto il mondo. I rifugiati, in particolare, fanno di tutto per avere un telefono, come se fosse la loro ancora di salvezza", hai detto al Global Investigation Journalism Network. Puoi spiegare perché avere il telefono non è un lusso, ma una necessità, per molti migranti?

Un telefono è lo strumento con cui puoi chiedere aiuto. Se sei rinchiuso con i trafficanti o in un centro di detenzione gestito dalle milizie o da gruppi armati affiliati al governo libico, le persone che ti controllano, controllano ed edulcorano anche la tua percezione della realtà. A meno che non trovi il modo di ottenere un resoconto realistico di cosa sta realmente accadendo fuori. I rifugiati in detenzione mi hanno raggiunta usando telefoni nascosti per dirmi che non venivano nutriti da tre giorni, che dozzine di persone erano morte per incuria medica o che il loro centro era stato bombardato.

Altrove, rifugiati e i migranti usano i loro telefoni per orientarsi (una volta ho incontrato un rifugiato siriano che era arrivato in Europa usando Google Maps), per chiedere soldi alle loro famiglie al fine di continuare il loro viaggio o per sapere se sia rischioso o meno tornare a casa.

L'informazione è potere e senza un telefono è dura reperire informazioni, informazioni di cui queste persone hanno assolutamente bisogno per prendere decisioni su cosa fare e dove trovare un posto sicuro.



Sally Hayden. Photo di Salem Rizk

Proprio i centri di detenzione libici sono l'oggetto del tuo prossimo libro, che sarà pubblicato all'inizio del 2022. Qual è la situazione in Libia attualmente, in un momento in cui il Coronavirus sta distogliendo l'attenzione da ogni altro problema?

La situazione è terribile. Il conflitto continua ad andare avanti. Le procedure per il rilascio e l'evacuazione legale per rifugiati e richiedenti asilo si sono fermate (il loro numero era incredibilmente basso anche prima, ma almeno a volte accadeva, prima della pandemia). Centinaia di persone che hanno passato anni tra trafficanti di esseri umani e centri di detenzione sono stati immediatamente buttati per le strade di Tripoli e soffrono per l'assenza di assistenza medica e per gli attacchi regolari della milizia.

Inoltre sono appena tornata da un viaggio di un mese in Etiopia, dove ho assistito al processo di due trafficanti di grosso calibro, uomini che sono accusati di spostare decine di migliaia di migranti e rifugiati in Europa, ricattandoli durante la tratta. Io ero l'unica osservatrice indipendente presente alle udienze. Non sarei sorpresa se la ragione fosse proprio la pandemia.



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“They Were Beating Me Like Crazy”

Video Documents Illegal Refugee Pushbacks in Croatia

For years, asylum-seekers have been claiming abuse at the hands of Croatian border police, with some reporting beatings, electric shocks and even having their toenails torn out. For the first time, videos in combination with reporting by DER SPIEGEL have confirmed some of these reports.

By **Steffen Lüdke** und **Nicole Vögele**

18.11.2020, 19.06 Uhr



Ibrahim after the pushback operation: "I have never been so scared in my life."

Foto: No Name Kitchen

Ibrahim had a hunch he knew what was coming when the Croatian police car stopped. The young Pakistani had set off from Kashmir two years earlier to reach Europe. But now, on a

cold day at the end of March, the Croatian police dragged him and the other refugees out of the vehicle, Ibrahim recalls. More security forces were waiting outside. They wore black balaclavas to hide their faces.

The men forced the refugees to take off their jackets, shoes and pants, and one by one, the hooded men lined up. One of the men in masks grabbed Ibrahim by the neck and dragged him toward the river, according to his recollection. The others beat him, aiming at Ibrahim's back, arms and legs. "They were beating me like crazy," he says. Out of fear, he asked that he not be identified by his last name in this article.



Ibrahim during his interview with DER SPIEGEL: "They were beating me like crazy."
Foto: Nicole Vögele

Ibrahim recalls a long, thick branch that hurt especially bad when he was hit with it. Three other refugees say they were beaten with a metal rod and with a sling that had a heavy object attached to the end of it.

AN

The beatings lasted only a few minutes, but it felt like an eternity to Ibrahim. The hooded men pushed him down to the Glina River, the natural border between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the village of Poljana. The river is only a few

meters wide there. "Fast, jump," one of the masked men shouted in English, says Ibrahim. "Go back Bosnia!"

Instead of being given a hearing, asylum-seekers are beaten.

The European Union closed the Balkan route to migrants in 2016, after it had already been used in previous months by hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria and other countries as they made their way to Western Europe. Thousands of refugees have been camping in the forest and in old war ruins in northwest Bosnia-Herzegovina ever since. On the other side of the border, Croatian officials with night-vision goggles and firearms patrol the border. But that doesn't stop the refugees from setting off each night. They have a name for their dangerous attempt to get past the border guards: "The Game."

Asylum seekers have been reporting for years of abuse at the hands of Croatian police and of being forced back to Bosnia. Photos from aid organizations show refugees with bleeding lacerations, broken arms, knocked-out teeth and dark red marks on their backs. Asylum-seekers speak of torture with stun guns, sexual abuse and even torn-out toenails. The focus of their reports is always the same: Masked police officers.

Beatings Instead of Hearings

NGOs, doctors and even the United Nations Refugee Agency have collected thousands of such testimonies. Sometimes, skin color alone is enough to become a target of the security forces. In winter 2019, Croatian border guards illegally deported two Nigerian table-tennis players who were only trying to take part in a university championship.

Pushbacks, as they are called, violate not only Croatian asylum law but also European law and the Geneva Convention on Refugees. They make a mockery of the right to apply for asylum. Instead of being given a hearing, asylum-seekers are beaten.



A migrant after attempting to cross the border: lacerations, broken arms and knocked-out teeth Foto: Danish Refugee Council

The Croatian authorities deny that officers use force at the border or that they illegally drag asylum seekers back across the border. The government has simply ignored video clips showing security forces leading asylum-seekers to the border. Government officials also claim that refugees have simply invented claims of violence. Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan

Grlić Radman recently said that his country denies "all accusations of incorrect behavior at the border."

But Ibrahim's case makes Croatia's claims of innocence all the more difficult to uphold.

DER SPIEGEL spent months investigating his case together with the media organization Lighthouse Reports. The reporters spoke with three refugees who were traveling with Ibrahim. To the extent possible, they reconstructed the route they took. The refugees' reports can only be partly independently verified, but their geodata does corroborate their statements. There is also a video that the NGO No Name Kitchen obtained when interviewing the refugees. DER SPIEGEL and Lighthouse Reports were able to verify its authenticity.

The reporting clearly shows that it is not only in Greece that refugees are being pushed back forcibly . On the Bosnian-Croatian border, masked men are beating up refugees. The images reveal a disturbing level of violence that is increasingly becoming the norm at the EU's external borders.

Ibrahim, for his part, had already failed to get past the Croatian security forces dozens of times, but in March things went better than usual. He and three other migrants described to DER SPIEGEL how they, together with around 50 other refugees, some of them underage, set off that day for the EU. The men crossed the border near Šturlić, a village in Bosnia, before walking through the wilderness of the Croatian forests. It was cold, and at night they slept in cheap sleeping bags.



DER SPIEGEL

After around seven days, the group reached the Kulpa River, which borders Slovenia, and the migrants spent the night there. They ate the last of their supplies, they recall, and finally waded through the river on their way to Western Europe. The group stopped in a patch of forest above the Slovenian village Kočevje. Smugglers were supposed to meet them there to take the men to Italy, but nobody showed up. "We held out for three or four days without food or anything to drink," says Ibrahim. But then they finally gave up.

Slovenian police intercepted the refugees as they left their hiding place. The refugees say the officers took them to a police station, questioned each individually and took photos and fingerprints. The migrants claim that each of them asked

to be allowed to file an asylum application. But the answer they received, they say, was clear: "No asylum. You're going back to Bosnia."

"I Have Never Been So Scared in My Life"

When contacted by DER SPIEGEL, the Slovenian police confirmed that they had apprehended the refugees. They deny, however, that Ibrahim asked to apply for asylum, so they handed the men over to the Croatian authorities as part of a return agreement. Both the Croatian and the Slovenian officials certified the handover with their signatures.

Things moved quickly once the refugees were in the hands of the Croatian police. The men say the officers drove the group to the border river, where the men wearing the balaclavas were already waiting for them. "I have never been so scared in my life," says Ibrahim.

The refugees' geodata, stored in a Google Maps account, supports their statements. It includes data geolocating the group in Croatia and Slovenia. Shaky mobile phone images provide even more evidence. One of the refugees says that the images only exist because he was able to hide his mobile phone in his underwear.



A Pushback on the Croatian Border

DER SPIEGEL

The images show Ibrahim standing on the Bosnian side of the river, in wet pants and no shoes. The young Pakistani can be seen crying, his face twisted in agony. "I have such pain in my leg!" he whimpers. Another refugee whose clothes are wet and also doesn't have any shoes, can be seen supporting him.

Four men can be seen in the background on Croatian soil with blue and olive-green clothing reminiscent of uniforms. Three are seen putting on black masks. The men carry a long pole with them, as well as a stick with rope that has a heavy object attached to it. One of the men can be seen wielding the homemade weapon.

The hooded men lead another group of people to the border river. They beat one of the migrants with a stick or a pole. They then chase another a few seconds later, running toward the border. "Fuck your mother" rings out across the river.



Masked men on the Croatian side of the border: Homemade weapons and migrant beatings (Video: DER SPIEGEL/No Name Kitchen)

The metadata show that the video was taken on the afternoon of March 23. The buildings in the background prove that the events unfolded near Poljana on the Bosnian-Croatian border. The masked men can't be clearly identified in the images. However, their presence at the closely guarded border suggests that the men are part of the Croatian security forces. It's unlikely that masked men could operate in broad daylight without the knowledge of the authorities.

"Some of the uniforms visible in the video seem to be all mixed up," says Ranko Ostojić, a politician with the center-left social democrats in Croatia. He says he suspects the men in question are retired police officers who are now part of the reserves. "They used to be allowed to keep their uniforms, and now they are apparently carrying out pushbacks."

Ostojić was once Croatia's director of police and interior minister. He spent years chairing the Domestic Affairs Committee in the Croatian national parliament. "The pushbacks are systematic," he says. "Based on my experience, I am convinced that they are at least tolerated by the government."

When contacted by DER SPIEGEL, officials at the Croatian Interior Ministry said in a statement that they have no records of any operations on the date and location in question. They said they could not comment on the events described without further details. Croatia offers asylum seekers the opportunity to apply for asylum, the statement says, and goes on to claim that NGO reports on injured migrants almost completely ignore the conflicts between migrants in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The ministry claims that the migrants are injured in accidents or that they inflict injuries on each other and then blame Croatian border police.

"It looked like someone had stuck an iron bar into a fire and then hit him with it."

Resident Milo Gujić

When Bosnian Milo Gujić hears shots or screams from the woods below his barn, he knows they are coming again. A short time later, bleeding, crying and half-naked men show up in his yard. Sometimes, he says, it happens daily.

Fear of Retaliation

Gujić and his wife have been experiencing the brutality of the Croatian border police up close for years now. Their property is located only a few hundred meters away from the EU's external border. Gujić, who has a wiry build, has asked that we not use his real name for this story. He is afraid that Croatian security forces might retaliate against him.

In March, Gujić opened up his home to Ibrahim and his companions. Gujić says he found the men standing at his door trembling and sobbing. When shown the video, he immediately recognizes them. He built a fire for them and brought dry clothes and food. "When I took the clothes off one of them, I saw his back. It looked like someone had stuck an iron bar into a fire and then hit him with it. That's how deep red the marks from the blows were."



A migrant after attempting to cross the border: There have been thousands of reports of violence at the border. Foto: Danish Refugee Council

The Glina River along the border is a popular place for pushbacks. It is easily accessible from the Croatian side and only sparsely populated on the Bosnian side. Gujić says the Croatians recently paved the gravel road leading to the border, an omen, he believes, that the half-naked, injured men will keep coming. Gujić can't understand the violence: "You don't even hurt animals like that."

The EU pays Croatia millions of euros to secure the border. Croatia is also slated to join the Schengen Area soon, meaning its borders with other members of the area will no longer be controlled. Once that happens, the Croatian border with Bosnia-Herzegovina will become one of those places where decisions are made on how many asylum-seekers are actually allowed to reach Western Europe.

In October 2019, the European Commission gave Croatia a positive evaluation in its progress toward accession into the Schengen Area, but said it would have to continue its work on "management of the external borders." All Schengen member states must approve any country's accession. But already, the Croatian government is effectively acting as one of Europe's gatekeepers.

"In light of these terrible images, the EU should act immediately."

Lawyer Hanaa Hakiki

So far, the EU has largely ignored these obvious violations of human rights. In Germany, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer

and Chancellor Angela Merkel have openly praised the work of the Croatian border police. EU border management agency Frontex, which monitors the border from the air, has reported hundreds of illegal border crossings, but no human rights violations.

"The EU is turning a blind eye to pushbacks," says former Croatian Interior Minister Ostojić. He says it appears EU officials don't seem to care whether the border police act in accordance with international law. And their silence merely encourages the Croatian government.

International

Abo





A migrant near Poljana tries to cross the border in what refugees call "The Game."
Foto: Nicole Vögele

"The images are the clearest evidence yet that Croatia engages in violent pushbacks," says Hanaa Hakiki, a lawyer with the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), a Berlin-based human rights organization that provides support to refugees facing court proceedings. She notes that the deportations did not take place at official border crossings and that some of the weapons used by the masked men were homemade. "In light of these terrible images, the EU should take immediate action," she says.

Schengen As a Means of Pressure?

Ylva Johansson, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs responsible for EU borders, sent a letter to the Croatian Ministry of the Interior at the end of October and urged that the reports be investigated. "If proven true, what is shown there is of course unacceptable," she now says after viewing the images. "People cannot be beaten up at the border. There must be consequences."

Meanwhile, the EU's ombudswoman has also opened a probe. But real pressure on Croatia would probably only arise if the pushbacks were to put Croatia's Schengen accession into question. "Violence at the border cannot continue," Johansson says. "This will not help Croatia in its efforts to join the Schengen Area."

In the end, Ibrahim finally managed to win the "Game." After another attempt, he managed to make it to Italy. He is

currently living in a housing project in the north of the country and he was able to apply for asylum.

But the months spent on the Croatian border took a massive toll on him. When he looks at the videos of himself on the Croatian border today, he bursts out in tears. He says he still suffers from headaches and the pain in his knee is also getting worse, especially now that the weather is getting colder. At night, he says, he sometimes has nightmares about the beatings by the Croatian policemen. One time, his roommates told him the next morning that he had been calling out for help. Again. **S**

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MIGRATION SECURITY & CONTROL



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Bei diesem Beitrag handelt es sich um ein Blog aus der Freitag-Community

Journalist*innen, Aktivist*innen, Anwalt*innen, Forscher*innen und kritische Denker*innen bringen Verfolgung, Kontrolle und kulturelle Gewalt rund um Grenzen und Migration ans Licht.


[BORDERS OF FEAR \(https://youtu.be/55r1BScZV0g\)](https://youtu.be/55r1BScZV0g) deckt Fehlverhalten im Kontext von Migration auf, indem die Ursachen und Praktiken des Errichtens von Mauern und Grenzen untersucht werden, die zu physischer und kultureller Gewalt, Verfolgung und Menschenrechtsverletzungen führen. Im Rahmen der Konferenz wird der Diskurs über Grenzen sowohl auf konkreter Ebene als auch als Strategie kultureller Gewalt durch rechtsgerichtete Propaganda untersucht. Grenzsicherungen, die Errichtung von Flüchtlingslagern und die Ausweitung von Sicherheitsmaßnahmen werden ebenso analysiert wie Narrative über Migrant*innen und geflüchtete Menschen in Europa und dem Westen, die durch grenzpolizeiliche Überwachung und die Datafizierung der Gesellschaft beeinflusst werden.


 **Disruption Network Lab**
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How is border policing & the datafication of society affecting the narrative around migrants & refugees?

Our [#DNL21](#) [#BordersofFear](#) conference will be discussing just that – and more!

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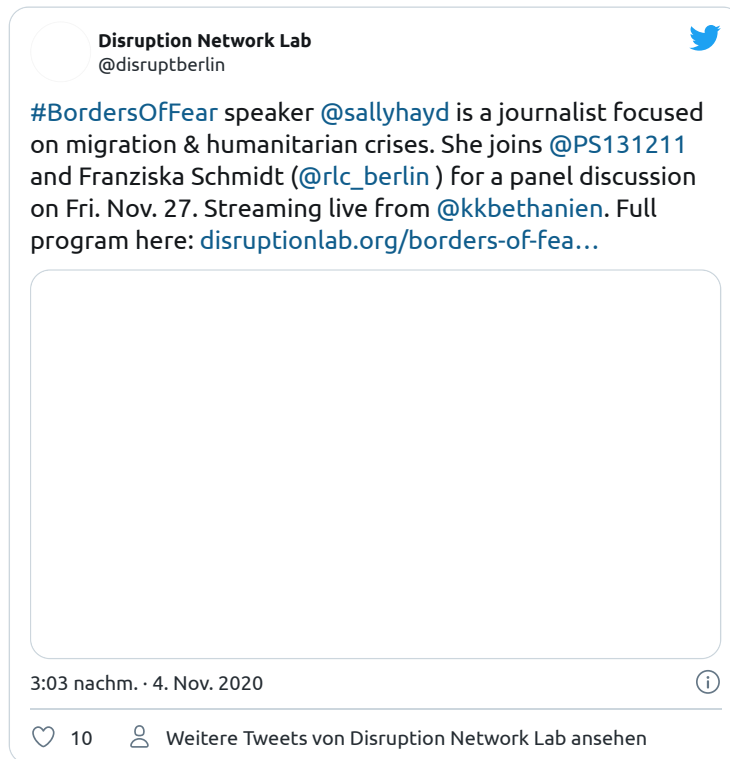


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Kulturelle und physische Grenzen bilden häufig den Rahmen für Diskriminierung, Gewalt und Menschenrechtsverstöße und für die Rechtfertigung von Rückführungen und Abschiebezentren, wo Menschen jahrelang eingesperrt werden und von Schleuser*innen ausgebeutet werden.

BORDERS OF FEAR bringt ein breites Spektrum von Sprecher*innen zusammen, um Ungerechtigkeiten, die an geflüchteten Menschen und Migrant*innen verübt werden, herauszustellen, und deren Stimmen bei dieser gemeinsamen Reflexion zu sozialer Gerechtigkeit und globalem politischen Bewusstsein anzuhören.



Das [Disruption Network Lab](https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear#speakers) [https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear#speakers], ist eine fortlaufende Veranstaltungs- und Forschungsplattform, die sich auf die Schnittmenge von Politik, Wissenschaft, Kunst, Technologie, Menschenrechten und Gesellschaft konzentriert. Das Disruption Network Lab e. V. organisiert seit 2014 partizipative, internationale Veranstaltungen mit dem Ziel, die Meinungsfreiheit zu stärken. Sie setzen sich für die global Marginalisierten ein!

15:56 23.11.2020

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Ascolta l'intervista a Regina Catrambone

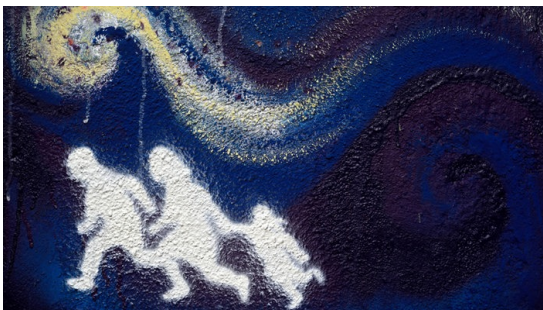
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Ogni vita è importante



di Vincenzo Savignano e Francesco Marzano

È il motto del MOAS, prima organizzazione non governativa che ha condotto operazioni di ricerca e soccorso di migranti nel Mediterraneo. La ong ancora oggi si batte per l'introduzione di vie di fuga legali dai teatri di guerra verso l'Europa. Ai nostri microfoni la fondatrice di Migrant Offshore Aid Station, Regina Catrambone.



Le fughe da guerre, oppressioni e carestie continuano anche in tempi di Covid

Il Moas è nato in seguito al naufragio dell'ottobre 2013 al largo dell'isola di Lampedusa, nel quale morirono 368 persone. Fondata dai due giovani imprenditori Regina e Christopher Catrambone, dal 2013 fino al 2017 la ong ha salvato circa 40.000 persone.

In seguito Regina e suo marito hanno deciso di interrompere l'attività di monitoraggio attraverso i droni nel Mediterraneo. Le immagini raccolte venivano, infatti, controllate dalla Guardia costiera italiana che le trasmetteva anche a quella libica che, in molte occasioni, fermava e arrestava i migranti sui barconi.



Il logo della conferenza Borders of fear

"Non volevamo partecipare indirettamente al sistema dei respingimenti", sottolinea Catrambone, che dal 2017 ha riorganizzato la propria attività, continuando sì a monitorare il Mediterraneo, ma spostando il proprio focus operativo sul Bangladesh.

- Per seguire online la conferenza "Borders of fear" | [mehr](#)

[<https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear>]

Il Moas continua comunque a chiedere all'Ue la realizzazione di vie e sistemi legali per consentire ai migranti di raggiungere le coste europee. Ma a cuasa del Coronavirus le rotte migratorie nel Mediterraneo sono passate un po' in secondo piano nei media e anche a livello politico.

Regina Catrambone partecipa fino a domenica 29 novembre 2020 alla conferenza organizzata dal Disruption Network Lab di Berlino dal titolo: "Borders of fear - Migration, security & control". È possibile seguire la conferenza in streaming gratuito al link qui sopra indicato.

- Vai agli altri temi | [mehr](#)

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Stand: 27.11.2020, 18:29



Migrant Media Network



BORDERS OF FEAR MEETUP: FACING INVISIBLE BORDERS

December 1, 2020 / in #MMN Meet-ups, Germany Events, News /

Facing invisible borders, every year thousands of people from developing countries apply for a visa to western countries and face an often tedious visa application process. They worry about whether they have the right documents or whether a typo might put their application directly into the reject pile and anxiously await a response. At best, successfully getting a visa is a completely mystifying process. At worst, after doing all the hard work, their visa gets denied.

Are the strict regulations governing access to the consulate and the complicated application process strategically designed to induce fear? If so, why?

The Borders of Fear Meetup:

[<https://www.disruptionlab.org/>] Facing Invisible Borders was organized by the Disruption Network Lab and held on October 28, 2020 from 19:00-22:00 at ACUD Macht Neu [<https://acudmachtneu.de/>] in Berlin's Mitte district. It was hosted by Thomas C. Kalunge of the #MigrantMediaNetwork [<https://migrantmedia.network>]. Thomas sought to answer questions related to the journey of a potential

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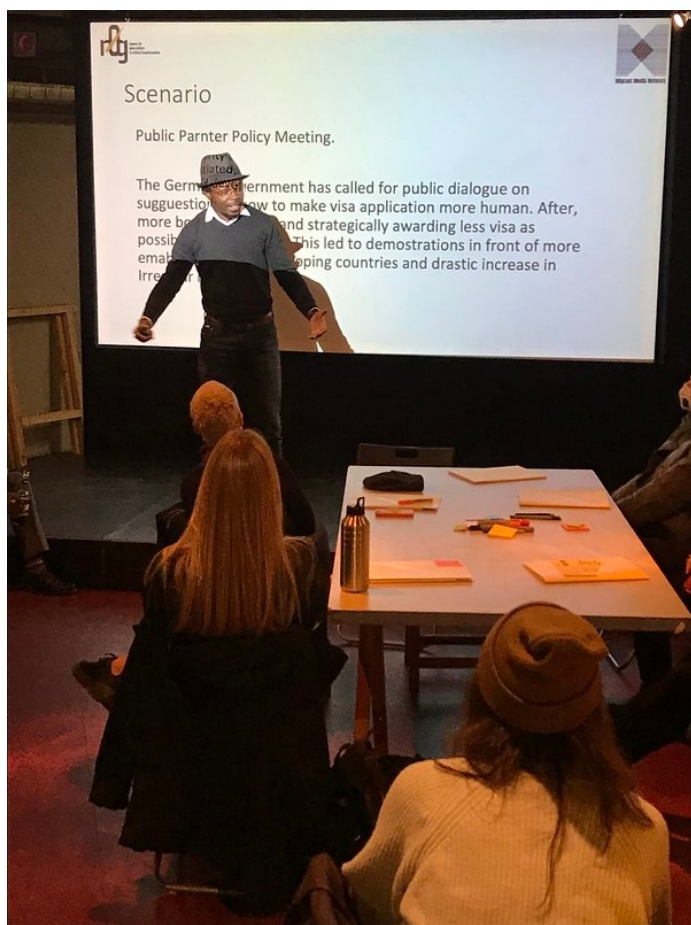
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migrant to Germany using design thinking.



Migrantmedianetwork provides young Africans with reliable information and training on migration issues and social media, in order to help others make informed decisions and be aware of safer migration options to Europe.

The German & European community was of particular focus in this #MMN meetup, with 13 Germans and other European citizens of the German community taking part in the event that welcomed 25 participants overall. Thomas began the evening by presenting on how a design thinking methodology could help us gain a deeper knowledge of the situation. He then took participants on a hypothetical journey that detailed the steps an individual coming from a developing country would have to take in order to apply for a visa to come to Germany as a migrant. In walking participants through this visa application process, he was able to make the invisible border visible, showing all of the hurdles that exist along the way.



As of July 2020, the German passport was ranked as the 3rd strongest passport in the world: German passport holders can travel to about 189 countries without a visa. The problems surrounding visa applications was therefore new to Germans, or citizens of the European Union, and highlighted the inequity faced by others whose citizenship does not bestow upon them these privileges.

The evening event was designed to be experiential in nature and covered the following topics:

Role Play: Visa Application Process

All participants were briefed and asked to arrange their documents in order and proceed to the gate for security control before they proceeded to the consulate.

Consulate setup: There were three consulates onsite ready to process the visa application forms of the participants. The participants went through two security checks: all required documents were checked, and electronic gadgets were left at the gate by the security checkpoint.

5 out of 20 participants were granted a visa, leaving 15 participants without visa. Participants were rejected based on the following criteria:

- Failure to answer odd questions
- Failure to submit required documents
- No reason given

Through role playing participants were able to in a small way experience the nature of the visa application process in developing countries.

After this, the group discussed and sought answers and solutions to these questions:

- What are the challenges that potential migrants face in the migration process, especially for those from developing countries?
- Why do some of the migrants choose to not even try to apply for a visa and instead take the irregular (backdoor) path, even in cases where the backdoor path costs more money than the regular path?
- Are the strict regulations governing access the consulate and the complicated application process strategically designed to induce fear? If so, why?

Discussing policy and public dialogue

In the past, the German government has called for public dialogue and suggestions for how to make the visa application process more humane. Yet at the same time, more border security was put in place and they have begun to strategically grant fewer visa. This led to demonstrations in front of embassies in developing countries and drastically increased irregular (backdoor) migration.

Based on this information and the role play, participants were divided into three groups to brainstorm and discuss these questions:

- Have you applied for visa before?
- How was your application?
- What made it difficult or easy for you?

- How did this process make you feel?
- Do you see any fault in the process?
- How can this process be made more effective?
- What could be changed about the process?

Outcome

The workshop was designed to foster discussion and allow participants to gain a better understanding of the hurdles that stand in the way of applying for a visa and using the prescribed path to migration. These goals were met. Participants came up with ideas and solutions they were ready and willing to share with the German government in the context of the public dialogue surrounding migration and the visa application process.

Ideas garnered from the discussions:

- Provide clear information on the official websites
- Websites need to be functional and user-friendly
- There should be offline info-centers
- Provide clear information on the reason for a rejection
- More funding to have sufficient & well-trained staff
- Greater transparency of the process
- Decentralized Consulates / Agencies for more accessibility
- Ban discriminating & intimidating behavior on the part of agency or staff

Another group argued that the process should be free and would be more fair if the following were implemented:

- Personnel should be well-informed / educated in order to provide accurate answers
- The process should be anonymous
- Provide a clear checklist of requirements/ documents (available online and offline at the consulate)
- Forbid questions related to socio-economic status

- Provide visa assistance through simple language forms and someone who does a pre-check for accuracy and typos
- Examining the root causes of problems more extensively
- Stop media fear mongering
- Digitalize the visa process (automation could decrease risk of prejudice / racism in interviews)
- Reduce “ultra security” in application centers.

Written by Benedictus Agbelom

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REPLIES



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Montag - Freitag: 10:00 Uhr - 13:00 Uhr

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„Borders of Fear“

morgen:magazin | 02.12.2020

Wie kann es sein, dass auch fünf Jahre nach Beginn der Flüchtlingskrise beinahe jeden Tag Menschen im Mittelmeer ertrinken müssen? Welche Strukturen machen Diskriminierung, Gewalt und Menschenrechtsverstöße an den europäischen Außengrenzen möglich? Die Konferenz BORDERS OF FEAR des Berliner Disruption Network Lab, bringt internationale Expert*innen zusammen, um gemeinsam über Verfolgung, Kontrolle und kulturelle Gewalt rund um Grenzen und Migration nachzudenken. Die



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Veranstaltung wird am Freitag, den 27.11. ab 16 Uhr aus dem Studio 1, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin live gestreamt:

<https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear#schedule>

Ihr habt an dem Termin keine Zeit? Kein Problem. multicult.fm berichtet für Euch am 02.12. im Morgenmagazin über die Konferenz.

Teilen

Borders of Fear

 furtherfield.org/borders-of-fear

February 16, 2021



The 21st conference of the Disruption Network Lab “Borders of Fear” was held on the 27th, 28th, and 29th November 2020 in Berlin’s Kunstquartier Bethanien. Journalists, activists, advocates, and researchers shed light on abuses and human rights violations in the context of migration management policies. Keynote speeches, panel discussions and several workshops were held involving a total number of 18 speakers and bringing together hundreds of online viewers.

Drawing on insights from humanities, science and technology studies, participants analysed from different perspectives the spread of new forms of persecution and border control targeting people on the move and those seeking refuge. They reflected collectively on forms of social justice and discussed the politics of fear that crystalize the stigmatisation of migrants. By concretely addressing these issues the conference also investigated the deployment of technology and the role of media to consolidate a well-defined structure of power, and outlined the reasons behind the rise of borders and walls, factors that lead to cultural and physical violence, persecution, and human rights violations.

In her introductory statement Dr. Tatiana Bazzichelli, founder and director of the Disruption Network Lab, presented the programme of the conference meant to address the discourse of borders both in their material function, and in their defining role within a strategy of dehumanization and racialisations of individuals. Across the globe, an unprecedented number of people are on the move due to war, economic and environmental factors. Bazzichelli recalled the urgent need to discuss human-right-related topics such as segregation and pushbacks, refugee camps and militarization of frontiers, considering the new technological artilleries available for states, investigating at the same time how border policing and datafication of society are affecting the narrative around migrants and refugees in Europe and the in the West.

The four immediate key content takeaways of the first day were the will to prevent people from reaching countries where they can apply for refugee status or visa; the externalisation polices of border control; the illegal practice of pushbacks; and systematic human rights violations by authorities, extensively documented but difficult to prove in court.



Lieke Ploeger, community director of the Disruption Network Lab, and Dr. Tatiana Bazzichelli, founder and director of the Disruption Network Lab opening the 21st conference “Borders of Fear”

The conference opened with the short film by Josh Begley “Best of Luck with the Wall” – a voyage across the US-Mexico border – stitched together from 200,000 satellite images, and a talk by lawyer **Renata Avila**, who gave an overview of the physical and socio-economic barriers, which people migrating encounter whilst crossing South and Central America.

Avila took step from the current crises in South and Central America, to describe the dramatic migration through perilous regions, a result of an accumulation of factors like inequality, corruption, mafia, and violence. Avila pointed out that oligarchic systems from different countries appear to be interconnected in complicated architectures of international tax evasion, ruthless exploitation of resources, oppression, and the use of force. In those same places, people experience the most brutal inequality, poverty and social exclusion.

Since the '90s the regional free trade agreement meant open borders for products but not for people. In fact, it was an international policy with devastating effects on local economies and agriculture. People on the move in search for a better future somewhere else found closed borders and security forces attempting to block them from heading north towards Mexico and the U.S. border. In these years, the police forceful response to the migrants crossing borders have been widely praised by the governments in the region.

The fact of travelling alone is a red flag, especially for women, and the first wall people meet is in their own country. People on their way to the north experience every kind of injustice. Latin America has often been regarded as a region with deep ethnic and class conflicts. Abandoning possible stereotypical representations, we see that the bodies of the people on the move are at large sexualised and racialized for political reasons. Race, therefore, is another factor to consider, especially when we look at the journey of individuals on the move. Aside, languages in South America could also represent a barrier for those who travel without translators in a continent with dozens of indigenous languages.

Avila concluded her intervention mentioning the issue of digital colonialism and the relevance of geospatial data. Digital is no longer a separated space, she warned, but a hybrid one relevant for all individuals and whose rules are dictated by a small minority. People and places can be erased by those very few companies that can collect data, and –for example– draw and delete borders.



Renata Avila during her intervention

The panel **on the first day** titled **“Migration, Failing Policies & Human Rights Violations,”** was moderated by **Roberto Perez-Rocha**, director for the international anti-corruption conference series at Transparency International, and **delivered by Philipp Schönberger** and **Franziska Schmidt**, coordinators of the Refugee Law Clinic Berlin, together with investigative journalist and photographer **Sally Hayden**. The panellists referred to their direct experience and work, and reflected on how the EU migration policy is factually enforcing practices that cause violation of human rights, suffering, and desperation.

The Refugee Law Clinic Berlin e. V. is a student association at the Humboldt University of Berlin, providing free of charge and independent legal help for refugees and people on the move in Berlin and on the Greek island of Samos. The organisation also offers training on asylum and residence law in Berlin and runs the website ihaverights.eu, designed to allow access to justice to those in marginalised communities.

Through a legal counselling project on the Greek island of Samos, the collective helps people suffering from European illegal practices at the Union’s borders, providing the urgent need of effective ways to guarantee them access to justice and protection. As Schönberger and Schmidt recalled, refugees, and people on the move within the EU find several obstacles when it comes to the enforcement of their rights. For such a reason, they shall be guaranteed procedural counselling by the law to secure, among other services, a fair asylum procedure. However, the Clinic confirmed that such guarantees are not being completely fulfilled in Germany, nor at Europe’s borders, in Samos, Lesbos, Leros, Kos, or Kios.

The panellists explained how their presence on the island gives a chance to document that these camps of human suffering are actually a structural part of an EU migration policy aimed at deterring people from entering the Union, result of deliberate political decisions taken in Brussels and Berlin. Human rights violations occur before arriving on the island, as people are intercepted by the Greek coastguard or by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), and then pushed back to the Turkish border.

The camp in Samos, with a capacity of a maximum 648 people, is instead the home to 4,300 residents, with no water, no sanitary services, poisonous food, and no medical services. Even very serious cases documented to local health authorities remain unattended. The list of violations is endless and the complete lack of adequate protection for unaccompanied minors represents another big issue in this like in all others Greek hotspots, together with the precarity of vulnerable groups, whose risks increase with race, gender, and sexual identity.

The legal team from Berlin prepares applications to the EUCHR court and in these years has filed also 60 requests for urgent procedure due to the risk of irreparable harm, which were granted, ordering adequate accommodation and medical treatment for people in extreme danger.



Roberto Perez-Rocha (left), Sally Hayden, Philipp Schönberger and Franziska Schmidt during the panel on the first day "Migration, Failing Policies & Human Rights Violations"

Many observers criticise that the sufferings in the Aegean and on the Greek islands is the result of precise political decisions. Agreed in March 2016, the EU-Turkey deal is a statement of cooperation that seeks to control the crossing of people from Turkey to the Greek islands. According to the deal, every person arriving without documents by boat or without official permission or passage to the Greek islands would be returned to Turkey. In exchange, EU Member States would take Syrian refugees from Turkey. NGOs and international human rights agencies denounce that Turkey, Greece, and the EU have completely failed on humanitarian grounds and dispute the wrong premise that Turkey is a safe country for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Journalist and photographer **Sally Hayden** looked at the EU-Turkey deal, defining it as a prototype for what would then happen in the central Mediterranean. Libya, a country at war with multiple governments, is the destination of people on move and refugees from all over Africa, willing to cross the Mediterranean Sea. As it is illegal to stop and push people back, for years now the EU has been financing the Libyan coastguard to intercept and pull them back. What follows is a period of arbitrary and endless detention.

Hayden writes about facts; she is not an activist. When she talks about Libya, she refers to objective events she can fact check, and individual stories she has personally collected. Her reports represent a country at war, unsafe not just for refugees and people on the move but for Libyans too. With her work, the journalist has extensively documented how refugees and migrants smuggled into Libya are subject to human trafficking, forced labour, sexual exploitation and tortures, trapped in an infernal circle of violence and death. She recalled her experience with the detainees in Abu Salim, where 500 hundred people suffer from illegal and brutal incarceration inside a centre affiliated with the government in Tripoli. In July 2020, during the conflict, one of these many prisons not far from the city was bombed. At least 53 illegally detained people were killed.

Hayden's work provides a picture of the results of Europe's management of the migration crises in the Mediterranean and Northern Africa. EU funds are employed for militarization of borders and externalisation of frontiers control. The political context, in which this occurs, is the cause of years and sometimes decades of lack

of investment in reception and asylum systems in line with EU-State's generic obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

All panellists called for the immediate intervention to evacuate camps and prisons that were the result of the EU migration policies, to allow migrant victims of abuses and refugees to seek justice and safety elsewhere.



Sally Hayden during the panel "Migration, Failing Policies & Human Rights Violations"

The evening closed with the panel discussion titled "Illegal Pushbacks and Border Violence" and moderated by **Likhita Banerji**, a human rights and technology researcher at Amnesty International. **Banerji** reminded the audience that in the first nine months of 2020 there had already been 40 pushbacks, illegal rejections of entry, and expulsions without individual assessment of protection needs, had been documented within Europe or at its external borders. Since these illegitimate practices are widespread, and in some countries systematic, these pushbacks cannot be defined as incidental actions. They appear, instead, to be institutionalised violations, well defined within national policies.

People who shall receive asylum or be rescued, are instead pushed back by police forces, who make sure that the material crossing of the borders remains undocumented. EU member States want to keep undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees outside of their jurisdiction to avoid moral responsibilities and legal obligations. During the second panel of the day, **Hanaa Hakiki**, legal advisor at the ECCHR Migration Program, filmmaker and reporter **Nicole Vögele**, and **Dimitra Andritsou**, researcher at Forensic Architecture, had the chance to go in-depth and to consider the different aspects of these violations.

Hanaa Hakiki, in her intervention "Bringing pushbacks to justice" presented the difficulties that litigators experience in court to materially document pushbacks, which are indeed not meant to be proven. She defined pushbacks as a set of state measures, by which refugees and migrants are forced back over the border – generally shortly after having crossed it – without consideration of their individual circumstances and without any possibility for them to apply for asylum or to put forward arguments against the measures taken.

There are national and international laws that need to be considered in these cases, constituting binding legal obligations for all EU Member States. As a general principle, governments cannot enact disproportionate force, humiliating and degrading treatment or torture, and must facilitate the access to asylum, guarantee protection to people, and provide them access to individualised procedures in this sense.

Member States know that pushbacks have been illegal since a 2012 ECtHR judgment, known as the “Hirsi Jamaa Case,” which found that Italy had violated the law in forcing people back to Libya. However, the effective ban on direct returns led European countries to find other ways to avoid responsibility for those at sea or crossing their borders without documents, and concluded agreements with neighbouring countries, which are requested to prevent migrants from leaving their territories and paid to do so, by any means and without any human rights safeguards in place. By outsourcing rescue to the Libyan authorities, for example, pushbacks by EU countries turned into pullbacks by Libyan coastguard.

Land-pushbacks are still common practice. Hakiki explained that the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) has worked with communities of undocumented migrants since 2014, considering potential legal interventions against the practice of pushbacks at EU borders, and assisting affected persons with individual legal proceedings. She presented three cases the ECCHR litigated in Court (*N.D. and N.T. v. Spain*; *AA vs North Macedonia*; *SB vs. Croatia*) proving that European countries illegally push people back, in violation of human rights laws. Despite the fact that this is still a common practice, it is very difficult to document these violations and have the authorities condemned.



Likhita Banerji (left), Hanaa Hakiki, Nicole Vögele and Dimitra Andritsou during the panel “Illegal Pushbacks and Border Violence”

During the beginning of the Syrian conflict, in 2015, refugees were able to travel via Serbia and Hungary into Central and Northern Europe. A couple of years later the EU decided to close down again this so-called Balkan Route, with the result that more and more people found themselves stuck in Bosnia-Herzegovina, prevented from continuing onward to Europe’s territories. From there a person can try to enter the European Union dozens of times, and each time is stopped by Croatian security forces, beaten, and then dragged back across the border to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

After having seen the effects of these illegal practices and met victims of dozens of violent pushbacks in Sarajevo, in 2019 the reporter Nicole Vögele and her crew succeeded in filming a series of these cross-border expulsions from Croatia to Bosnia Herzegovina near the village of Gradina, in the municipality of Velika Kladuša. The reporter, one of the few who succeeded in documenting this practice, also interviewed those who had just been pushed back by the Interventna Policija officers. The response of the Bosnian authorities to her reportage was a complete denial of all accusations.

Vögele then presented footage taken at the EU external border in Croatia, in March 2020, showing masked men beat up refugees and illegally pushing them back to Bosnia. The journalist and her team found the original video, analysed its metadata, and interviewed the man captured on it. Once again, their work could prove that these practices are not isolated incidents.

The panel closed with the investigation by Forensic Architecture part of a broader project on cases of pushbacks across the Evros/Meriç river. Team member **Dimitra Andritsou** presented the organisation founded to investigate human rights violations using a range of techniques, flanking classical investigation methods including open-source investigation video analysis, spatial and architectural practice, and digital modelling.

Forensic Architecture works with and on behalf of communities affected by state and military violence, producing evidence for legal forums, human rights organisations, investigative reporters and media. A multidisciplinary research group – of architects, scholars, artists, software developers, investigative journalists, archaeologists, lawyers, and scientists – based at the University of London, works in partnership with international prosecutors, human rights organisations, political and environmental justice groups, and develops new evidentiary techniques to investigate violations of human rights around the world, armed conflicts, and environmental destruction.

The Evros/Meriç River is the only border between Greece and Turkey that is not sea. For years migrants and refugees trying to cross it to enter Europe have been reporting that unidentified and generally masked men catch, detain, beat, and push people back to Turkey. Mobile phones, documents, and the few personal things they travel with are confiscated or thrown into the river, not to leave any evidence of these violations behind. As Andritsou described, both Greek and EU authorities systematically deny any wrongdoing, refusing to investigate these reports. The river is part of a wider ecosystem of border defence and has been weaponised to deter and let die those who attempt to cross it.



Nicole Vögele during the panel “Illegal Pushbacks and Border Violence”

In December 2019, the German magazine Der Spiegel obtained rare videos filmed on a Turkish Border Guard’s mobile phone and on a surveillance, camera installed on the Turkish banks of the river, which apparently documented one of these many pushback operations. Forensic Architecture was commissioned to analyse the footages. A team of experts was then able to geolocate and timestamp the material and could confirm that the images were actually taken few hundred metres away from a Greek military watchtower in Greece.

Andritsou then presented the case of a group of three Turkish political asylum seekers, who entered Greek territory on 4 May 2019, always crossing the Evros/Meriç river. In this case a team of Forensic Architecture could cross-reference different evidence sources, such as new media, remote sensing, material analysis, and witness testimony and verify the group's entry and their illegal detention in Greece. A pushback to Turkey on the 5 May 2019 led to their arrest and imprisonment by the Turkish authorities.

Ayşe Erdoğan, Kamil Yildirim, and Talip Niksar had been persecuted by the Turkish government on allegations of involvement in Fettulah Gulen's movement. The group on the run had shared a video appealing for international protection against a possible forced return to Turkey and digitally recorded the journey via WhatsApp. All their text messages with location pins, photographs, videos and metadata prove their presence on Greek soil, prior to their arrest by the Turkish authorities. The investigation could verify that the three were in a Greek police station too, a fact that matches their statement about having repeatedly attempted to apply for asylum there. Their imprisonment is a direct result of the Greek authorities contravening the principle of non-refoulement.

Some keywords resonated throughout the first day of the conference, as a fil rouge connecting the speakers and debates held during the panels and commentaries by the public. Violence, arbitrariness and lawlessness are wilfully ignored –if not backed– by EU Member States, with authorities constantly trying to hide the truth. Thousands of people live under segregation, with no account or trace of being in custody of authorities free to do with them whatever they want.



Likhita Banerji (left), Hanaa Hakiki, Nicole Vögele and Dimitra Andritsou during the panel “Illegal Pushbacks and Border Violence”

Technology has always been a part of border and immigration enforcement. However, over the last few years, as a response to increased migration into the European Union, governments and international organisations involved in migration management have been deploying new controversial tools, based on artificial intelligence and algorithms, conducting *de facto* technological experiments and research involving human subjects, refugees and people on the move. The second day of the conference opened with the video contribution by Petra Molnar, lawyer and researcher at the European Digital Rights, author of the recent report “Technological Testing Grounds” (2020) based on over 40 conversations with refugees and people on the move.

When considering AI, questions, answers, and predictions in its technological development reflect the political and socioeconomic point of view, consciously or unconsciously, of its creators. As discussed in the [Disruption](#)

Network Lab conference “AI traps: automating discrimination” (2019)— risk analyses and predictive policing data are often corrupted by racist prejudice, leading to biased data collection which reinforces privileges of the groups that are politically more guaranteed. As a result, new technologies are merely replicating old divisions and conflicts. By instituting policies like facial recognition, for instance, we replicate deeply ingrained behaviours based on race and gender stereotypes, mediated by algorithms. Bias in AI is a systematic issue when it comes to tech, devices with obscure inner workings and the black box of deep learning algorithms.

There is a long list of harmful tech employed at the EU borders is long, ranging from Big Data predictions about population movements and self-phone tracking, to automated decision-making in immigration applications, AI lie detectors and risk-scoring at European borders, and now bio-surveillance and thermal cameras to contain the spread of the COVID-19. Molnar focused on the risks and the violations stemming from such experimentations on fragile individuals with no legal guarantees and protection. She criticised how no adequate governance mechanisms have been put in place, with no account for the very real impacts on people’s rights and lives. The researcher highlighted the need to recognise how uses of migration management technology perpetuate harms, exacerbate systemic discrimination, and render certain communities as technological testing grounds.

Once again, human bodies are commodified to extract data; thousands of individuals are part of tech-experiments without consideration of the complexity of human rights ramifications, and banalizing their material impact on human lives. This use of technology to manage and control migration is subject to almost no public scrutiny, since experimentations occur in spaces that are militarized and so impossible to access, with weak oversight, often driven by the private sector. Secrecy is often justified by emergency legislation, but the lack of a clear and transparent regulation of the technologies deployed in migration management appears to be deliberate, to allow for the creation of opaque zones of tech-experimentation.

Molnar underlined how such a high level of uncertainty concerning fundamental rights and constitutional guarantees would be unacceptable for EU citizens, who would have ways to oppose these liberticidal measures. However, migrants and refugees have notoriously no access to mechanisms of redress and oversight, particularly during the course of their migration journeys. It could seem secondary, but emergency legislation justifies the disapplication of laws protecting privacy and data too, like the GDPR.



Petra Molnar, lawyer and researcher author of the report “Technological Testing Grounds” (2020)

The following part of the conference focused on the journey through Sub-Saharan and Northern Africa, on the difficulties and the risks that migrants face whilst trying to reach Europe. In the conversation “The Journey of Refugees from Africa to Europe,” Yoseph Zemichael Afeworki, Eritrean student based in Luxemburg, talked of his experience with Ambre Schulz, Project Manager at Passerell, and reporter Sally Hayden. Afeworki recalled his dramatic journey and explained what happens to those like him, who cross militarized borders and the desert. The student described that migrants represent a very lucrative business, not just because they pay to cross the desert and the sea, but also because they are used as cheap labour, when not directly captured for ransom.

Once on the Libyan coast, people willing to reach Europe find themselves trapped in a cycle of waiting, attempts to cross the Mediterranean, pullbacks and consequent detention. Libya is a country at war, with two governments. The lack of official records and the instability make it difficult to establish the number of people on the move and refugees detained without trial for an indefinite period. Libyan law punishes illegal migration to and from its territory with prison; this without any account for individual’s potential protection needs. Once imprisoned in a Libyan detention centre for undocumented migrants, even common diseases can lead fast to death. Detainees are employed as forced labour for rich families, tortured, and sexually exploited. Tapes recording inhuman violence are sent to the families of the victims, who are asked to pay a ransom.

As Hayden and Afeworki described, the conditions in the buildings where migrants are held are atrocious. In some, hundreds of people live in darkness, unable to move or eat properly for several months. It is impossible to estimate how many individuals do not survive and die there. An estimated 3,000 people are currently detained there. The only hope for them is their immediate evacuation and the guarantee of humanitarian corridors from Libya –whose authorities are responsible for illegal and arbitrary detention, torture and other crimes– to Europe.



Yoseph Zemichael Afeworki and Ambre Schulz (video), Dr. Tatiana Bazzichelli (left) and Sally Hayden

The second day closed with the panel “Politics & Technologies of Fear” moderated by Walid El-Houri, researcher, journalist and filmmaker. Gaia Giuliani from the University of Coimbra, Claudia Aradau, professor of International Politics at King’s College in London, and Joana Varon founder at Coding Rights, Tech and Human Rights Fellow at Harvard Carr Center.

Gaia Giuliani is a scholar, an anti-racist, and a feminist, whose intersectional work articulates the deconstruction of public discourses on the iconographies of whiteness and race, questioning in particular the white narrative imaginary behind security and borders militarization. In her last editorial effort, “Monsters, Catastrophes and the

Anthropocene: A Postcolonial Critique” (2020), Giuliani investigated Western visual culture and imaginaries, deconstructing the concept of “risk” and “otherness” within the hegemonic mediascape.

Giuliani began her analyses focusing on the Mediterranean as a border turned into a biopolitical dispositive that defines people’s mobility –and particularly people’s mobility towards Europe– as a risky activity, a definition that draws from the panoply of images of gendered monstrosity that are proper of the European racist imaginary, to reinforce the European and Western “we”. A form of othering, the “we” produces fears through mediatized chronicles of monstrosity and catastrophe.

Giuliani sees the distorted narrative of racialized and gendered bodies on the move to Europe as essential to reinforce the identification of nowadays migrations with the image of a catastrophic horde of monsters, which is coming to depredate the wealthy and peaceful North. It’s a mechanism of “othering” through the use of language and images, which dehumanizes migrants and refugees in a process of mystification and monstrosification, to sustain the picture of Europe as an innocent community at siege. Countries of origins are described as the place of barbarians, still now in post-colonial times, and people on the move are portrayed as having the ability to enact chaos in Europe, as if Europe were an imaginary self-reflexive space of whiteness, as it was conceived in colonial time: the bastion of rightfulness and progress.

As Giuliani explained, in this imaginary threat, migrants and refugees are represented as an ultimate threat of monsters and apocalypse, meant to undermine the identity of a whole continent. Millions of lives from the South become an indistinct mass of people. Figures of race that have been sedimented across centuries, stemming from colonial cultural archives, motivate the need to preserve a position of superiority and defend political, social, economic, and cultural privileges of the white bodies, whilst inflicting ferocity on all others.

This mediatized narrative of monsters and apocalypse generates white anxiety, because that mass of racialized people is reclaiming the right to escape, to search for a better life and make autonomous choices to flee the objective causes of unhappiness, suffering, and despair; because that mass of individuals strives to become part of the “we”. All mainstream media consider illegitimate their right to escape and the free initiative people take to cross borders, not just material ones but also the semiotic border that segregate them in the dimension of “the barbarians.” An unacceptable unchained and autonomous initiative that erases the barrier between the colonial then and the postcolonial now, unveiling the coloniality of our present, which represents migration flows as a crisis, although the only crisis undergoing is that of Europe.

On the other side, this same narrative often reduces people on the move and refugees to vulnerable, fragile individuals living in misery, preparing the terrain for their further exploitation as labour force, and to reproduce once again racialized power relations. Here the process of “othering” revivals the colonial picture of the poor dead child, functional to engender an idea of pity, which has nothing to do with the individual dignity. Either you exist as a poor individual in the misery –which the white society mercifully rescues– or as a part of the mass of criminals and rapists. However, these distinct visual representations belong to the same distorted narration, as epitomized in the cartoons published by Charlie Hebdo after the sexual assaults against women in Cologne on New Year’s Eve 2015.



Gaia Giuliani (video), Walid El-Houri and Joana Varon during the panel "Politics & Technologies of Fear"

Borders have been rendered as testing ground right for high-risk experimental technologies, while refugees themselves have become testing subjects for these experiments. Governments and non-state actors are developing and deploying emerging digital technologies in ways that are uniquely experimental, dangerous and discriminatory in the border and immigration enforcement context. Taking step from the history of scientific experiments on racialized and gendered bodies, Claudia Aradau invited the audience to reconsider the metaphorical language of experiments that orients us to picture high-tech and high-risk technological developments. She includes instead also tech in terms of obsolete tools deployed to penalise individuals and recreate the asymmetries of the digital divide mirroring the injustice of the neoliberal system.

Aradau studies technologies and the power asymmetries in their deployment and development. She explained that borders have been used as very profitable laboratories for the surveillance industry and for techniques that would then be deployed widely in the Global North. From borders and prison systems –in which they initially appeared– these technologies are indeed becoming common in urban spaces modelled around the traps of the surveillance capitalism. The fact that they slowly enter our vocabularies and daily lives makes it difficult to define the impact they have. When we consider for example that inmates' and migrants' DNA is collected by a government, we soon realise that we are entering a more complex level of surveillance around our bodies, showing tangibly how privacy is a collective matter, as a DNA sequence can be used to track a multitude of individuals from the same genealogic group.

Whilst we see hyper-advanced tech on one side, on the other people on the move walk with nothing to cross a border, sometimes not even shoes, with their personal belongings inside plastic bags, and just a smartphone to orientate themselves, and communicate and ask for help. An asymmetry, which is –once again– being deployed to maintain what Aradau defined as matrix of domination: no surveillance on CO2 emissions and environmental issues due to industrial activities, no surveillance on exploitations of resources and human lives; no surveillance on the production of weapons, but massive deployment of hi-tech to target people on the move, crossing borders to reach and enter a fortress, which is not meant for them.

Aradau recalled that in theory, protocols ethics and demands for objectivity are necessary when it comes to scientific experiments. However, the introduction in official procedures of digital tech devices and software such as Skype, WhatsApp or MasterCard or a set of apps developed by either non-state or state actors, required neither laboratories nor the randomized custom trials that we usually associate with scientific experimentation. These heterogeneous techniques specifically intended to work everywhere and enforced without protocols,

need to be understood under neoliberalism: they rely on pilot projects trials and cycles of funds and donors, whose goal is every time to move to a next step, to finance more experiments. Human-rights-centred tech is far away.

Thus, we see always more experiments carried out without protocols, from floating walls tech to stop migrants reaching the Greek shores, to debit cards used as surveillance devices. Creative experiments come also with the so-called refugees' integration, conceived by small-scale injections of devices into their reality for limited periods, with the purpose of speculatively recompose rotten asymmetries of power and injustice. In Greece, as Aradau mentioned, the introduction of Skype in the process of the asylum application became an obstacle, with applicants continually experiencing debilitation through obsolete technology that doesn't work or devices with limited access, disorientation through contradictory and outdated information.

There is also a factual aspect: old and slow computers, documents that have not been updated or have been updated at different times, and lack of personnel are justified by saying that resources are limited. A complete lack or shortage of funds, which is one other typical condition of neoliberalism, as we can see in Greece. In this, tech recomposes relations of precarity in a different guise.

Aradau concluded her contribution focusing on the technologies that are deployed by NGOs, completely or partially produced elsewhere, often by corporate actors who remain entangled in the experiments through their expertise and ownership. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon, or Google not only shape relations between online users, she warned, but concerning people on the move and refugees too. Google and Facebook –for example– dominate the relations that underpin the production of refugee apps by humanitarian actors.

Google is at the centre of a sort of digital humanitarian ecosystem, not only because it can host searches or provide maps for the apps, but also because it simultaneously intercepts data flows so that it acts as a surplus data extractor. In addition, social networks reshape digital humanitarianism through data extractive relations and provide big part of the infrastructure for digital humanitarianism. Online humanitarianism becomes thus a particularly vulnerable site of data gathering and characterised by an overall lack of resources –similarly to the Greek state. As a result, humanitarian actors cannot tackle the depreciation messiness and obsolescence of their tech and apps.



Joana Varon and Walid El-Houri during the panel "Politics & Technologies of Fear"

The last day of the conference concentrated on the urgent need to creating safe passages for migration, and pictured the efforts of those who try to ensure safer migration options and rescue migrants in distress during their journey. Lieke Ploeger, community director of the Disruption Network Lab, presented the panel discussion “Creating Safe Passages”, moderated by Michael Ruf, writer and director of documentary and theatre plays. Ruf’s productions include the “Asylum Dialogues” (2011) and the “Mediterranean Migration Monologues” (2019), which have been performed in numerous countries more than 800 times by a network of several hundred actors and musicians. This final session brought together speakers from the Migrant Media Network (MMN), the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), and SeaWatch e.V. to discuss their efforts to ensure safer migration options, as well as share reliable information and create awareness around migration issues.

The talk was opened by Thomas Kalunge, Project Director of the Migrant Media Network, one of r0g_agency’s projects, together with #defyhatenow. Since 2017 the organisation has been working on information campaigns addressed to people in rural areas of Africa, to explain that there are possible alternatives for safer and informed decisions, when they choose to reach other countries, and what they may come across if they decide to migrate.

The MMN team organises roundtable discussions and talks on various topics affecting the communities they meet. They build a space in which young people take time to understand what migration is nowadays and to listen to those, who already personally experienced the worst and often less discussed consequences of the journey. To approach possible migrants the MMN worked on an information campaign on the ethical use of social media, which also helps people to learn how to evaluate and consume information shared online and recognise reliable sources.

The MMN works for open culture and critical social transformation, and provides young Africans with reliable information and training on migration issues, included digital rights. The organisation also promotes youth entrepreneurship “at home” as a way to build economic and social resilience, encouraging youth to create their own opportunities and work within their communities of origin. They engage on conversations on the dangers of irregular migration, discussing together rumours and lies, so that individuals can make informed choices. One very relevant thing people tend to underestimate, is that sometimes misinformation is spread directly by human smugglers, warned Kalunge.

The MMN also provides people from remote regions with offline tools that are available without an internet connection, and training advisors and facilitators who are then connected in a network. The HyracBox for example is a mobile, portable, RaspberryPi powered offline mini-server for these facilitators to use in remote or offline environments, where access to both power and Internet is challenging. With it, multiple users can access key MMN info materials.

An important aspect to mention is that the MMN does not try to tell people not to migrate. European government have outsourced borders and migration management, supporting measures to limit people mobility in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, and it is important to let people know that there are real dangers, visible and invisible barriers they will meet on their way.

Visa application processes –even for legitimate reasons of travel– are very strict for some countries, often without any information being shared, even with people who are legitimately moving for education, to work or get medical treatment. The ruling class that makes up the administrative bureaucracy and outlines its structures, knows that who controls time has power. Who can steal time from others, who can oblige others to waste time on legal quibbles and protocol matters, can suffocate the others’ existence in a mountain of paperwork.

Human smugglers then become the final resort. Kaluge explained also that, at the moment, the increased outsourcing of the European border security services to the Sahel and other northern Africa countries is leading to diversion of routes, increased dangerousness of the road, people trafficking, and human rights violations.



An image from the panel discussion “Creating Safe Passages” with Thomas Kalunge

Closing the conference, Regina Catrambone presented the work that MOAS does around the world and the campaign for safe and legal routes that is urging governments and international organisations to implement regular pathways of migration that already exist. Mattea Weihe presented instead the work of SeaWatch e. V., an organisation which is also advocating for civil sea rescue, legal escape routes and a safe passage, and which is at sea to rescue migrants in distress.

The two panellists described the situation in the Central Mediterranean. Since the beginning of the year, over 500 migrants have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea (November 2020). While European countries continue to delegate their migration policy to the Libyan Coast Guard, rescue vessels from several civilian organisations have been blocked for weeks, witnessing the continuous massacre taking place just a few miles from European shores. With no common European rescue intervention at sea, the presence of NGO vessels is essential to save humans and rescue hundreds of people who undertake this dangerous journey to flee from war and poverty.

However, several EU governments and conservative and far right political parties criminalise search and rescues activities, stating that helping migrants at sea equals encouraging illegal immigration. A distorted representation legitimised, fuelled and weaponised in politics and across European society that has led to a terrible humanitarian crisis on Europe’s shores. Thus, organisations dedicated to rescuing vessels used by people on the move in the Mediterranean Sea see all safe havens systematically shut off to them. Despite having hundreds of rescued individuals on board, rescue ships wait days and weeks to be assigned a harbour. Uncertainty and fear of being taken back to Libya torment many of the people on board even after having been rescued. After they enter the port, the vessels are confiscated and cannot get back out to sea.

By doing so, Europe and EU Member States violate human rights, maritime laws, and their national democratic constitutions. The panel opened again the crucial question of humanitarian corridors, human-rights-based policy, and relocations. In the last years the transfer of border controls to foreign countries, has become the main instrument through which the EU seeks to stop migratory flows to Europe. This externalisation deploys modern tech, money and training of police authorities in third countries moving the EU-border far beyond the Union’ shores. This despite the abuses, suffering and human-rights violations; willingly ignoring that the majority of the 35 countries that the EU prioritises for border externalisation efforts are authoritarian, known for human rights abuses and with poor human development indicators (Expanding Fortress, 2018).

It cannot be the task of private organizations and volunteers to make up for the delay of the state. But without them no one would do it.

States are seeking to leave people on the move, refugees, and undocumented migrants beyond the duties and responsibilities enshrined in law. Most of the violations, and the harmful technological experimentation described throughout the conference targeting migrants and refugees, occurs outside of their sovereign responsibility. Considering that much of technological development occurs in fact in the so-called “black boxes,” by acting so these state-actors exclude the public from fully understanding how the technology operates.

The fact that the people on the move on the Greek islands, on the Balkan Route, in Libya, and those rescued in the Mediterranean have been sorely tested by their journeys, living conditions, and, in many cases, imprisoned, seems to be irrelevant. The EU deploys politics that make people who have already suffered violence, abuse, and incredibly long journeys in search of a better life, wait a long time for a safe port, for a visa, for a medical treatment.



Dr. Tatiana Bazzichelli, founder and director of the Disruption Network Lab and Lieke Ploeger, community director of the Disruption Network Lab, closing the 21st conference “Borders of Fear”

All participants who joined the conference expressed the urgent need for action: Europe cannot continue to turn its gaze away from a humanitarian emergency that never ends and that needs formalised rescue operations at sea, open corridors, and designated authorities enacting an approach based on defending human rights. Sea rescue organisations and civil society collectives work to save lives, raise awareness and demand a new human rights-based migration and refugee policy; they shall not be impeded but supported.

The conference “Borders of Fear” presented experts, investigative journalists, scholars, and activists, who met to discuss wrongdoings in the context of migration and share effective strategies and community-based approaches to increase awareness on the issues related to the human-rights violations by governments. Here bottom-up approaches and methods that include local communities in the development of solutions appear to be fundamental. Projects that capacitate migrants, collectives, and groups marginalized by asymmetries of power to share knowledge, develop and exploit tools to combat systematic inequalities, injustices, and exploitation are to be enhanced. It is imperative to defeat the distorted narrative, which criminalises people on the move, international solidarity and sea rescue operations.

Racism, bigotry and panic are reflected in media coverage of undocumented migrants and refugees all over the world, and play an important role in the success of contemporary far-right parties in a number of countries. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance effective and alternative counter-narratives based on facts. For example, the “Africa Migration Report” (2020) shows that 94 per cent of African migration takes a regular form and that just 6 per cent of Africans on the move opt for unsafe and dangerous journeys. These people, like those from other troubled regions, leave their homes in search of a safer, better life in a different country, flee from armed conflicts and poverty. It is their right to do so. Instead of criminalising migration, it is necessary to search for the real causes of this suffering, war and social injustice, and wipe out the systems of power behind them.

Videos of the conference are also available on [YouTube](#) via:



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/videoseries>

For details of speakers and topics, please visit the event page here: <https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear>

Upcoming programme:

The 23rd conference of the Disruption Network Lab curated by Tatiana Bazzichelli is titled “Behind the Mask: Whistleblowing During the Pandemic.” It will take place on March 18-20, 2021. More info: <https://www.disruptionlab.org/behind-the-mask>

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