Management, Truth and Life

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The securitization of migration

The 2006 United Nations report, *The State of the World's Refugees*, outlines many of the challenges of studying migration in the contemporary moment. The first of these being the recognition that migration today is increasingly 'mixed' or blended. In contrast, the post-World War II state-based migration regimes seem to offer governmental categories that, to paraphrase Friedrich Nietzsche, grasp at the smoke of an evaporating reality. These days, student migration is also widely recognized (even by governments) to be blended with labour migration. With increasing restrictions on labour migration, applications for asylum offer one of the few routes to a better life; and, with increasingly restrictive asylum systems, unknown numbers are falling into irregular routes. All of this must be situated against a background in which the numbers of migrants in the world continues to grow.[1] Of course, many migrants are not asylum seekers, refugees or 'illegal' immigrants, but rather migrants working at different levels of the globalized world economy. This special issue of the *Irish Journal of Anthropology* on Managing Migration looks at migration from different angles, from high-tech workers to asylum seekers, and examines the migration regimes, management thinking and processes of securitization evident in today's world.

While we live in a complex world of mixed migration, it is nonetheless important to note that managing the frictions and flows of population mobility is a practical matter for governments, international organizations and policy makers. In 2006, for example, Elaine Dezenski of the US Department of Homeland Security discussed the North America and Mexico Security and Prosperity Partnership (SSP) at an EU conference and set out the aim of migration management in the following terms:

> To streamline the secure and efficient movement of legitimate and low-risk traffic across our shared borders through a ... traveller security strategy that includes standards on travel and nationality documents ... facilitating travel, enforcing immigration laws, and identifying the bad guys ... Best of all, we are able to achieve results like this without inconveniencing legitimate travellers ...
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> About 100 years ago, 'Americanization,' as the policy was called, sought to promote civic literacy, English language acquisition, and cultural assimilation ... Today, we believe, that, despite differences in background, all Americans are bound together by a set of enduring civic principles as relevant today as they were the day our Constitution. ... We welcome immigrants who want to make the U.S. their home and join us in honouring these principles. (2006: passim)

Dezenski establishes the benefits to be gained by facilitating low-risk travel while at the same time working to ameliorate the dangers inherent in mobility. The technologies of identity management – travel documents and secure identity verification – are situated in the context of security. And security is situated alongside 'integration'. It is the latter connection that many people may find surprising, but this connection is often made in the most explicit terms: in a recent interview with *Irish Times* migration correspondent Ruadhán MacCormaic one Irish government official argued, 'Integration can't happen without deportation!' This special issue begins with a recorded roundtable discussion on integration in which Clement Esebamen, former Senior Policy Advisor to the Irish Minister for State for Integration, Robin Hanan, CEO of the Irish Refugee Council, and Issah Huseini of the New Communities Partnership tease out many of these issues and connections.

But what are the major policy shifts with respect to migration management, and how might we map the future directions and the human consequences? Again, many insights are available in the United Nations report, *The State of the World's Refugees*. It is worth noting, for example, that since 2000 the number of refugees (those who meet the definition of a person needing protection under the 1951 Geneva Convention and 1967 Protocol) in the world has fallen, due in part to a decline in the number of inter-state conflicts. However, internal strife, oppression and civil war have persisted, and 'refugees' often do not cross borders today but remain encamped within their own or in neighbouring countries. The number of asylum seekers has also fallen, but again this allows no space for celebration: today illicit channels seem increasingly followed as governments tighten asylum policy and deploy restrictive measures to manage the 'problem' of asylum. Perhaps the most disturbing trend, however, is management through 'outsourcing'.

In 2003, the UK government together with the Netherlands and Denmark put forward a 'New Vision for Refugees,' which envisaged transferring asylum applicants to third country Regional Protection Areas (RPAs). RPAs were to be supplemented with Transit Centres closer to the EU border area. While this particular proposal met with considerable resistance from several Member States, NGOs and the UNHCR, the overall policy direction that undergirds it remains on the agenda. But this is no 'Fortress Europe' that can be studied via 'border studies' alone. As the US

Department of Homeland Security's representative, Elaine Dezenski outlined to the EU conference in 2006, managing migration is not just about border control; rather, it is an assemblage of systems to filter mobility, separate the good from the bad; systems that make use of new technologies that promise secure identities, and systems that couple security and migration together with visions of integration. What we are discussing is the securitization of migration. And what of the lives lived in this context – the stuff of ethnographic projects?

Human securitization

In January 2002, a group of two hundred asylum seekers went on hunger strike in the notorious Woomera Centre in Australia. They captured international media attention by stitching their lips together to protest against their muted and liminal status. Since the late 1990s, a deterrent system confronted those seeking asylum in Australia, involving the use of detention centres such as the remote ex-military base at Woomera and some off-shore islands such as the tiny Pacific nation of Nauru. By late January 2002, however, there were signs of resistance: alongside the initial two hundred asylum seekers a further thirty-five went on hunger strike in Maribyrnong. Simultaneously, a large-scale riot broke out in Curtin Detention Centre. Michael Dudley of Suicide Prevention Australia and Sarah Mares, a child psychiatrist, inspected Woomera and slammed the conditions as, 'akin to concentration camps'. They put the following question to the world's media: 'Does any other country lock children and families behind walls of razor wire in the desert?'

Australia's asylum policy is at the vanguard of the securitization of migration, a trend characterized by new configurations of state, non-state agencies and private interests and marked by increasing use of detention and segregation. But one could also add the events in Europe in May 2009 under this heading: the Italian government, contrary to international legal principles, ordered its navy to force hundreds of migrants entering Italian waters towards Libya, where the EU's 'good neighbourhood' policy aspires towards greater levels of security cooperation with North African governments. Therefore, to the question, 'Does any other country lock children and families behind walls of razor wire in the desert?' the answer is, to varying degrees, yes.

In May 2006, thirty-three Afghan asylum seekers entered St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin and began a hunger strike. By the following day their number had swelled to forty-one persons. 'When you cannot have your rights in an office, a church is the best place to come,' said the protesters' spokesperson, nineteen year-old Samandar Khan. His choice was a poor one, however. Church authorities failed to mediate with government officials, while the UN's Dublin representative, Manuel Jordão denounced the protest as 'unacceptable' in the light of Ireland's 'just and fair'

asylum system. The neighbourhood surrounding the Cathedral quickly turned hostile. By day six there were protesters outside, many scarcely more than ten year-olds, carrying placards that read, 'Let them die.'

In an interview with Mark Maguire for the Irish multicultural newspaper *Metro Éireann,* the protest spokesperson Samandar Khan explained:

> Our main purpose is not to commit suicide. … We are victims and we are looking to have our rights. We are not trying to die. We are trying to have our cases heard. (Maguire 2006: 3)

Khan, who fled Afghanistan when his father was killed, pointed out that the group was composed of people who 'have been here for three or four years and have been ignored' (*ibid.*). The hunger strike in Dublin ended peacefully after just one week. The protesters left the sanctuary of the Cathedral amid racist calls, to return to a 'fair and transparent' asylum system.

From Australia to the EU an image is emerging of increasingly similar asylum systems in which hundreds of thousands of people live their daily lives – as Michel Agier notes herein, it involves a long insomnia. In this special issue of the *Irish Journal of Anthropology* we ask: in what ways can social-scientific knowledge contribute to understanding migration systems, from IT workers on visas in the USA to asylum seekers in Europe and beyond its borders? But we also ask: what are the conditions for the possibility of efforts to 'manage'? In this sense, this issue discusses themes that are broader than migration studies, from mapping and diversity in the Balkans to medico-legal reports for survivors of torture. Here we are interested in the politics of truth and life itself: the contemporary workings of biopower.

Recently the costs associated with the asylum system in Ireland received considerable attention. Estimates suggest that in 2008 direct provision centres/sites cost the exchequer €91.5 million, with the asylum legal system and deportation costs bringing the overall bill to approximately €300 million per annum. If we follow Michel Foucault in seeing neo-liberal biopolitics as demanding the perpetual trial of everything in the court of the economy then we must understand that an 'economic imperative' to 'tackle' asylum is recognized by governments in many parts of the world. But Foucault was careful to note that neo-liberal economic rationalities are in fact embedded in broader strategies and tactics of government and are themselves instantiations of biopower: discourses about the vital nature of humans, their 'truth' and subjectivity; strategies and tactics for actual interventions on every level, from the individual to that of the population, the health, welfare or security of which might be threatened or curtailed and thus must be defended.

Discussions of biopolitics, biopower or governmentality are not attempts to recast practical realities in the language of high theory; rather, such concepts provide useful tools with which to mine into contemporary political thought and useful ways

through which to recognize the interconnected nature of ostensibly disjoined and diverse tactics for migration management. Specific migration policies often clearly articulate the objectives, the overall approach and specific tactics to be deployed. Take for example Tony Blair's preface to the UK's policy statement *Controlling our Borders: Making Migration Work for Great Britain* (which bears more than a family resemblance to the speech by Homeland Security's Elaine Dezenski to the EU):

> We will finger print visitors who need visas ... before they arrive. We will, where necessary, use our powers to demand financial bonds from migrants ... to guarantee their return home ... We will replace out-dated and confusing rules with a clear and modern points system so we only allow into Britain the people and skills our economy needs. (Home Office 2005: 6)

Here, labour migrants ('visitors') are perpetually tried in the court of the economy; those who are suspected of not being in a position to contribute are 'suspects' from whom truth is demanded on the level of life itself. And the contribution of those with the skills the economy needs is flexibly defined – as Payal Banerjee shows in this issue, Indian Immigrant IT Workers in the US, with skills the economy needs, must rely on informal networks of support in order to make a 'high-end' contribution.

Controlling our Borders is clearly a policy statement that brings together the different categories and scales of mobility and models the ways in which global migration can be harnessed and controlled for the good of the UK. Gone is the ill-defined multiculturalism of the past and in its stead a nation-state conceptualized as a market-nexus in the global economy; gone is the vision of a nation-state as the pillar of international legal systems and agreements, replaced by a vision of borders that are spread out, filled in (Agier in this issue) and controlled with electronic fences. Reading statements such as *Controlling our Borders* through a lens of biopower allows one to see clearly the interconnected nature of ostensibly disjoined and diverse tactics and strategies of management.

On truth

Efforts to manage migration at the level of truth and the body are often striking in their mobilization of 'scientific' knowledge. For example, in 2009 the UK Border Agency (UKBA) established a pilot project to investigate the use of genetic tests for country of origin. Asylum seekers have been asked to volunteer mouth swabs or hair or nail samples where the credibility of their evidence of nationality is in doubt. In the light of a furious reactions from advocacy groups and from the scientific community—the latter pointing out that genes don't respect nation-state borders—the UKBA argued that such tests are only to support other investigative methods, such as the broader credibility assessments by Immigration Judges, as discussed in the

UK context by Anthony Good herein, and medico-legal reports similar to those discussed by Monika Wesseinsteriner in the Irish case herein. While this proposal appears to be floundering it is the conditions for its possibility that demand attention. For several years the US has used DNA tests to query claims of relatedness in families claiming asylum and in cases of claims for family reunification. What is at stake here is not just the specific mechanisms of asylum systems but also broader uses of 'science' to uncover the 'truth' of migrants' claims.

Some 'scientific' tests of credibility clearly have more of a symbolic than evidentiary value and perhaps the best-known example of this is biometric tests of age for unaccompanied minors. In Germany, local Youth Welfare Offices and Foreigners' Authorities have used biometric bone-density, radiological and dental tests to supplement a system in which a 'notional' age is 'presumed' through visual inspection. While visual inspections are carried out by culturally encoded eyes (in Germany they can the estimations of age can only be refuted by means of relevant documents or medical certificates) bone-density and radiological tests are also deeply cultural in that they are based on the dubious theory that 'minors' will have universal nutritional and physical stress variables in their environments.

Should we be surprised that 'scientific' tests of credibility themselves lack credibility? From the DNA and biometric tests mentioned above to the commissioning of private language testing companies to verify country of origin via interview transcripts, what we are witnessing is progressive and widespread efforts to problematize migration. In this sense, 'truth' is a security problem. But more needs to be said here. If Foucault's work on governmentality and biopower can provide the conceptual tools to unpick the assemblage of migration management then we must take seriously not just the challenges of producing the anthropology of this contemporary problematization but also the history of the present. As Jelena Tošić's work herein shows, governmentality may be usefully deployed to think through how diversity is managed through older technologies for gathering knowledge of populations, such as maps and demographic data.

A brief history of the present

> Such as travel carry with them a passport from the Prince, with both certifies the license that is granted for travelling, and limits the time of their return. ... But if any man goes out of the city to which he belongs without leave, and is found rambling without a passport, he is severely treated, he is punished as a fugitive, and sent home disgracefully; and, if he falls again into the like fault, is condemned to slavery. ... Thus you see that there are no idle persons among them, nor pretences of excusing any from labour.
> - Sir (Saint) Thomas More, *Utopia*

In the above epigraph, as Thomas More's protagonist, Raphael Hythloday surveys Utopia (from the Latin, *Nusquama*, 'Nowhere' and the Greek, *eutopia*, the

good place) he notes that occupations are fixed and movement is restricted. Life in Utopia is orderly as a consequence of powerful incentives for the inhabitants to remain in their proper places. In Utopia, roles are expected to be fulfilled in specific locations, and while those roles are transposable to other, similar locations, movement denotes disorder and must be carefully managed.

The form of discipline and order in More's *Utopia* is, as Hythloday informs us, predicated by a particular problem of population. Great numbers were once carried off by the plague – a disaster from which recovery was partial – and the health and wealth of cities is understood to depend upon forces at the level of population. The plague therefore stands as the violent foundational moment of the law and as a constant image of all that is different and disorderly.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault provides us with many examples of how more contemporary societies produce real and imagined visions of order and disorder, utopias and dystopias. His celebrated chapter on panopticism begins not with Jeremy Bentham's panopticon but with the plague measures for Vincennes at the end of the seventeenth century. The measures proposed strict partitioning, surveillance, procedures to maintain food security, and definitions of 'crows,' or persons 'of little substance' who could be left to die. Everyday a syndic would stop before each house to survey the living and the dead, and inhabitants had to appear at their window and upon their 'true' names being called speak that truth under pain of death. According to Foucault:

> This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, ... in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, ... in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead – all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism (1995 [1977]: 197).

The disciplinary mechanisms that greeted the plague were exceptional and violent responses not just to the dangers of pestilence but also the potential for disorder. The plague could bring with it a nightmare-like world wherein statutory identities gave way to mobile bodies and identities: a dystopia of alternative truths, idleness, crime, and the whole aspect of the carnival, wherein rules are suspended and indeed inverted.[2] By countering this dystopian world, disciplinary management allowed for the realization in exceptional, limited and temporary circumstances of its own utopia, according to Foucault, 'the utopia of the perfectly governed city' (1995 [1977]: 198).

Foucault suggests that it was the very heaviness and quarantine-like nature of the plague town that made its form of government impossible to maintain. Societies and economies required circulation (see also Elden 2003). Thus he turns to consider Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. The panoptic tower for viewing

the lunatic, patient, school boy or factory worker, without the observer being seen (except by observers of a higher rank), is explained as not simply an architectural form or a specific technology. Bentham himself was quick to point this out: panopticism was 'a great and new instrument of government ... its great excellence consists in the strength it is capable of giving to *any* institution' (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 206). As Bentham hinted and Foucault understood, panopticism was a mode of generalized surveillance that could run the length of society and rest upon a whole series of connections between space, power and knowledge, from fixed names and occupations, to dedicated institutions, and from specific domains of knowledge to legal instruments. Instead of the exceptional dream-like government through quarantine and discipline, panopticism allows for amplification without absolute violence; it is a more economic and efficient technique of management that exists not in the state but precisely through and beyond the state – panopticism is a way of governing that is deinstitutionalized as 'flexible methods of control' (ibid 211).

However, Jeremy Bentham's panopticon and Michel Foucault's discussion of panopticism do not stand as grand narratives of how western societies operate and cannot be simply transposed into the analysis of other cultures. As more and more Anthropologists turn their attention to issues of migration, integration and borders, the work of Foucault is being deployed to discuss new forms of security, databases such as Eurodac, encampment and identity politics. Yet, there remains a constant need to critically theorize the anthropology of migration and to use the material and problematizations in migration research to critically challenge 'theory'. This issue of the *Irish Journal of Anthropology* includes a debate on integration, articles on citizenship, labour migration, security and encampment, credibility in asylum courts, medico-legal reports, and governing diversity in the Balkans. The common thread that connects these contributions is the sense that governing mobility, diversity, truth and life itself is a biopolitical problem that may be unpicked through anthropological approaches. Each in their own way, the contributions to this issue engage with discourses about the vital nature of humans on the level of life itself, their credibility, 'truth' and subjectivity; strategies and tactics for actual interventions or management on every level, from the individual to that of the population, the health, welfare or security of which might be threatened or curtailed and thus must be defended.

Notes

[1] 'Migrant' here denotes a person residing in a country other than their place of birth for at least one year. Current data suggest that approximately three percent of the world's population are migrants. The figure has shown significant recent increase and grew from approximately 100 million in 1960 to 175 million in 2000. However, the most significant trend in the

migration from South to the North, especially from poorer countries to the 'developed' world: in 2000, 63 percent of the world's migrants were in developed countries.

[2] An interesting historical illustration occurs in the summer of 1666, the English court decamped to Oxford and laid down 'Rules and Orders' for the movement of goods and bodies, conducted a survey of persons, and posted guards, all as if preparing for a siege. However, the measures could not provide full security; and one 'lewd fellow ... having a plague sore upon him' (Porter 2000: 106) stole a scholar's gown and roamed the court as if he belonged. The *Quarantine Act* was passed in England in 1721 but was restricted in its powers amid concerns over attacks on liberties and its measures to control households were repealed in 1722.

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