The enforcement archipelago: Detention, haunting, and asylum on islands.

Alison Mountz

Abstract

From offshore border enforcement to detention centers on remote islands, struggles over human smuggling, detention, asylum, and associated policies play out along the geographical margins of the nation-state. In this paper, I argue that islands are part of a broader enforcement archipelago of detention, a tactic of migration control. Island enforcement practices deter, detain, and deflect migrants from the shores of sovereign territory. Islands thus function as key sites of territorial struggle where nation-states use distance, invisibility, and sub-national jurisdictional status (Baldacchino & Milne, 2006) to operationalize Ong’s (2006) “graduated zones of sovereignty.” In sites that introduce ambiguity into migrants’ legal status, state and non-state actors negotiate and illuminate geopolitical arrangements that structure mobility. This research traces patterns among distant and distinct locations through examination of sovereign and biopolitical powers that haunt asylum-seekers detained on islands. Offshore
detention, in turn, fuels spatial strategies employed in onshore detention practices internal to sovereign territory.

Highlights

- Islands are part of a broader enforcement archipelago of detention, a tactic of migration control.
- Island enforcement practices deter, detain, and deflect migrants from mainland territory.
- Islands are sites of territorial struggle where states exploit distance, precariousness, and ambiguous status.
- Geopolitical arrangements structure mobility on islands.
- Offshore detention fuels strategies employed onshore such as visibility and invisibility.

Keywords

Island; Migration; Asylum; Refugee; Enforcement; Sovereignty; Detention

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