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

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### 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.



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## Keywords

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

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