

## EVERYDAY BORDERING IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

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This special issue focuses on the concept of 'everyday bordering', which has thus far received limited attention in the Nordic context. In five case studies from Norway, Finland and Sweden, we examine internal bordering practices and gatekeeping on the one hand and migrant strategies of coping with such everyday bordering on the other. On a broader level, this issue explores the significance of intensifying internal bordering – 'a border that is everywhere' (Lyon 2005) – in relation to the purportedly universal Nordic welfare states. From the 1990s onwards, increasing mobility and the selective tightening of migration policies have produced a diversity of non-citizens in each Nordic country, who lack or have overstayed their residence permit or who are in an otherwise precarious legal and social position. This poses a dilemma for the Nordic welfare states, which have a long tradition of combining strict regulation of entry and residence with relatively generous welfare arrangements for recognised residents (Brochmann & Hagelund 2011; Djuve *et al.* 2015: 9–10).

As in other countries of the so-called Global North, there has been a consistent drive towards more restrictive immigration policies in the Nordic countries (e.g. Brochmann & Hagelund 2011). However, European de-bordering and commitment to international law and multilateral agreements that protect the rights of migrants mean that authorities are often unable to directly turn back or deport migrants such as rejected asylum seekers or unregistered European Union (EU) migrants. Partly as a response to this inability, there has been a proliferation of internal everyday bordering practices, taking place at the level of health care and bank reception counters, homeless

shelters, workplaces, schools, local police stations and so on (e.g. Könönen 2014; Pellander 2016; Tervonen & Enache 2016; Thomsen *et al.* 2010).

The contributions to this special issue connect this development in the Nordic countries to a growing international literature on the control of mobilities taking place within physical state borders (e.g. Balibar 2004; Dauvergne 2009; Könönen 2018a, Rigo 2009; Van Baar 2014). This research has produced a series of re-conceptualisations of borders and migration management. Focus has shifted from viewing borders as static lines 'containing' populations to a processual understanding of 'bordering' as something that reaches beyond borderlines and into everyday life, shaping social relations and migrant subjectivities (Assmuth *et al.* forthcoming 2018; Mezzadra & Neilson 2013). Borders have come to be seen as 'differentiating machines' (Rigo 2009: 51) that produce complex hierarchies not only between citizens and migrants, but also within these categories. Frequently, these hierarchies also reproduce and reinforce global, racial and gender-based inequalities (e.g. Basham & Vaughan-Williams 2013; Horsti & Pellander 2015; Staeheli, Kofman & Peake 2004; Van Baar 2014).

This shift of attention has not downplayed the significance of external physical borders. The intensified control of mobility within state borders has been integrally linked to restrictive efforts at the borders, as well as *outside* them (the militarisation of state borders, efforts to 'upstream' the control of borders, visa control, carrier sanctions and so on). Indeed, no neat dividing line can be drawn between 'internal' and 'external' forms of bordering. Without

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disregarding the hardening external borders surrounding the countries of the Global North, the focus on everyday bordering invites attention to the pervasiveness of mobility control *also within* these borders and to its complex societal consequences.

In a number of countries with large non-citizen populations, de-territorialised forms of bordering everyday lives have become a central area of restrictive policy-making (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy 2017, forthcoming 2019). In the UK, for instance, the Immigration Act of 2014 aims explicitly to create a 'hostile environment' for non-European Economic Area (EEA) migrants within the UK. The Act obligates landlords to check the immigration status of all tenants and lays down increased civil penalties for employers found to have employed migrants without residence permits. In effect, ordinary citizens, including landlords, employers, college administrators and medical professionals, are turned into border guards, sanctioned by heavy fines and prosecution if they fail to fulfil this role. Indeed, Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy (2017) argue that everyday bordering has replaced multiculturalism as the hegemonic technology of controlling population diversity and discourses on diversity, resulting in environments that are more 'hostile' not only to migrants, but to everyone.

This special issue probes the ways and the degree to which a comparable expansion of internal bordering has taken place in the Nordic countries, as well as the consequences resulting from this process, from the perspective of the migrants, 'gatekeepers' and wider welfare regimes. Our approach to these developments is inspired by Yuval-Davis's focus on micro-scale bordering practices in order to understand changing European borders (Yuval-Davis 2013: 16; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy 2017, forthcoming 2019).

## Migrants and gatekeepers

The empirical cases in this special issue are drawn from Sweden, Norway and Finland, and they address three main analytical and empirical areas.

First, the contributions probe the administrative and street-level bordering practices implemented by various state and non-state actors as they regulate migrants' residence permits and their access to health care, schooling, accommodation and so on. We follow a broad conceptualisation of gatekeeping that incorporates the normative aspects of the implementation of immigration regulations (Bache 1999; Iacovetta 2006; Satzewich 2013; Triandafyllidou & Ambrosini 2010). An expanding variety of authorities, civil servants, doctors, non-governmental organisation (NGO) workers, landlords and others are employed in such gatekeeping roles. They are in effect charged with upholding the internal boundaries of the nation/welfare state by enforcing policies that are often expressly designed to avoid creating 'incentives' for unwanted would-be-migrants. The Finnish traffic police, for instance, are routinely employed in immigration raids, while social workers, teachers and doctors are expected not only to deny 'illegal' migrants non-essential services but also to refer them to immigration authorities.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, local registry offices function as gatekeepers to stratified welfare entitlements (Alastalo & Homanen 2015).

However, as the burden of controlling the social rights of migrants filters down to ground-level actors, the latter frequently find themselves in moral and institutional grey zones. Bendixsen's (2018) contribution thus describes doctors who are unwilling to deny treatment to irregular migrants, while Diatlova and Näre (2018) write about the ambivalent relationship between Finnish police and

Russian-speaking women engaged in commercial sex, who are simultaneously protected and threatened by the former.

Secondly, this special issue relates everyday bordering to migrants' coping strategies, experiences and struggles, focussing on migrants' agency and their engagements with various 'gatekeepers'. The most directly disruptive and threatening effects of everyday bordering are felt in the lives of non-EU migrants without residence rights. What Genova (2002) has called 'deportability' is at the heart of these migrants' unequal power relations with various state and non-state gatekeepers. Yet, bordering processes also shape the lives of other kinds of 'in-between' migrants with ambivalent legal statuses and social rights, and, as shown by Diatlova and Näre (2018) as well as Pellander (2018), can even affect those with formal citizenship (refer also Horsti & Pellander 2015; Sotkasiira & Haverinen 2016; Tervonen & Enache 2016).

While the 'tactics of everyday life' (de Certeau 1984) utilised by women engaged in commercial sex (Diatlova & Näre 2018) differ fundamentally from those of elderly family migrants (Pellander 2018), or – for instance – from those of irregular migrants with health concerns (Bendixsen 2018), in each case, bordering practices produce latent – and often also actual – problems and risks. At the same time, as Sager (2018) argues, migrant tactics of coping and resistance can also affect bordering practices, constituting potential 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2008).

Thirdly, this special issue explores collectively the implications of expanding everyday bordering processes for the boundaries and ongoing restructuring of the Nordic welfare states. The issue contributes to the ongoing discussion on the relationship between irregular and precarious forms of migration and the welfare state (e.g. Thomsen *et al.* 2010; Triandafyllidou 2010). Nordic countries diverge significantly in their migration histories (Mulinari *et al.* 2009) and do not form a single ideal type or 'model' (Kettunen & Petersen 2011). Still, they also share a number of institutional and structural features, such as highly regulated labour markets and residence-based welfare provision, which make 'in-between' migrants deeply anomalous to Nordic state practices. As debates on the provision of health care to undocumented or 'paperless' migrants (*papperslösa*, *paperittomat*) illustrate, the question of managing migration has become directly a question of defining the boundaries of the welfare state.

## Contributions to the special issue

The first three contributions deal with the everyday bordering on those legally residing within the state – and sometimes even citizens – who are nevertheless subject to forms of internal bordering affecting them and their family members.

Könönen (2018b) analyses administrative bordering within the state, which often follows non-EU migrants for years. Drawing on interviews with non-EU citizens in Finland, he argues that while the right to residence is the primary border struggle faced by non-citizens, administrative bordering continues to affect the everyday lives of the migrants even after gaining the residence permit, differentiated by the type of permit issued. In addition to the Finnish Immigration Service, several other institutions, such as local registry offices, embassies, employment offices, trade unions, schools, banks and even consulting firms, partake in the everyday processes of administrative bordering. The article criticises the idea of a linear path of migrants towards citizenship and argues that administrative bordering creates pervasive insecurity for non-citizens, as they experience transitions in their legal status.

Similar dynamics of insecurity and deportability are apparent in the analysis by Diatlova and Näre (2018). Drawing on interviews conducted with Russian-speaking women engaged in commercial sex, ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with key bureaucrats and NGO actors in Finland, Diatlova and Näre examine how policies and bordering practices become part of everyday life in rental markets, banking and law enforcement. Policies that purportedly protect women engaged in commercial sex often end up facilitating exploitation or enforcing exclusion from citizenship rights. The article's findings expand the notion of 'deportability' and show that even women with formal citizenship can be subjected to various bordering practices. The case of Russian-speaking women engaged in commercial sex demonstrates that bordering practices and deportability can affect mobile individuals not only because of their status as migrants but also due to the work they engage in.

Another case of bordering practices affecting citizens is Pellander's (2018) analysis of Finnish policies and practices regarding family reunion for elderly family members living abroad. In order for elderly parents or grandparents to be allowed entry, they must prove total dependency on the family member living in Finland. As Pellander shows, dependency is a central criterion in determining whether elderly people are granted residence permits. In the application process, not only transnational family ties but also the bodies of elderly family members become bordering sites. Rather than the slowly ageing dependent body, it is the body in sudden need of care and that cannot uphold bodily functions without the assistance of others that qualifies for a residence permit.

While the first three articles of this special issue explore everyday bordering affecting those with legal permits, and in some cases even those with citizenship, the last two papers deal with irregular migrants who have been denied – or have overstayed – their permits. As with Pellander's contribution, the article by Bendixsen (2018) deals with the body and health care as sites of bordering. Bendixsen explores the ways in which refused asylum seekers with irregular status deal with policing and the control of access to health care. Drawing on fieldwork with irregular migrants in Norway, Bendixsen suggests that welfare rights and their distribution creates everyday bordering practices, and that irregular migrants respond to these practices with various 'tactics'. Access to health care is not merely an issue of legal regulation, but it is also related to the migrants' capacity to manoeuvre in spaces that are bound by sovereign power. The article suggests that in adopting tactics to cope with everyday bordering, irregular migrants do not ultimately challenge the state's micro-practices of control in health care.

Finally, Sager's (2018) article brings out the tensions and contradictions between the visibility and invisibility of irregular migrants in Sweden. The article builds on the seemingly contradictory developments by which irregular migrants have gained social rights and recognition, while simultaneously being subjected to increased

repression and deportations. By juxtaposing the analysis of policy and migrant agency, Sager argues that the establishment of irregular migrants as a policy object has created new visibility, which has produced both increased social rights and intensified mechanisms of repression.

Collectively, the contributions to this special issue illustrate that the politics of everyday bordering are not simply reducible to top-down repression or the prevention of mobility. This is illustrated clearly by Sager's analysis of the simultaneously improved access to education and health care, as well as intensified police searches, for irregular migrants (Sager 2018). Meanwhile, as several of the contributions bring out, a missing 'firewall' between civil servants and immigration authorities causes irregular migrants to avoid even those authorities who are nominally tasked with helping them. Efforts to provide care for the most vulnerable migrants can similarly produce paradoxical results. The contributions of Bendixsen and Pellander point to the suffering body of the migrant as a potential source of legitimacy in relation to migration management – provided that the body is demonstrably dependable or 'sick enough'. Together, the contributions thus point to the paradoxes and ambivalent borderscapes of 'post-universal' welfare states, characterised by an increasing differentiation of rights.

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## Notes

1. These recent examples are from Finland ('*Poliisi valvoo tällä viikolla tehostetusti ulkomaalaisten maassaolon edellytyksiä.*' *Yle uutiset* 12.3.2018; '*Sosiaalityöntekijät nousivat ministeriötä vastaan paperittomista.*' *Helsingin Uutiset* 22.5.2017; '*Analyysi: kun maahanmuuttokeskustelu sotki lääkäreiden työt.*' *Yle uutiset* 29.11.2017).

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