

SECTION 5

BORDERS AND MOBILITIES

The border is everywhere. This evocative and apt phrase conveys a complex social truth about life in the twenty-first century. As scholars in surveillance studies and beyond have noted (e.g., Balibar 2002; Lyon 2005), a world that is economically globalizing is also one in which boundaries, walls, fences, and borders are becoming more, not less, important. It is a world with systems designed to facilitate and regulate flows—on one hand, ensuring unencumbered transit for commercial goods, capital, and the relatively affluent who present low security risks, while, on the other, slowing down or stopping altogether flows that might threaten economic stability, social exclusivity, or security (Cowen 2014).

Surveillance is essential to these processes. It affords the rapid, and often automated, differentiation of flows on multiple scales. Thus, identification schemes try to fix the identities of known and unknown bodies so that they can be assessed and sorted either in real time or in advance, in an anticipatory way, so that screening at borders or checkpoints becomes largely perfunctory for elite (white) travelers, while it remains an anxiety-producing, unpredictable ordeal for (racialized) others. While the criteria used to assess risk might be arbitrary or prejudicial, thereby engendering different experiences and outcomes for different people, there is also differential exposure to *types* of

systems. On one end of the spectrum, for instance, elite travelers might enroll in pre-screening systems (or use dedicated toll roads in non-border settings), whereas on the other end of the spectrum, refugees seeking to relocate in Europe from North Africa and the Middle East are rigorously questioned about their backgrounds and then entered into various identification systems, some using iris scans, to assess their level of threat or need, apportion benefits, and track them across territories (Monahan 2017). Such risk-management approaches to the social sorting of mobilities are the norm, and whereas the emphasis in this section is on systems that regulate the mobility of people, parallel systems exist for assessing and regulating the flows of goods and capital across the world.

These developments partly correspond with Gilles Deleuze's (1992) influential observations about "control societies," where the modulation of flows occurs in the service of neoliberal capitalism—or "the corporation," in his framing—which segments society and shapes it to conform to markets. As the excerpts in this section show, however, articulations of biopolitical and disciplinary power persist and mutate within control societies (see Section 2). This process puts the resources of the nation-state, including for border control, into the service

of the market. Wendy Brown (2010) has famously argued that this embrace of border control by states is also a sign of the contemporary weakness of the nation-state: having already been effectively deprived of its ability to regulate economies, the border becomes one of the few sites available for the excessive display of national security power. Some of the nuances of this situation are explored by Louise Amoore (excerpted in Chapter 24), who uses the case of biometric systems at US borders to illustrate how such systems materialize biopolitical power through regimes of risk management and risk profiling (see also Mueller 2010). Yet, as Mark Salter shows in his paper on the post-9/11 US border regime (excerpted in Chapter 25), screening systems, like all technological systems, are fallible, so the state also cultivates a disciplinary culture of self-regulation and conformity to achieve its ends. It further seeks to enlist citizens in the process of monitoring for suspicious-looking people or activities, which is a process that could spread fear and exacerbate discriminatory conditions for others. His concluding question is perhaps the key one: “Who pays the cost of freedom for the mobility of others?”

This brings us to surveillance studies’ strongest contribution to the study of mobility: sustained analysis of the ways in which differential mobilities are established or reproduced by technological systems in specific socio-spatial contexts (e.g., cities, borders). As David Murakami Wood and Stephen Graham (2006: 177) note: “Differential mobility is in no way a new phenomenon; from the moment some people rode or were carried while others walked, there have existed differences in mobility which reflect and reinforce existing social structures.” As with most forms of privilege, the mobility of a new transnational upper class, or “kinetic elite” (Sloterdijk 1987), may benefit from this system in ways that are, or might become, imperceptible

(e.g., not needing to obtain a visa to visit another country, having traffic signals optimized to accelerate vehicle throughput as opposed to pedestrian traffic). Social inequality is aggravated by technological forms of social sorting that gradual “unbundle” utilities and services from urban and other environments, such that equal access is not guaranteed to public goods like water, electricity, or transportation (Graham and Marvin 2001). The excerpt by Stephen Graham and David Murakami Wood pursues this line of thinking, underscoring how forms of automated social exclusion could be enacted by digital systems in urban settings or elsewhere. Crucially, they explain, there is always a social component to the regulation of access or mobility; it is present in the design process that embeds values into the systems, the context of deployment and use that lends meaning to them, and the human mediation of the systems by operators (see also Monahan 2007).

The final two excerpts in this section probe the ramifications of surveillance-supported differential mobilities for people on the margins. Katja Franko Aas describes how the collision of people in dire circumstances (e.g., refugees) with state mechanisms of crime control and immigration enforcement brings about a new subject for state regulation: the “crimmigrant.” She reads the plight of crimmigrants through the lens of Giorgio Agamben’s (1998) concept of “bare life,” where unlike citizens to be governed through biopolitical means, these outsiders are subjected to an entirely different logic (and different surveillance systems too), where they may face death through exclusion. Thus, for some people, intimidating borders, boundaries, walls, and fences are a daily and consequential reality. Didier Bigo extends this mode of analysis to include holding camps and internment facilities, which prevent the mobility of people deemed

(potentially) dangerous. By framing the problem of terrorism as a global threat and an exceptional state of emergency, the US government and others have been able to assert the need for interlinked global security networks and extralegal measures. These support the de-differentiation of surveillance systems and practices, as well as the blurring of police and intelligence functions. The banalization and institutionalization of such exceptions suggests, among other things, that racist or xenophobic beliefs will continue to inform security applications and that the mobility and life chances of the most needy will remain threatened.

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