Workshop: The Politics of Bordering. CAPONEU Project
CAPPE (Centre for Applied Philosophy, Politics and Ethics)
Tuesday 3rd of December,
Room M2, 68, Grand Parade, Brighton, BN2 OJY
Keynote speaker: **Aleksandra Lewicki**, Reader in Sociology and Co-Director of the Sussex European Institute, University of Sussex, UK.

Programme & Abstracts

Programme
9.00 – Registration in Lobby of Grand Parade
9:30 AM – Opening Remarks
Mark Devenney (University of Brighton)
Introduction to CAPONEU and the Workshop

9:45 AM – 11:15 AM – Panel 1: Embodying Borders: Policing, Sensing, and Speaking

- Believing the Body: Biological and Biographical Injustices in the Asylum Regime. **Arianne Shahvisi (Brighton and Sussex Medical School)**

- Embracing the Body: Sensory Rituals in Borderwork. **Arantxa Ortiz (Brandeis University)**

- Language, Borders, and Anxiety: The Role of Language in Immigration Enforcement in Juan Felipe Herrera's 'Borderbus'. **Natasha Jane Kennedy (University of Brighton)**

11:15 AM – 11:30 AM – Break

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM – Panel 2: Borders in Transition: Fragmentation, Racialization, and Exclusion

- Ambivalent Internationalisation: Social Policy, International Students, and Social Exclusion in the UK. **Isaac Thornton (University of Brighton)**

- Racialised Bordering Practices in the NHS. **Kathryn Zacharek (University of Brighton)**

- De-territorialization and the Fluidity of Borders. **Yagmur Bicer (University of Brighton)**

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM – Lunch Break

2:15 PM – 3:45 PM – Panel 3: Human Rights and Identity in Disputed Borderlands

- Borders of Exclusion: Deconstructing the Human-Animal Divide. **Luke Edmeads (University of Brighton)**

- Divided Across Borders: Identity Movements in Jammu and Kashmir. **Serena Hussain (Coventry University)**

- Human Rights from Below: Tools for Resisting Bordering Mechanisms. **Marco Perolini (London School of Economics)**

3:45 PM – 4:00 PM – Break

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM – Keynote Address: Coloniality, race, and Europeanness: Britain's borders after Brexit. **Aleksandra Lewicki (University of Sussex)**

Abstracts:

Panel 1: Embodying Borders: Policing, Sensing, and Speaking

- **Believing the body: biological and biographical injustices in the asylum regime**
Arianne Shahvisi (Brighton and Sussex Medical School)

The concept of the 'bogus asylum seeker' is central to the politics of migration and the operation of the border regime within the UK. Asylum seekers are assumed to be dishonest, and are subject to credibility deficits. Accordingly, various 'biological' techniques have been used to examine the bodies of migrants in order to investigate their claims, such as historic 'virginity' testing, torture examinations, genetic and isotope testing, and, most recently, bone age assessment. In this paper, I critically analyse this favouring of biological testimony over biographical testimony, surveying the refusal culture of the asylum regime and then evaluating the evidence base for these 'scientific' practices, leading to the conclusion that they are both unsound and unjust. I show that the credibility of asylum seekers' biographical testimonies is systematically deflated while the credibility of asylum seekers' bodies is systematically inflated, and show that this is key to their dehumanisation. I situate this analysis within the broader framework of 'biolegitimacy', and finish by suggesting ways in which biology and biography could be incorporated in order to better meet the needs of necessitous migrants.

- **Embracing the Body: Sensory Rituals of Borderwork**
Arantxa Ortiz (Brandeis University)

In this talk, I draw on Black and feminist sensory epistemologies and methodologies in order to explore the carceral imprint of illegalization on the body. Taking inspiration from Phanuel Antwi's work on the notions of racial embrace and cuddling, and Christina Sharpe's work on the hold and holding, I examine what I call sensory rituals of borderwork. I focus on the role of the senses, specifically touch, in the creation of border knowledge. I mobilize performance and re-enactment to retrieve bodily archives of border knowledge and explore the potential of such methodologies for offering a reprieve from their hold on the illegalized body. This work

is part of a multimodal doctoral dissertation, titled Citizenship Infrastructures: At the Crossroads of Recognition, Sensory Borderwork, and Mobility, that interrogates how actors involved in the regulation of transnational migration and mobility rights (including immigrant rights collectives, the security industry, and law enforcement) approach dilemmas related to recognition, registration, and the right to mobility. The dissertation develops an account that captures the embodied dimensions of enacting borderwork and experiencing illegalization. It argues that sensory borderwork—involving the development of visual, tactile, and other sensory capacities—is central to the rituals of citizenship and governance through which law enforcement and bureaucrats produce, embrace, and illegalize subjects.

- **Language, borders and anxiety – Language as an extension of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Juan Felipe Herrera's heterolingual poem 'Borderbus'**

Natasha Jane Kennedy (University of Brighton)

Abstract: Juan Felipe Herrera's 'Borderbus' (2015) is set on a bus between the Mexican and US border and is presented as a hushed discussion between two sisters who are being taken to a detention centre (Moving Parts Press, 2022). The poem switches between English and Spanish, sometimes using translation but not always to render the sisters' thoughts and fears about being in this bus, stressing the importance of using English. The tone of the poem conveys a state of anxiety before the evident danger of the situation – English becomes a requirement or else "the guard is gonna get us hermana" (JFH, 2015). Through a close reading of the poem, I will present the ways in which it links "language to power" (Pérez-Torres, 2023), with English becoming an extension of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Heterolingual literature plays with the borders between languages, subverting them and defamiliarizing our expectations of literature (Kennedy, 2024), but this poem also reproduces the physical and political nature of the geographical borders. There is a contrast here between free movement of bodies and linguistic creativity, and the very real constraints that arise from immigration policies. Felipe Herrera was the first Latino Poet Laureate of the United States (Soldofsky, 2018) and has been acclaimed for his poetic activism, multilingual experimentation (Ibid.) and his celebration of the "movimiento" culture of the Chicanx (Vaquera-Vásquez). 'Borderbus' seeks to challenge and critique the violence and dehumanisation of border policies in the US, whilst simultaneously showing the intimacy between the two sisters, their humanity, recognising their fears and shedding light on the lived experience of deportees and "transfronteriza" communities (Oliver-Rotger, 2019).

Panel 2: Borders in Transition: Fragmentation, Racialization, and Exclusion

- **Ambivalent internationalisation: Reviewing literature on the social policy context for international students in the United Kingdom and implications for social exclusion**

Isaac Thornton (University of Brighton)

Within the social policy literature, bordering is understood as the ways in which non-state actors (educational institutions, employers, banks, landlords, healthcare services) are increasingly implicated in processes of policing the border. This study explored the social policy context for international students in the UK and its implications for social exclusion (an inability to fully participate in society). Within a rapid review policy literature addressing

international student experience, forty-two articles from the Web of Science and Social Science Research Network were selected through multiple screenings. Migration and education were the most explored policy areas, followed by inequalities, work, health and wellbeing, security, and housing. Results demonstrated that policy both creates barriers to inclusion (e.g., hostile environment migration/bordering practices) and supports inclusion/adaption to social exclusion-related challenges (e.g., sanctuary scholarships for forced migrants, Graduate Visas). Through policy-driven bordering within a hostile environment, universities are increasingly required to monitor international students' attendance and engagement, sharing this data with the home office. The same is the case for students' employers, landlords, and other actors. Meanwhile, all international students to some degree lack equitable participation in wellbeing-relevant provision. Overall, policies are constructed so the state and universities can extract value from internationals without fully including them in British society. Policies abdicate responsibility for students' inclusion, making it expensive and complicated to build a life in the UK.

- **Bordering practices of the NHS and racialisation**
Kathryn Zacharek (University of Brighton)

The core argument for this paper is that to understand contemporary bordering in the UK, we need to look beyond bordering as protecting the nation-state's exterior territorial boundaries. Borders have now proliferated (Balibar, 2002) throughout the UK. The Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 dramatically extended immigration control powers over people's everyday lives in the hopes of making life more difficult for 'illegal immigrants to live in the UK', but what is required is to situate these policies within the context of colonial legacies. Britain's borders are articulated and policed via immigration law, maintaining the global racial order established by colonialism (El-Enany, 2020). Therefore, the UK needs to be understood as a racially and colonially configured space in which the racialised poor remain disproportionately vulnerable to state violence.

This presentation will focus on the National Health Service (NHS) and how it has been tasked with protecting the internal border (Vaughan-Williams, 2015) of welfare access to those who are deemed to 'belong'. It will unpack how access to healthcare is shaped by the colonial logic of 'deservingness' (Shilliam, 2018). It will also explore why the NHS is represented as a beloved icon under threat by racialised 'others' in the British political imagination. Healthcare is the institutional embodiment of the relationality of care between the state and people residing within its territory. Nevertheless, the continuation of the 'hostile environment', for those who are part of the suspected group of 'not belonging' are left exposed to abandonment during times of vulnerability. In theorising the distinction between external and internal borders and the role of the NHS in internal border policing, this presentation seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of British bordering and the endurance of colonial hierarchies.

- **De-territorialization and borders**
Yagmur Bicer (University of Brighton)

The evolution of border politics in the modern era has made a considerable impact, particularly by bringing the transferal and dynamic relationship between sovereignty and

governmentality to the forefront of bordering policies. This relationship positions bordering practices at the core of tactical and strategic governmental apparatuses. Framed within discourses on globalization, these policies reveal a paradox: as territorialization and deterritorialization interweave, the result is an increasingly ambiguous and fragmented territorial landscape. In this context, border policies operate within a liminal space between territorialization and deterritorialization, legitimizing violence and arbitrary practices. Many theoretical approaches, however, struggle to fully conceptualize this complex interplay between power and territory, often falling short or remaining limited in their scope.

Thus, a renewed approach is needed—one that reevaluates the interaction between sovereignty and governmentality, while also exploring the ties between globalization, colonialism, and territory. Such a framework could shed light on why decolonial practices remain entwined within colonial structures, despite efforts to break free from their influence. This would ultimately offer a clearer understanding of the ongoing impact of colonial dynamics in modern governance.

In this study, my goal is to critically analyze contemporary bordering policies through the conceptual framework of de-territorialization, focusing on the juridical-political threshold between territorialization and deterritorialization. By re-evaluating the relationship among sovereignty, governmentality, and territory, I aim to explore whether de-territorialization effectively addresses issues such as arbitrary border practices, de-bordering, fragmented territories, transitional borders, as well as closures, walls, and border policing. This analysis seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how these bordering tactics operate and whether they function within or against the concept of de-territorialization.

Panel 3: Human Rights and Identity in Disputed Borderlands

- **Borders of Exclusion: Deconstructing the Human-Animal Divide**
Luke Edmeads (University of Brighton)

This paper examines the philosophical and political implications of the border between humans and animals. Drawing on Adorno's critique of Enlightenment thinking and Derrida's deconstruction of human supremacy over animals, I argue that the distinction between the two has historically upheld systems of domination and exploitation Animals are viewed as passive beings to be controlled, subject to violence and ultimately death in stark contrast to the human identity as a rational, active subject. This objectification not only diminishes the value of animals but also obscures the entwinement of humans and animals. In the context of the politics of bordering, the paper connects this philosophical inquiry to broader questions of inclusion, exclusion, and domination, particularly in how European colonial legacies have shaped our understanding of borders. Thus, by challenging the border between humans and animals, the paper proposes a rethinking of political and environmental boundaries, offering a critical perspective on how these conceptual distinctions reinforce systems of control and exploitation, a negative-disavowal of animals, and a rethinking of the human/animal distinction.

- **Divided across an internationally disputed border: Exploring identity mobilisation movements across the bifurcated Jammu and Kashmir**

Dr Serena Hussain (Coventry University)

The erstwhile sovereign state of Jammu and Kashmir was divided for administrative purposes between India and Pakistan as a result of a UN Security Council decision in 1947. The division and border that resulted, known as the Line of Control (LoC), was intended to be temporary and serve as a cease fire line between the two waring nations who both laid claim to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in its entirety. The UNSC advised that a free and impartial plebiscite take place within J&K to allow its people to determine which country their territory accede to. However, a referendum did not take place, and the state has remained in a position of 'suspended sovereignty'. This paper discusses the impact of the border which divides J&K on the ethnic, religious and political identity of a population within the state. In recent years we have seen parallel, yet distinct, identity mobilisation movements of a particular community known as Paharis, on both sides of the LoC and within their diaspora in the United Kingdom. This presentation discusses the extent to which being embedded within two separate national settings – India and Pakistan - have influenced how, what were a historically connected people, have developed on either side of an artificial border over the space of seventy-five years. It therefore addresses the question: How are collective identities reconstructed as a result of living either side of an internationally disputed border?

- **Human rights from below: tools for challenging bordering mechanisms?**

Marco Perolini (London School of Economics)
Mobility struggles elaborate non-legal, emancipatory notions of human rights in their collective challenges to border regimes. These struggles provide opportunities for racialised migrants to reshape and transform legal notions of human rights, which are often limited and fall short of opposing systemic mechanisms of oppression (Perolini, 2022; 2023).

Human rights from below, including the idea of unrestricted freedom of movement and the right to stay, form the basis of classificatory struggles through which racialised migrants oppose and transform exclusionary concepts, especially notions of citizenship, the legal notion of refugee and the legal status hierarchies embedded in migration and asylum law.

This paper explores the potential of the approach to human rights followed by the actors involved in mobility struggles in Berlin to challenge bordering mechanisms and practices at multiple levels. First, it exposes how human rights from below may facilitate practices of solidarity among groups of migrants who are assigned different legal status categories by the state. As these categories provide stratified access to rights, they often entrench bordering among different groups of racialised migrants and fragment their collective action against border regimes. The paper discusses the potential of human rights to forge alliances between Syrians and non-Syrians in Germany after 2015/16 and between Ukrainians fleeing the war and other groups of migrants after 2022.

Second, the paper discusses the potential of human rights for alliances among different actors challenging some aspects of border regimes, in particular radical grassroots organisations and NGOs. It argues that the multiscalar approach to human rights embraced by grassroots organisations, using both legal and non-legal human rights, enabled them to establish broad alliances, such as the coalition for the protest Unteilbar in 2018 in Germany.

Third, the paper explores whether human rights from below may foster alliances among struggles for social and economic justice that often are compartmentalised. Specifically, it addresses whether human rights may provide actors involved in mobility and climate justice

struggles opportunities to establish alliances in the context of efforts to address the legal protection of people who migrate because of climate-related factors.

Keywords: refugees, human rights, solidarity, alliances, bordering, climate justice

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM – Keynote Address: Coloniality, race, and Europeanness: Britain's borders after Brexit. **Aleksandra Lewicki (University of Sussex)**