



Welfare, crime and society

Migration: controlling borders

VOICEOVER COMMENTARY

Many people are travelling further and more often than ever before. Whether it be for leisure, study or work. Yet at the same time crossing state borders is increasingly monitored and many people face tough restrictions in entering another country. And once within the borders of a country there are further controls that migrants face. Their presence is monitored in many ways, such as through registration and reporting requirements and the need to prove their identity and residence.

LIZA SCHUSTER

The current attempt to control migration isn't that new, there've always been attempts to control migration, including internally. I suppose what's new is the fact that governments have more tools at their disposal for that control.

VOICEOVER COMMENTARY

Over recent years, laws and practices have been introduced to control and contain immigrant populations. New surveillance technologies are being used to police the state's external borders, but also to create and monitor internal borders within the state's boundaries. This has created categories of 'legal' and 'illegal' people for the purposes of state decisions about who can come and what they're entitled to do and receive when they're here.

LIZA SCHUSTER

People have always migrated. Always. Since the beginning of time. They followed the seasons; they followed their animals; they went hunter-gathering; they looked for work. Migration has always been part of human behaviour.

Just as migration is not new, so state controls of migration and certain populations are not new. Passport and visa systems have existed since medieval times but it wasn't until the twentieth century that having a passport became essential to moving between countries.

These increased controls were supported by state immigration and social welfare policies. In Britain, the Aliens Act passed in 1905 was introduced in response to the number of Jewish migrants arriving from Russia and Poland. Immigrants continued to arrive in Britain throughout the twentieth century and further restrictions were brought in, limiting entry and work opportunities to foreign nationals, as well as their entitlements to benefits and services.

RHIAN BEYNON

Modern immigration control as we know it really began in the post-war period and what we've seen is a tendency for increasing control and also for very differentiated rights depending on how you enter as a migrant.

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The rights migrants have and the restrictions they face also depend on where they come from. Citizens of European Union member-states are now able to move freely within the EU to travel, live and work. But for people coming from outside the EU gaining entry is much more difficult. It's especially difficult for people from poorer countries, and those who are unable to get a visa often pay vast amounts of money to get them inside 'Fortress Europe'.

Algeciras is a small fishing port in southern Spain. It's just 14 miles across the sea to Africa but the waters have the most dangerous currents in the Mediterranean.

Although no accurate figures for illegal immigration exist, it's estimated that tens of thousands have entered the EU through this small port.

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One of these is Salif, a Senegalese immigrant who came to Europe with a plan to set up development projects to help his home country. He now runs a small voluntary organisation, recycling old farm machinery and shipping it to Senegal.

SALIF SOW (SPANISH SPOKEN)

I said "Well, I'm leaving. I'm crossing the border."

So at 5 o'clock in the morning we got ready to go. We got our things together, came down from the mountains and went to the beach. There was the Patera, they started the motor, we got in and we were off. It was already 7 in the morning, the sun was up. We left in the daylight, at 7 o'clock to Spain, on a clear day.

A very interesting journey, but during those 21 days when I was waiting in Morocco and was watching the Spanish television, I'd watched many boats that sunk and many people died.

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As numbers of undocumented migrants arriving in boats from North African coast have grown, new measures have been introduced by the EU to keep its external borders sealed. One such measure is a state of the art surveillance system which was introduced in Algeciras in 2002 and is being rolled out along the Mediterranean coast.

SALAVDOR GALINDO:

We had a really bad problematic with the immigration before, because we have lots of incoming citizens from Morocco, even from the centre of Africa, trying to enter illegally here into Spain, which is to enter illegally into Europe.

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The surveillance system, called SIVE, uses a series of powerful CCTV cameras and infra-red detectors to keep the entire stretch of sea and coastline under close watch.

Operators in this control room monitor all the vessels passing through the Gibraltar Straits. When unidentified boats appear, they can control these cameras remotely to get a closer view of any area of the sea or coastline.

Heat-sensitive cameras can also detect vessels that are smaller than conventional boats.

SALAVDOR GALINDO

This is a boat, which is the one that the ... a rubber ring, well the children use, you know, this is just one and a half metres length only, with 5 people inside. 5 people. 1½ metres. Pretty dangerous. This is the new way where they are trying to cross the Strait now because they think that this system cannot detect that small size of boat. But, as we see, it has been detected, in this case rescued. This is one of our vessels, you know, they are approaching them. Not only these boats, umm, we have been detecting here, from the last years people trying to cross the Straits on boats of drag wheels, windsurf tables. The imagination, you know – to get a floating thing and to cross.

They are sometimes, you know, using refrigerators. They are jumping inside a refrigerator with an open door, you know. It's floating, inside of the fridge, just crossing, using it like a boat.