



Welfare, crime and society

Migration: monitoring and surveillance

LIZA SCHUSTER

There are definitely borders within Europe. Sometimes they coincide with the borders of the state. Sometimes it's to do with entitlement. So, these people in this territory are entitled to this, but those other people who are in this same territory are not entitled to benefits or protections. So you have lots of different kinds of borders that are shifting and changing all the time. And who they include and exclude also shifts and changes depending on different needs, in particular of the nation-state or of the economy or even of the welfare state.

I think the welfare state is a hugely important factor in migration policy. One of the reasons that governments, for example, or local authorities, will give for needing to know who's in my territory or area or local authority, what are their needs, is so that they can tailor resources to the needs of that population. The flaw in this argument is that too often migrants are seen as recipients of welfare, they're seen as those people who come in and who need lots of help and support. If we look at migrants as a whole, they pay into this welfare state, so they finance the welfare state. They are often also employed within the welfare state.

VOICEOVER COMMENTARY

Jennita is a nurse from the Philippines who's been working in the UK's National Health Service for four years. Her journey as a migrant nurse began several years before that.

JENNITA MEJORADA

It was 1994 when I decided to work abroad. Initially I work in Saudi Arabia. From Saudi Arabia I went to Dublin, Ireland. I worked there for nearly three years before coming to London.

VOICEOVER COMMENTARY

The combination of her nursing skills and a global nursing shortage enable her to move around the world more freely. But her situation is far from secure. In the UK, despite paying tax and national insurance, she has no access to social security benefits here. Her right to remain in the country depends on her employer, so if her employment is terminated she's not allowed to stay in the UK.

JENNITA MEJORADA

I have five years' contract. So basically I have to renew it if the hospital will still employ me. So I have to renew my visa next year, 2009. You have to submit your CVs, your bio data, your documents that you're really registered as a nurse. Your ... oh what is this? From the Philippine Office of Employment Agency that you're qualified and you're indeed as a nurse. You have loads of stuff to process.

VOICEOVER COMMENTARY

Providing and processing documentary evidence is an increasingly important part of borders control policy. Many countries around the world are introducing biometric passports. These are combined paper and electronic identity document using biometrics – fingerprint, iris and facial recognition – to authenticate identity.

RHIAN BEYNON

What we're seeing is an increased use of IT and communication technologies to monitor the movement and presence of migrants. Biometric identity cards are going to be used to keep people under surveillance, mostly through their access to services because you'll need that data to be able to access health services, to be able to access work. If you can't produce your card you won't be able to access those services and work.

VOICEOVER COMMENTARY

In the UK, foreign nationals from outside the EU are required to carry biometric identity cards. One of the drivers of this policy is to combat false ID documents. But there are concerns that this technology may not be secure and that it may be used to deny people with irregular status from accessing welfare services. For example, biometric ID may be used by health workers to decide which patients take priority.

RHIAN BEYNON

What we're seeing is the responsibility for monitoring passed over to other organisations like businesses, like health services. That's the logical consequence of making those agencies responsible for monitoring entitlement to services and work. So in effect they are becoming quasi immigration officers.