

Call for Interventions

2nd Conference in Critical Migration and Borders Studies

'Radical interventions: re-imagining border and migration struggles within academia and activism'

1-2 September 2015, Queen Mary University of London

We invite proposals for the next meeting of Moblab – a network of critical researchers and activists working in border, migration and citizenship studies – which will take place on 1-2 September in London. What distinguishes Moblab from other networks in border, migration and citizenship studies is the explicit interest of its members in antiracist, intersectional and no border politics and the shared desire to blur the boundaries between political activism, academic knowledge production and artistic intervention. The workshop will provide a space to develop new possibilities of critique and intervention in today's border struggles and to consolidate and further develop the Moblab-network. This dual objective is reflected in the structure of the meeting: On the first day we will exchange knowledge and ideas on three themes in parallel day-long workshops. Rather than preparing paper-based individual presentations, we hope to engage in collaborative thought processes and reflections, and to identify common themes, questions, and concerns that unite our various works. The second day is reserved for developing the organisational structure of Moblab in order to make it a hub of counter-knowledge and a laboratory of antiracist, intersectional and no border politics.

Keynote:

Bridget Anderson, University of Oxford

'Heads I win, tails you lose!' Challenging the worker citizen.

If you are interested in participating please send us an abstract of no more than 350 words by 19 June 2015 in which you outline your intervention (which may include, but is not limited to, a paper, workshop, activist experience or artistic contribution) in relation to one of the following three themes:

1. Printing or Burning Passports? For or Against Citizenship?

The mere existence of stateless persons, refugees and migrants, whether illegalised or not, highlights that citizenship is and remains an exclusive affair. And yet, "legalisation", that is citizenship, is usually the principal demand of those who are "sans papiers" and "non-citizens". This conundrum of citizenship is also reflected in the academic debate. While scholars like Engin Isin seek to appropriate citizenship as a tool for progressive politics, many others have called for moving beyond citizenship, invoking alternative concepts like the mobile commons (e.g. Bridget Anderson, Sandro Mezzadra, Dimitris Papadopoulos and Vassilis Tsianos). In this session we will try to make sense of the struggles for, within and against citizenship: Should we abandon this building-block of the sovereign nation-state or rather struggle for the expansion of the privileges it has to offer? Are alternative concepts like the commons not fraught with the same problematics of access, distribution and membership as citizenship?

2. Power and privilege: decolonizing migration struggles

This session applies an intersectional analysis to various power dynamics within the fields of migration and border studies and activism. We aim to identify and analyze how progressive knowledge production and emancipatory activism may comprise practices of exclusion and oppression. We are particularly concerned with issues related to racism, ableism, gender oppression, queer phobia and the reproduction of whiteness within these fields. Questions to be discussed include, but are not limited to, the following: In what way is the field of (critical) migration and border studies white and cis-male dominated? What are the dynamics of whiteness and saviourism in the practices of migrant support work and broader migration activism? How may we counter these dynamics? What would a strategy of decolonisation in this field look like? What universities, departments and grassroots initiatives can we look at as best practices?

3. How to Critique today's Border Regimes?

The exclusionary effects of tight border controls in the EU, which are meant to ensure freedom of movement for some and exclusion for others, have been much criticised. Yet, these critiques have been integrated into arguments for tighter, better and more border controls. How to critique a European border regime that serves the protection of freedom of movement against its misuse? How to argue against proposals to build up asylum systems in regions of origin in order to spare refugees long and dangerous journeys? How to defy the promotion of border control technologies like drones as humanitarian devices that serve to rescue migrants from unseaworthy boats? How to critique the horrible conditions in detention centres run by profit-oriented private companies without implicitly calling for more human, state-run detention facilities? How to counter immigration raids that purport to rescue migrants from ruthless human traffickers without denying that the latter exist and often do betray and exploit migrants?

Please send us an abstract of no more than 350 words as well as a short biographical note, by 19 June 2015 and indicate in the header of the e-mail of your submission in which session you would like to participate.

Email: moblondon15@gmail.com

If you have further questions regarding the format, the workshop, or the network, don't hesitate to send us an email as well. Applications from persons without formal academic affiliation are encouraged. A limited number of travel grants will be available. Please indicate in your application whether you will need financial support for travel to and/or accommodation in London.

The conference is organised in liaison with The Centre for the Study of Migration and TheoryLAB at Queen Mary University of London.