

Agnieszka Radziwinowiczówna

"Mexicans and the US Deportation Regime"

ABSTRACT

Do you need visas to go to America? On researching the US deportation regime Abstract Creation of deportation regimes by the nation-states has become an important topic for political anthropology in the last decade (De Genova, 2010). The consequences of deportation have been studied by the anthropology of family (Boehm, 2016) and legal anthropology (Hasselberg, 2016; Zilberg, 2011). According to Walters (2002) and De Genova (2010) deportations and their sheer possibility, or deportability of migrants, produce sovereignty in the face of uncontrolled bordercrossings, perceived by the states as a disturbing symptom of "losing control" (Sassen 1996). My presentation enters into dialogue with deportation theorists (De Genova 2010; Pope and Garret 2013), and – drawing upon ethnographically grounded data it reconstructs the actors engaged in creating, transnationally, the US deportation regime.

The United States deport annually over 300,000 people (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2016, p. 103), more than the European Union member states altogether. Under the administration of the former President Barack Obama, a historically-high number of people were deported; throughout the record year 2013, 438,421 individuals were "removed" from the United States. Mexicans made up 72% of all the deportees (Simanski, 2014, pp. 5–6). It is to be assumed that the US immigration policy will keep growing increasingly strict and more people will be deported during the next three years, given Donald Trump's anti-immigrant promises during the elections and the increase in the number of detentions reported by the media.

During the colloquium, I will present five vignettes from my ethnographic fieldwork in the United States and Mexico. They will show the interplay of various actors engaged in the US deportation regime: politicians, immigration authorities, immigration right activists, deportable and deported migrants, their families and employers. The transnational approach adopted in my research helps to explain how the US deportation regime transnationalizes as the people are removed to Mexico. The deported people and their communities are important actors of the US deportation regime. As a result of politics that criminalize unauthorized migration they might resign from transnational mobility, and at the same time create governmentality that works in favor of the US deportation regime. Through the experience of the immobile deportees, US sovereignty is externalized or unbundled (Ruggie, 1993) from the US territory, and materializes in Mexico.

A transnational research conducted since 2012 in Mexico and the United States of America is the basis for my presentation. I carried out the Mexican part of the research in a rural municipality in the Lower Mixteca region of the Oaxaca state, the American – in Washtenaw County in Michigan. The meta-question penetrating the presentation is about the positionality of a Polish anthropologist researching the US deportation regimes in America and Mexico. During the colloquium, I will present my strategies of entering the anthropological “field” and researching a very sensitive problem, I will explain the advantages and disadvantages of being a stranger for the research subjects. A reflexive approach to researcher’s positionality helps to understand better the research problem.

BIO

Agnieszka Radziwinowiczówna is a social anthropologist researching the impact of the U.S. immigration system on the Mexican communities in Mexico and the USA. She is a laureate of the Award of the Prime Minister of Poland for her doctoral thesis “Living/Leaving the Deportation Regime: Power and Violence in the Experience of Deportation”. She has also researched social change occurring in Poland as a result of transnational mobility and a co-authored books “Migrants as Agents of Change: Social Remittances in an Enlarged European Union” (Palgrave, 2016) and “Ethnomorality of Care: Migrants and their Aging Parents” (Routledge, forthcoming). The Kosciuszko Foundation Fellow, and laureate of scholarships of the Mexican Government and the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education..