698.1 - The Stories of the Unheard: Border-Crossing, Passports, and Travel Experiences

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Thursday, 29 June 2023
15:30 - 16:00

- *M8 (Level 1, Crown)*

Abstract

Airports as borders signify critical thresholds of tourism experiences – arrival and departure. Various levels of mobility rights are bestowed on different passport holders, which create vastly different and controversial encounters (Adey, 2017). Those who rank higher on the hierarchy of passports with the 'right' look, accent, religion, and nationalities receive more favourable treatments (Torabian & Mair, 2022), whilst others submitting to onerous, intimidating and sometimes humiliating border-crossing experiences (Villegas, 2015). In this study, airport border is configured as a liminal, ethically paradoxical space, where gateways and barriers, hospitality and hostility, inclusion and exclusion, and mobility and immobility co-exist (Mezzadra & Nelson, 2015). To safeguard sovereignty, dehumanising practices, such as racial stereotyping and risk profiling become normalised at airport border, leaving many negative encounters unnoticed (Stephenson, 2006). Thus, this study aims to unpack the multiplicity of border-crossing experiences and their subsequent effects on travellers' emotions and memories. Grounded within a critical-constructivist paradigm, this study will employ a qualitative in-depth interview as the methodological approach, collecting memories of contested border-crossing encounters. By engaging the authors' own experiences at the border, knowledge can be constructed intersubjectively through interactive dialogues between the researchers and the subjects. Theoretically, the recognition of alternative tourist border-crossing experiences contributes to decolonisation of tourism research, by highlighting the importance of border as key touch points in tourists' journeys. Practically, this study provides timely implications for managing the rapid return of international travel post-pandemic. Tourists undergo emotional, social, physical, and cognitive challenges at borders, necessitating further scholarly attention. Problematising the border space is the first step in surfacing the experiences and challenges of the unheard. Through such understandings, more humane and dignified approaches to border policing could be adapted.

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