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Abstract for Strand 9
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Contested Boundaries. An ethnographic study with rejected asylum seekers in their everyday struggle for inclusion.

Rejected asylum seekers are excluded from many forms of social and political rights. This ethnographic study conducted in Sweden shows how the lack of rights and the lack of recognition when combined with deportability – that is, the pending risk of detention and/or deportation – shape and limit people’s lives in many and various ways. Deportability intersects with gender, ethnicity/”race”, sexuality and nationality and defines subject positions on the labour market, in family life, in relation to their own bodies and their imaginations of the future. The ability to defend one’s rights in relation to an employer or a partner, or the ability to reproduce and care for children, are all restricted and conditioned by the lack of permission to stay.

But the effect of deportability, the exclusion from rights and the limited space of action are also challenged in the everyday life and practices of asylum seekers, their kinship/social networks and by actors in civil society. This contestation of boundaries and these everyday practices can be understood as expressions of political subjectivities that are positioned in a space characterized by simultaneous exclusion and inclusion in the nation-state. The paper will explore these expressions and discuss the ways in which exclusionary migration policies are challenged but will also reflect on the contradictions, paradoxes and gendered norms that define this excluded/included space.