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Workshop: Data matters in migration and border control

Workshop 2024

Panel: Control and Contestation

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Title:

Low-tech and high-tech technologies in the context of resistance and solidarity at the Calais border: Data maps by grassroots activists and researchers

Abstract: The city of Calais has been coined as the "French bunker border city pushing migrants into the English Channel" (Le Monde, 08/03/2023). In a bid to prevent the resurgence of the infamous "Calais Jungle" from 2015-2016, local authorities have adopted a 'no point of fixation' policy. This policy involves eviction operations every 48 hours on refugee settlements (see Human Rights Observers, 2021). Consequently, the lives of migrants in Calais have become even more precarious. These biopolitical and necropolitical mode of governance dictate the daily existence of refugees in this borderland, compelling them to be in constant motion not only within the city but also on its outskirts and along the French coast. Keeping migrants on the move is a deliberate strategy aimed at rendering their lives untenable in the city. Simultaneously, it contributes to making them invisible to French citizens, particularly those in Calais, leaving "no traces of their encampment" at least officially. The recurring imposition of forced (im)mobility on migrants constitutes a persistent form of violence that they must endure regularly. Using "counter-mapping" as an intellectual and political tool, this paper aims to work on the construction of maps in order to depict this morbid choreography and examining how it is orchestrated. In partnership with grassroots organizations such as Utopia 56, l'Auberge des migrants and Human rights observers (HRO), this exercise of counter-mapping aims to render the violence of border controls as well as simultaneously highlighting elements of resistance and solidarity.