

PENS-318

Border Forensics

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Cursus	Sem.	Type
Projeter ensemble ENAC	BA6	Opt.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	4
Session	Summer
Semester	Spring
Exam	During the semester
Workload	120h
Weeks	12
Hours	4 weekly
Courses	1 weekly
Project	3 weekly
Number of positions	

Summary

This course will introduce students to the causes and shifting modalities of border violence, focusing on three border zones across the Euro-African borderscape, and the way spatial analysis, remote sensing and architectural intervention can be used to document and contest this violence.

Content

Areas of mobility conflicts erupt across the globe- wherever the movements of migrants clash with bordering practices. They are most intense along the fault lines of the world system, where economic inequality, environmental injustice, and racialized difference overlap. These mobility conflicts precaritize migrants' journeys, and structurally generate large-scale borders deaths. The IOM (International Organization for Migration) has counted more than 30.000 deaths globally since 2014- and many more lives are lost leaving no other trace than the absence that haunts their families. The Mediterranean is the epicentre of this global deathscape.

The course is divided into two main parts: a first part offers a theoretical and methodological introduction to border violence and its documentation, that will serve as the basis for the second part, which will involve experimentation with the documentation and transformation of border violence in relation to specific sites.

The first part of the course we will examine the use of forensic techniques to make traces of violence emerge and present them in various forums. We will focus specifically on the research conducted within the Forensic Oceanography project. The course aims to unpick theoretical and methodological challenges that resonate far beyond migration and border violence.

The second part of the course will bring students to focus on specific border zones, and experiment with new tools and approaches towards spatial analysis and spatial transformation. While there will be common sessions for all students, students will also be able to form smaller clusters that may focus on particular border zones, and emphasize one or the other dimensions of spatial analysis and spatial transformation.

The course will allow students to address a wide range of questions such as: how can we understand and register violence in its many different guises? How does border violence operate and how are geophysical environments harnessed within it? How can we navigate complex regimes of (in)visibility, in which deaths can be hidden but also spectacularised? What is the politics of different technologies and methods used to reconstruct cases of violence? What are the potentials, limits and ambivalences of strategic litigation and the language of the law? How can spatial interventions articulate places of (in)visibility, resistance, coordination and memory? Can these interconnected places become places that question the very process of the city and the built environment?

By exploring these questions, the course will equip students with the conceptual tools to navigate the complexities of research based spatial and remote sensing practice.

Keywords

Borders, migration, (counter-)forensics, human rights, violence, territory, body, spatial analysis, remote sensing, traces, sentinels, visualization, (im)mobility, (in)visibility, potentialities, solidarity, hospitality, refuge.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Discuss contemporary debates and approaches in relation to mobility, borders, spatial practice and the critical forensic approach
- Identify how the production of space shapes violence and how spatial analysis in turn can offer a unique edge in analyzing and contesting it
- Conduct individual and collaborative spatial interdisciplinary research combining humanities and social science methods with creative practice and visual representation
- Discuss inextricably theoretical, political and methodological questions in relation to the different tools and methods used to register traces of violence and in particular remote sensing technologies
- Use of Exploratory Spatial Data Analysis (ESDA), and Geovisualization (GVIS) technologies
- Design how infrastructures that enable and/or constrain mobility may be transformed to mitigate border violence and foster mobility justice

Teaching methods

Towards spatial analysis, we will examine how spatial analysis, GIS and remote sensing can be used to document and contest border violence in three distinct but interconnected border zones where European states seek to prevent migrants' onward movement. Students will build on data compiled by the Forensic Oceanography project, and the methods developed by the LASIG Lab on geographic information, spatial analysis through Exploratory Spatial Data Analysis (ESDA), and Geovisualization (GVIS).

Towards spatial transformation, students will focus on transcalar spatial transformations (body-territory). We will develop concepts such as Sentinel Architectures and extend them to architectural practices from the collective tacit experience of territory and modes of survival. Through this, we will focus on the potentialities and possibilities of the border to motivate a process from hostile spaces to niches of hospitality. In the process, we will explore concrete proposals to transform (im)mobility infrastructures operating in the selected border zones to undermine border violence and enable mobility justice.

Resources

Bibliography

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Websites

- <https://forensic-architecture.org/category/forensic-oceanography>