

Life and Death at the European Borders
Public Lecture Series (Ringvorlesung)
Mondays, 4:15-5:45 / May 3 – July 5 2021 (per Zoom)

Conveners:

Carolina Kobelinsky, Laboratory of Ethnology and Comparative Sociology/ Université Paris Nanterre.
Estela Schindel, European University Viadrina Frankfurt Oder

Registration: ifes@europa-uni.de

Through the last decades the route to the EU has become deadly for thousands of border crossers trying to reach the continent. Incipient scholarship has been pointing out to diverse aspects of this border related lethality, including the recording and statistics of those deaths, the actors involved in the treatment of these deaths, their political-institutional character, their relation to border militarization and securitization, the forensic challenges raised by the unnamed dead bodies, and the strategies for memorializing, working through and searching for accountability for those lives lost.

However, the EU borders are not only a lethal zone, but also one where assumptions and conditions about life itself are at stake. In the words of Etienne Balibar, the border becomes “an extraordinarily viscous spatio-temporal zone, almost a home – a home in which to live a life which is a waiting-to-live, a non-life”. Researchers have been thus paying also increasing attention to the living conditions of illegalized travelers and to the embodied experiences of crossing borders and of confinement in spaces of assistance or detention. The knowledge about this aspect of the migration-border complex has been enriched in the last years by a series of empirical studies on the dynamics of humanitarianism and how it shapes the ways in which unwanted border crossers are managed in refugee camps, hotspots, and internment centers. Decisions over the everyday existence of the inhabitants of such institutions may reveal underlying assumptions as well as undergoing contestations over the value and definition of human life.

The aim of this lecture series is to shed light on the ways in which not only death but also life is being instantiated at the European borders. Drawing on contributions from legal and forensic studies, medical anthropology, and refugee and migration research, and combining the perspectives of critical humanitarianism studies with the biopolitical paradigm, the aim is to unpack the EU border regime’s effects on the lives and deaths of people on the move. More specifically, it seeks to reflect upon the value ascribed to the lives of unwanted border crossers and to inquire into the ways in which living and dying are both constantly being defined, influenced, shaped, and challenged.

Program

- May 3 Michel Agier (Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales/IRD-CEMS)
Living at the Border until Death
- May 10 Carolina Kobelinsky (CNRS/LESC)
The 'Completeness' of the Dead: Practices of Management and Modes of Attachment to Unknown Border Crossers Buried in Catania
- May 17 Antoine Pécoud (Université de Sorbonne Paris Nord/CERI)
Civil Society, International Organizations, and the (De)Politization of Border Deaths' Numbers
- May 31 Vanessa Grotti (Università di Bologna)
Ecologies of Remembrance: Situating the Afterlives of Migrant Dead at Sea in Italy (1997-2019)
- June 7 Vanessa E. Thompson (Europa Universität Viadrina)
Politics of (Un-)Breathing. Policing Blackness in Europe
- June 14 Gerhild Perl (Universität Bern)
Recovering Remnants. The Erasure of Deceased Migrants and the Exculpation of Responsibility at the Spanish-Moroccan Frontier
- June 21 Karolina Follis (Lancaster University)
Not Crossing Borders: The (Im)mobilities of the Covid-19 Pandemic
- June 28 Valentina Zagaria (Central European University)
The Place of Others: Weddings, Funerals, and the Work of Dignity in a Tunisian Border Town
- July 5 Estela Schindel (Europa Universität Viadrina)
Between Life and Death : The Migrant as Ghost over Europe