



The enforcement archipelago: Detention, haunting, and asylum on islands

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A B S T R A C T

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From offshore border enforcement to detention centers on remote islands, struggles over human smuggling, detention, asylum, and associated policies play out along the geographical margins of the nation-state. In this paper, I argue that islands are part of a broader enforcement archipelago of detention, a tactic of migration control. Island enforcement practices deter, detain, and deflect migrants from the shores of sovereign territory. Islands thus function as key sites of territorial struggle where nation-states use distance, invisibility, and sub-national jurisdictional status (Baldacchino & Milne, 2006) to operationalize Ong's (2006) 'graduated zones of sovereignty'. In sites that introduce ambiguity into migrants' legal status, state and non-state actors negotiate and illuminate geopolitical arrangements that structure mobility. This research traces patterns among distant and distinct locations through examination of sovereign and biopolitical powers that haunt asylum-seekers detained on islands. Offshore detention, in turn, fuels spatial strategies employed in onshore detention practices internal to sovereign territory.

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From preemptive patrolling to detention in remote locations, struggles over human smuggling, detention, asylum, and exclusion play out along the margins of nation-states. This paper posits island detentions as one key element of 'the securitization of migration' (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006) – processes through which transnational migrants are increasingly subject to enforcement measures implemented to protect national security. I report one key finding of a larger study: islands emerged as spatially significant sites of exclusion in the geographical landscape where migrants tried to access asylum processes and where nation-states invested significant resources in enforcement to manage entry. I argue that islands prove a key component of a broader enforcement archipelago designed to control migrants deemed out of place, reducing their chances to reach sovereign territory. By detaining migrants on islands, states and third parties hide asylum-seekers from view of media, human rights monitors, and publics at large. As a result, the perspectives of those involved in island encounters – civil servants, migrants, attorneys, and advocates – are underrepresented in contemporary debates on immigration and border enforcement in public discourse and scholarly literatures.

Islands are sites where nation-states exercise power through the management of global migration and sites ripe for investigation of *how* sovereign and biopolitical power operate offshore. Nation-states exploit legal ambiguity, economic dependency, and partial

forms of citizenship and political status on islands to advance security agendas. In the burgeoning field of island studies, scholars are mapping broad patterns and variations in jurisdiction and governance in order to situate activities on islands (Baldacchino & Milne, 2006). Migration scholars, meanwhile, have identified forms of precariousness encountered by people on the move (e.g., Goldring, Berinstein, & Bernhard, 2009). Here, I bring together these two trends: growth in migrants' precariousness and recognition of islands as sites of creative exercises in power, their many uses documented in the field of nissology (McCall, 1994). The islands discussed are distinct from each other historically, geographically, culturally, economically, and politically. Yet important patterns connect them and fuel examination of geographies of sovereignty.

Islands play key roles in military strategy, resulting in violent colonial histories along with militarized landscapes, such as large naval bases in small territories (Kaplan, 2005; Vine, 2009). These residual material landscapes are sites where past usage haunts present occupants as they often serve as convenient built structures for detention. Now, nation-states are using islands to capture liminal populations, neither home nor arrived, not able to legally become refugees or asylum-seekers because of their location at a distance from sovereign territory. Whether open or closed, publicly or privately managed, officially or unofficially sanctioned, facilities on islands serve the purpose of isolating migrants from communities of advocacy and legal representation, and in some cases from asylum claims processes that can only be accessed by landing on sovereign territory.

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The enforcement practices delineated here mirror historical patterns of work done by nation-states in 'bounded' sites, yet asylum is an issue rarely examined on islands. Identification of the patterns surrounding island detentions will enhance knowledge of migration activities offshore and contemporary debates about sovereignty (e.g., Baldacchino & Milne, 2006; Steinberg, 2005). Data on asylum-seekers in temporal, spatial, and legal limbo between nation-states prompt conceptualization of enforcement practices as the haunting of sovereign and biopolitical powers and the recursive relationship between offshore and onshore detention practices.

Asylum claimant processes differ from programs designed to resettle refugees selected from abroad by governments ('government-assisted refugee resettlement programs'). Whereas the latter involve the selection of refugees for resettlement by authorities working in concert with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the former travel without government sanction or assistance. Asylum-seekers often employ human smugglers and cross multiple borders in order to reach sovereign territory of nation-states with asylum claimant systems (Nadig, 2002). Migrants proceed in clandestine fashion in order to elude authorities en route to a destination where they can make a claim. Consequently, those detected en route become associated not with asylum, but criminality.

Those countries with the largest per capita refugee resettlement programs – Australia, Canada, and the United States – also exercise the most advanced 'front-end' border enforcement strategies to inhibit what policymakers refer to as 'spontaneous arrivals,' those who arrive to make a claim for protection without having been selected or assisted by governments. These wealthy resettlement states of the global North prefer to exercise choice in the resettlement of refugees, and believe the managed process of refugee selection to be – alongside border enforcement – "the right to sovereign assertion," as one Australian immigration official explained (Interview, Canberra, April 2006). The displacement that causes asylum-seeking thus involves struggles over the respective agency, resources, and resourcefulness of migrants and authorities. These struggles transpire in the context of asymmetrical geopolitical fields where authorities and asylum-seekers find themselves intertwined spatially, legally, and materially. States fulfill competing mandates to enforce borders and provide protection for those displaced, and migrants face these contradictions during their transnational journeys. These encounters and negotiations are acutely visible through the enforcement practices in the peripheral yet strategic zones of sovereignty where migrants are detained on islands. As Arendt (1958) and Agamben (1998) both argued, exclusion of non-citizens has always been central to exercises in sovereign power.

In addition to establishing that islands are sites where nation-states exploit isolation to control migration, I analyze *why* this archipelago of exclusion has taken shape. As the pace of human migration intensified and public opinion turned against asylum-seekers throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, states displaced border enforcement internally and externally (Bigo, 2000; Coleman, 2007). In both cases, policing entered the intimacies of daily life. Detention offshore exemplifies one manifestation of this process, where the bodies and identities of asylum-seekers are contained and regulated in the name of border enforcement, national security, and geopolitical imperatives. Through these processes, people on the move are haunted. Sociologists have primarily applied the concept of haunting where the sociological imagination demarcates oppressive practices carried out in daily life (e.g., Cho, 2009; Gordon, 2008). Here, haunting does geographical work that reveals dimensions of sovereign power enacted offshore, well beyond mainland territory. Haunting does important analytical work because it captures the mobility of

sovereign power as borders are relocated amid the residue of militarized landscapes. Past haunts present and detention practices offshore – in turn – haunt detainees onshore. Haunting thus offers a way of understanding state violence even where the state may appear absent.

I proceed as follows. After discussion of methods, the third section frames understandings of power operating on islands with discussion of legality, securitization, and enforcement. The fourth section elaborates on the concept of haunting. The fifth section lays the groundwork for mapping islands as enforcement archipelago, addressing distinctions and shared characteristics of islands under study. The sixth section offers findings on islands in order to situate detention in relation to enforcement and displacement. The concluding section revisits the concept of haunting and its implications for research on the political geography of islands.

On methods

Quantitative data on potential asylum-seekers in detention offshore are not readily available, and often acquired in pieces rather than comprehensive statistical portraits. Researchers often secure information about detention through access to information requests, interviews, and even media accounts. With a dearth of quantitative data, qualitative data offer information beyond numbers about offshore border enforcement and detention in sites under study.

This paper draws on fieldwork conducted between 2006 and 2008 on shifting enforcement strategies of nation-states as they moved offshore to police borders beyond mainland territories. There is an important distinction to make when discussing information about enforcement between official and unofficial realms of knowledge, between policy recorded on paper and daily practice. Many of the empirical phenomena detailed in this paper fall under the category of *practice*. Attention to this field of practice resonates with Avery Gordon and Grace Cho's engagement with haunting. For Gordon, haunting functions in daily life where oppressive forces are assumed to be historically "over-and-done-with" (2008: xvi). Cho (2009) focuses on haunting in the form of silence among women in the Korean diaspora displaced by war, the unspoken a response to oppression.

Similarly, practices detailed here are often not found in the pages of policy, but in remote field locations hidden from view where authorities carry out work beyond the purview of media, advocates, or human rights monitors. Often, a geographical narrative, such as proximity to interception, stands in as a rationale for remote detention. The countries under study are signatories to the *Convention*, yet some of the practices of civil servants who patrol borders are not written into the texts or corresponding geographies of either domestic or international law. This study therefore draws insight from scholars on daily state practices operating beyond the texts of policy (e.g., Das and Poole 2004; Gupta and Sharma 2006; Painter, 2006).

The project began with the goal of studying offshore border enforcement that precluded the arrival of asylum-seekers on sovereign territory. Earlier research on detention and the refugee determination process in Canada had revealed a community of nation-states that Canadian bureaucrats studied for "best practices." After research in Canada, I went on to examine enforcement practices undertaken by those nation-states that served as peers with comparable border enforcement practices: Australia, the United States (US), and member states of the European Union (EU).

The project involved semi-structured interviews with governmental and non-governmental institutional employees, detainees, former detainees, attorneys, authorities, journalists, and advocates. Fieldwork also included participant-observation in the form of

visits to detention centers with advocates and friends of detainees and observation of asylum processes where possible. Due to the difficulty of entering detention centers and the risks involved with interviewing those detained, I conducted most interviews with those released, representing, advocating for or visiting detainees. In some places, such as Canada and Australia, larger groups of people did this work, so over seventy and thirty interviews were possible, respectively. On Guam, however, only a few lawyers at one firm represented asylum-seekers, and there were no organizations working with immigrants, prompting the *National Immigrant Justice Center* (2010: 14) to declare Guam the most isolated place to be detained in the United States. As a result, members of these small groups of individuals are easily identifiable and therefore identified by occupation and location only. Interview questions were the same across locations and sought to understand not only the journeys of authorities offshore and individuals and families through island detention, but also secondary knowledge of others detained in similar settings or nearby locales.

The role of islands in enforcement emerged repeatedly in this research. In interviews on the policing of borders, respondents frequently discussed actions offshore. Much debate on offshore detention has centered on US detention of 'foreign enemy combatants' in Guantánamo Bay (e.g., Gregory, 2006; Kaplan, 2005; Reid-Henry, 2007). Yet other 'exceptional' island sites demand attention (e.g., Vine, 2009). This 'offshoring' forms an archipelago of exclusion that capitalizes on sub-national island jurisdictions to shrink spaces of asylum legally (Durieux & MacAdam, 2004), numerically (Newland, 2005, UNHCR 2007, 2008), and spatially (Mountz, 2010).

Legality, securitization, and enforcement on islands

While many scholars have studied transnational migration since the early 1990s (e.g., Glick-Schiller et al. 1992), a smaller yet growing group has examined enforcement strategies intended to regulate transnational migrations (e.g., Andreas and Biersteker 2003; Bloch & Schuster, 2005; Nevins, 2002). Topics have included the changing nature of border enforcement (Amoore, 2006; Salter, 2006; Walters, 2004), detention (Simon, 1998; Welch, 2002), and interdiction (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2003), a legal term referring to stopping migrants en route to potential entry without authorization.

Less is known about the detention of asylum-seekers on islands. They are between states and in interstitial states: neither at home where claims to citizenship are stronger nor in the asylum process having their claims heard by a signatory state to the 1951 *Convention relating to the status of refugees*. These liminal locations hold implications for epistemology, ontology, and methodology. What is known about life in interstitial sites and how can more be learned? The sites under examination involve distance from the more powerful central administration of sovereign territory, legal ambiguity prescribed by location, and diverse political arrangements and allegiances. As such, activities on islands simultaneously mirror and inform enforcement practices on mainland territory in a feedback loop.

In recent years, border enforcement has grown more dispersed and sovereign practices more transnational. Changing geographies of the border aptly reflect shifting spaces of sovereignty (Sparke, 2006). Peripheral geographies prompt reconfiguration of traditional landscapes of sovereign territory as state authorities and social movements traverse and connect margin and center in new ways (Walters, 2004). For this reason, Giorgio Agamben's (1998) idea that we look to the paradoxical margins as sites of inclusion through exclusion has been so popular (Mitchell, 2006; Secor, 2007). Recent theories of shifting geographies of the nation-state can be read through the burgeoning field of island studies (Baldacchino, 2004, 2008; Steinberg, 2005). The spatial patterns

emerging prompt examination of traditional political geographies of sovereign territory by moving analysis to the margins where remote processing of migrants happens along the edges of sovereign territory, where mobile state authorities and practices meet and immobilize migrants, where the precariousness of ambiguous legal status intersects with the partiality of political status.

Australia, Canada, the United States, and EU member states learn one other's enforcement practices. These wealthy countries with the highest immigration rates per capita also boast the most sophisticated border management policies. Their authorities view 'spontaneous arrivals' as security threats to target with enforcement. As numbers of people on the move without authorization increased throughout the 1990s, states intensified efforts to reduce spontaneous arrivals. Terrorist attacks in the US in 2001, Indonesia in 2002 (which killed Australian citizens), Spain in 2004, and England in 2005 led to the implementation of new security regimes and anti-terrorism legislation that facilitated stricter border enforcement. Security agencies received an infusion of resources, and immigration departments saw radical overhauls. Australia, Canada, the US, and the UK developed extensive 'front end security,' from increased visa requirements to interdiction abroad wherein Airline Liaison Officers and Immigration Control Officers operate informally to share information with counterparts (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2003; Mountz, 2010). EU member states have pursued processes of border harmonization and the externalization of asylum, which entails processing and detention of asylum-seekers beyond sovereign territory, closer to 'regions of origin' (Betts, 2004; Schuster, 2005).

In the securitization of migration (Huysmans, 2006), borders become reconstituted as "biometric", regulating mobility by amassing digital biological data in shared databases (e.g., Amoore, 2006; Koslowski, 2004). In the 1980s, states began to reach beyond land borders in efforts to manage migration (Coleman, 2007), stopping unauthorized migrants from reaching sovereign territory long before they boarded a boat or airplane. The border moved outward in enactments of remote detention, legally ambiguous zones, and interdiction. Research on mobile borders led me to islands as sites where management of migration takes place, and struggles over access and exclusion unfold.

The 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and its 1967 *Protocol* guide signatory states to implement policies that provide access to an adjudication system for those who reach sovereign territory to make an asylum claim. Beyond sovereign territory in 'grayer' zones offshore, however, states are under no such obligation. By enacting enforcement in extra-territorial locales, states use geography to subvert international refugee law. The number of people reaching sovereign territory to make an asylum claim has diminished globally (Newland, 2005; UNHCR, 2007). Though human smugglers facilitate the migration of populations characterized as "mixed flows" (i.e., on the move and 'out of place' for both political and economic reasons), these applicants tend to be seen as economic migrants. The conflation of asylum-seekers with illegality and disorder further posits all migrants as security threat (Bigo, 2002). The use of remote locations to regulate access involves practices in effect for many years, but exacerbated in the securitized climate that conflates people moving for different reasons (Bigo, 2002; Sparke, 2006).

The dispersal of detention takes different forms in different countries (Bloch & Schuster, 2005; Welch, 2002) and extends offshore. Baldacchino and Milne (2006: 490) argue that binaries between sovereign and non-sovereign territory no longer serve as helpful tools for understanding sovereign territoriality and the international state system. Similarly, exclusion feeds on the blurring of work done by sovereign and non-sovereign actors. Exclusion also grows with the mobility of these enforcement practices between offshore and onshore locations. Just as strategies of war abroad are used at home

(as in the securing of American cities after 9/11), so too are islands prototypes for detention practices enacted at home. Haunting serves as a useful analytic in the deconstruction of this binary between sovereign and non-sovereign, visible in the impossibility for many detainees of knowing at whose hands they are being detained, and sometimes even where, exactly, they are detained.

Islands as enforcement archipelago

There are obvious reasons why imprisonment (generally) and detention of migrants (specifically) occur on islands, and this has much to do with spatial relationships between flight, interception, and physical geography. Asylum-seekers often employ human smugglers to cross multiple borders to reach sovereign territory where they have a right to make a claim (Nadig, 2002). Many of these passages involve water. En route, migrants face possible deterrence through measures that rely increasingly on ‘front end’ security, the movement of enforcement offshore to stop persons posited as *potential* security risks from reaching sovereign territory. The proximity of islands to interceptions, combined with the presence of military bases with facilities that can be converted for processing, often leads to detention on islands. Because they arrive on territory where access to asylum is mediated, these migrants do not necessarily become asylum-seekers or refugee claimants, but remain instead in interstitial legal categories without citizenship status in the territories traversed en route.

There are, of course, more capricious reasons why detention on islands has emerged as a significant pattern. The relative distance of islands from mainland territory exacerbates the isolation of detainees, limiting access to advocates and asylum. State and non-state institutions exert more control over detainees, information, and people moving into and out of facilities. Because detainees are remote and difficult to reach, they remain largely hidden from view of media and human rights monitors. Like detainees in facilities internal to sovereign territory, they are dispersed (Bloch & Schuster, 2005; Welch, 2002), their access to judicial processes mediated by distance. This dispersal also causes detachment from community and resources more readily available on mainland territory and in large cities such as Sydney, New York, or Vancouver.

Island detentions are not coincidental, though – like US detentions in Guantánamo Bay (Kaplan, 2005; Reid-Henry, 2007) – they are too readily explained as ‘exceptional.’ Viewed in isolation, these detentions appear ad hoc, circumstantial matters of convenience, physical geography, and proximity. But when connected, significant factors include location, political status, and post/colonial history. Some, such as Guam, have colonial histories of invasion that have led to militarized landscapes and large bases. In several cases, detention becomes a form of economic development, a residual material haunting through neo-colonial control.

While I aim to map broad spatial and conceptual patterns, I do not want to do so at the risk of ignoring particularities and histories. Indeed, the islands discussed differ in important ways, including regional location, proximity to mainland territory, political status, size, and colonial history. Analysis beyond the scope of this paper will illuminate distinct geopolitical histories, in the spirit of “Where is Guantánamo?” (Kaplan, 2005) which traces the history of Guantánamo Bay, linking historical periods to contemporary bio-political incarceration. Before 9/11 and the invention of foreign enemy combatants, detainees on Guantánamo included asylum-seekers from Haiti and Cuba (McBride, 1999). Kaplan’s history foregrounds the continuities of sovereign power through histories of colonization, imperialism, migration, and militarization. Similarly, Reid-Henry (2007: 628) argues that the “grey area” prompted by Guantánamo’s “(extra)territoriality” “has not been conjured out of nowhere: it too is closely indexed to the territory’s imperial

past”. Gregory (2006), too, connects current detentions to the island’s past. Similar examination of sites where potential asylees are detained will link contemporary detentions to historical trajectories.

Table 1 offers a glimpse of the spectrum where island political and migrant legal statuses intersect. This intersection both reflects and enhances Ong’s (2006) ‘graduated zones of sovereignty’. Ong’s ‘zones’ offer a compelling, if aspatial metaphor for political geographers working to understand the relationship between states and migrants. Drawing on feminist theories of intersectionality, Ong shows among myriad populations and locations that states produce identities through work visas, exempt work zones, and the like. However, her analysis of social identities remains aspatial. Ong studies racialized, classed, and legal categories without attending to distance from administrative loci of power and political status. Table 1 begins the spatialization of Ong’s graduated zones of sovereignty, and in so doing, brings political geography back into the analysis. Fig. 1 maps these sites.

Similar to Reid-Henry’s categorization of Guantánamo as ‘grey area,’ the categories and content of Table 1 show obfuscated legality around asylum that arise from the intersection of partial sovereignty. The political status of the territory is determined by its sovereign power and post/colonial histories and, in turn, influences the legal status of detainees and whether they will be able to seek asylum.

This list is contemporary and necessarily incomplete. A historical list of detentions on islands would be much longer. The “Yes and no” response in the column on access to asylum signals uncertainty and the many ways in which distance mediates claimants’ access. The ability to seek asylum on each island is mediated by political status of the island, distance, technology, infrastructure, excision, and degrees of access to asylum and legal representation. One cannot, for example, seek asylum from Indonesia because Indonesia does not observe the 1951 Convention. One may, however, request that a claim be heard by the UNHCR. Further ambiguity ensues in island territories of Italy and Australia where one might be able to legally make a claim, but where the process is expedited and influenced by location in other ways.

Haunting through state mobility

Gordon (2008) conceptualizes haunting as the effects of systems of power as they manifest in daily life, especially where they seem to have disappeared. In the second edition of her book, she revisits the concept, explaining earlier usage and continued relevance:

Table 1
Islands where asylum-seekers are detained.

Sovereign power	Island	Political status	Ability to seek asylum
Cuba/US	Cuba (Guantánamo Bay)	US military base on Cuba	Yes & No
US	Guam	Unincorporated territory of the United States	Yes
US	Tinian	US Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	No
Spain	Canary Islands	Spanish territory	Yes
Italy	Lampedusa	Italian territory	Yes & No
Malta	Malta	Independent nation-state	Yes
Greece	Greece	Independent nation-state	Yes
France/The Comoros	Mayotte	Overseas collectivity	Yes
Australia	Christmas Island	Australian overseas territory	Yes & No
Nauru	Nauru	Independent nation-state	Yes & No
Indonesia	[Several]	Independent nation-state	Yes & No
Canada	Vancouver	Independent nation-state	Yes & No



Fig. 1. Map of sites where area asylum-seekers are detained.

...haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with...or when their oppressive nature is denied.... Haunting is not the same as being exploited, traumatized, or oppressed, although it usually involves these experiences or is produced by them. I used the term *haunting* to describe those singular yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar, when your bearings on the world lose direction, when the over-and-done-with comes alive, when what's been in your blind spot comes into view (2008: xvi).

Gordon's analysis implicates the state, and I draw on her ideas to conceptualize haunting as the work done on behalf of (thought not always directly by) states on islands where sovereign and biopolitical powers envelop asylum-seekers. These actions involve complicity, dependency and contractual relations between states and non-state third parties such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and capitalize on the physical geography of islands.

I draw on Gordon to signal the residual effects of oppression and its connection to the state, even where the state appears absent in everyday life. Sometimes states appear absent because the island has entered into a postcolonial period of liberation for some. The colonial past that positioned island populations as partial citizens (e.g., Guam or Nauru), later resulted in asymmetrical economies ripe for development through detention. There, colonial past haunts what Gregory (2004b) and Kaplan (2005) would identify as colonial present. The islands depend on development projects from Australia or on military bases from the United States. Other times states appear absent because those on whose behalf detentions are carried out are obscured and detainees do not know by whom they are being detained. Yet, no matter how lost at sea, how complex the legality of liminal geographies, there is the state, present in some form – if concealed in another – to enforce the border, to contain by investing extraordinary resources offshore.

Exclusion requires silence and concealment of certain moves along the peripheral zones of sovereign territory. Through the displacement of the border and the reconstitution of virtual, smart, biometric borders elsewhere, sovereign and biopolitical practices increasingly haunt migrants through transnational enforcement explained earlier. These practices *follow* migrants

across borders, *capture* and *detain* in ambiguous interstitial sites, *exclude* them from landing on sovereign territory to make a claim for protection, *hide* them from view of public and media, *distance* them from advocates, and *invest* tremendous resources, *privatizing* along the way. These are performative verbs, components of haunting that portray state movements offshore and practices of control in locales where migrants enter varying degrees of legal ambiguity. The partial forms of sovereignty, citizenship, and protection on islands (e.g., Baldacchino, 2004; Baldacchino & Milne, 2006; Steinberg, 2005) provide conditions for exploitation and the undermining of responsibilities of signatory states.

Offshore detention centers offer opportunities to map state mobilities with examination of how and where states are themselves moving to influence the mobility of migrants. Baldacchino and Milne (2006) locate islands as sites where sovereign power and governance might be understood:

Islands provide bounded space for the emergence of ingenious new species of asymmetrical economies and governance. The pattern repeats itself again and again where typically large states make creative use of their small, far-flung and remote island jurisdictions to facilitate activities that would be simply anathema on home ground (2006: 488).

Far from anathema, however, internal detentions show characteristics of island facilities, as in "Gitmos across America," an editorial published by the *New York Times* (2007) that connects onshore detention practices to the isolation of detention in Guantánamo Bay. Taussig (2004), too, sees islands as central to understanding sovereign power and lists those with prisons, enticing readers to "think of some to add" (283). Whether offshore bank activity or incarceration, Taussig (2004: 287) argues that activities occur on islands "not despite but because of the existence of the modern state".

Haunting of migrants transpires strategically at the nexus between political status of the island and legal status of the migrant or detainee. Political status and partial forms of sovereignty provide a backdrop for struggles over legality where *potential* asylum-seekers enter territory that renders their citizenship status ambiguous, thus mediating their access to sovereign territory and asylum claimant processes.

Cresswell (2006: 49) posits the state as "the metaphorical enemy of the nomad." He argues, "It is not that the state opposes

mobility, but that it wishes to control flows – to make them run through conduits”. For Taussig, islands prove one such conduit:

Like the puppet theatre or the play within the play, miniaturization in the form of an island allows one to hold the world in one’s hands, play with it, observe it from different angles, and provide it with different fates.... Time is framed in a spatial image. Surrounded by sea. (Taussig, 2004: 294).

Each island visited below demonstrates limbo, isolation, and struggles over access between migrants and authorities. Asylum-seekers are haunted at the intersection of sovereign and biopolitical power on islands. Sovereignty plays out in far-flung locales, once theatres of war, now stages where those escaping conflict struggle. The states under discussion have all processed migrants intercepted at sea on islands and entered into legal negotiations over access in recent years. The islands are connected not only to one another, but to the detention of migrants *internal* to sovereign territory as well. As such, the ‘carceral archipelago’ (Gregory, 2004a) illuminates the biopolitical reconstitution of borders around bodies of asylum-seekers where remote detention figures centrally and is itself a mobile practice in processes of securitization.

Detention on islands

I organize this section thematically and geographically, relaying findings from a variety of locations in order to explore why detention occurs on islands: Taussig’s “play within the play;” detention as island within the island. The section moves among sites in order to map patterns of interception, detention, and access that provide conditions for *haunting*. I examine sites less prominent than Guantánamo, and perhaps even banal-seeming. In each case, I discuss forms of haunting that transpire, beginning at the Canadian naval base of Esquimalt on Vancouver Island, outside of Victoria, British Columbia.

Using geography to deny access: Canada’s “long tunnel thesis” revisited

In 1999, Canadian authorities intercepted nearly 600 migrants on four ships off the coast of British Columbia. Although believed to be transiting Canada en route from China to the US, once intercepted they made refugee claims in Canada and were brought by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to the Esquimalt Naval Base for processing. A legal struggle ensued when refugee lawyers in British Columbia requested permission to represent clients. The response to this request involved an informal policy called “the long tunnel thesis,” explained frequently by bureaucrats I interviewed the following year (Mountz, 2010). Officials in CIC and the Department of Justice altered the designation of the base to a ‘port-of-entry’ in order to legally defend the decision to not allow access. The ‘thesis’ likened the base to an international airport where travelers have landed, but are walking through the long tunnel en route to customs and immigration. They have not yet been processed or entered sovereign territory for legal purposes, and do not yet therefore have a right to access asylum or legal representation. The site and detainees held there were not in Canada.

This isolation from attorneys did not last long, but came back to haunt refugee claimants in the tribunals of the Immigration and Refugee Board where claims were adjudicated and information gathered during initial interviews at Esquimalt used against them (Interview, Vancouver, March 2000). The altered legal designation of the base as a Port-of-Entry demonstrates the state’s ability to control legal geographies and the extension of this territorial control to influence access to legal representation and claimant

processing. Biopolitical data collected during the information-gathering process intersected with the sovereign control of territory and border enforcement. Though located in close geographical proximity to advocates and legal representation, access was mediated with manipulation of the space and time of detention.

This struggle over access occurred on Vancouver Island, close to the capital of British Columbia. The island itself is large and connected in myriad ways to mainland Canada. It is not nearly as remote politically, geographically, culturally, or even linguistically, as some of the islands discussed below. Yet the example illustrates efforts to control information offered to and gathered from claimants in processing. Even in Canada, where access to the refugee determination process is codified as a human right protected by the *Canadian Charter for Human Rights*, decisions in the daily work of enforcement and processing influence the quality of access to the claimant process. Ultimately, the 600 claimants processed had unusually low rates of acceptance compared with other claimants from China that same year. Canada invested substantial resources in remote detention, including legal teams hired to disprove refugee claims. Advocates argued that these results reflected the detached geographies of their detention: that distance from lawyers, interpreters, advocates, and the Immigration and Refugee Board affected the quality of their access to rights.

Ten years later, in 2009, this process repeated itself when authorities intercepted a boat of 76 Sri Lankan Tamil men and again in 2010 when over 400 Tamil men, women and children were intercepted off the coast of British Columbia. The migrants made claims once they were intercepted, but the process of legal representation was delayed and they were held in detention en masse, this time in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver. While traveling through distinct geopolitical fields, traces of previous interceptions remained as history repeated itself in muted fashion. The effects of detention on outcomes of the process are yet to be discovered, but the sites of interception and long-term detention corresponded between events. Here colonial past haunted the present as migrants sought shelter in commonwealth states of Australia and Canada with long histories of holding migrants at bay (Johnston, 1979).

Status in Micronesia ‘Where America’s day begins’

In a distant island across the Pacific, 6200 miles from the western coast of North America, concurrent geographical struggles imbricate legality, technology, and access from island detentions. At the same time that smugglers transported Fujianese migrants to the western coast of Canada, they also operated much farther west on Micronesia in the Mariana Trench. Guam is the westernmost US territory, most distant from its capitol. Guam is “Where America’s day begins,” as its slogan suggests, some 14 hours before the day begins in Washington, D.C. Guam’s location places the island closer to China, Japan, and the Philippines than to California, and its history has always involved labor migration, military strategy, colonial struggle (Rogers, 1995), resettlement, and displacement.

The UN Special Committee on Decolonization counts Guam among the last remaining colonies in the world (UN Special Committee on Decolonization, 2009). Guam has been a colony of Spain and the US and experienced military occupation by Japan. Guamanians – many of whom identify ethnically as Chamorro – are US citizens with full rights to mobility within the US, but some argue with only partial rights to citizenship. They can vote in national primaries, for example, but not in national elections. These are among the contradictions in sub-national island jurisdictions identified by Baldacchino and Milne (2006). In 1944, the US established large air force and naval bases on Guam, and in 2008 planned to move the Okinawa island marine base from Japan to

Guam. Though resistant to militarization in myriad ways, Guamanians have also grown economically dependent on the bases.

The US has long housed asylum-seekers intercepted at sea on islands, including Cuba (McBride, 1999; Van Selm & Cooper, 2006). But less known are interception practices by the US Coast Guard surrounding the Mariana Trench (United States Committee for Refugees, 1999). In the late 1990s, when large boats of Chinese migrants were arriving on Guam, the local prison operated beyond capacity. When it seemed the ships would continue to come directly from China, the government created a 'tent city' outside of the local jail to house the excess population. Guamanians joined the efforts of the Coast Guard to locate and intercept ships by telephoning in ship sightings (Interview, Guam, July 2008). An 'air of crisis' prevailed, and the US Coast Guard began to divert boats headed for Guam to Tinian (United States Committee for Refugees, 1999).

Guam and Tinian hold distinct political status in relation to the US, and therefore migrants have different access to asylum on each island. While migrants can file asylum claims on Guam, an unincorporated territory of the US, they may not travel to the mainland until and unless they are accepted as asylum applicants. Once beds at tent city filled, the Coast Guard began to tow intercepted boats to Tinian for processing. Tinian is part of the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands. Until late in 2008, US immigration laws did not apply there, and therefore, migrants could not seek asylum.

Asylum advocates on the mainland have expressed concern about the lack of knowledge and oversight of the asylum process on Guam (National Immigrant Justice Center, 2010; United States Committee for Refugees, 1999). There were few lawyers available on Guam in the late 1990s when ships carrying large groups arrived. There are fewer now. One small firm on the island handles all immigration matters, including asylum cases. Although a sizeable population awaits processing of applications sent from Guam to California, the federal government has not posted anyone on Guam permanently to adjudicate claims. Instead, most hearings are heard via televideo conference by a federal judge in Honolulu.

While conducting research on Guam in 2008, I observed some of these cases by accompanying an attorney representing claimants. Asylum applicants and their lawyers visit the office of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on Guam for the hearing. The immigration judge and DHS lawyers are broadcast live from where they sit in a similar room in Honolulu, Hawaii, some 3800 miles away. The judge telephones a disembodied interpretation service where a live person located in a third, undisclosed location interprets proceedings by conference call. Participants questioned the quality of access, given the distance between Guam and the mainland. One lawyer I interviewed described hearings as a "circus." He said that largely inexperienced interpreters would grow distracted by the televised proceedings and sit as though watching a film, forgetting their roles as interpreters. He argued that the confusion of socio-spatial distance across time zones was not transcended by technology, including difficulty with interpretation and the restricted ability of the judge to read the body language and affect of claimants (Interview, Guam, July 2008).

In spring of 2008, US Congress passed an Omnibus bill that will pull the rest of the islands of the Commonwealth of Micronesia back under the jurisdiction of the US government for the purposes of migration law. By the summer of 2008, immigration attorneys were anticipating an 'onslaught' of asylum claims among migrants traveling by boat from other islands where immigration attorneys estimated that over half of the migrant population has no documentation and would be returned home by the Department of Homeland Security (Interview, Guam, July 2008). Most attorneys I interviewed on Guam in 2008 identified the island as 'exceptional' in many ways, including the processing and adjudication of asylum

claims. There, claimants are haunted by distance and decisions that accompany colonial control over remote territory. They contend with a general silencing of their presence among the public on mainland territory and the population on the island too, most of whom were not aware of the presence of asylum-seekers in the local jail, despite local histories of volunteer work with refugees en route to resettlement (Smith, Smith, & Peang-Meth, 2010).

Detention as detachment: Australia's Pacific Solution

Unlike Canada and the United States, Australia is an island that prides itself on control of cross-border flows. In 1992 the government implemented a policy of mandatory detention of anyone who arrived without a visa (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2006). Despite this effort at deterrence, in the late 1990s, arrivals by sea increased with smugglers operating through Southeast Asia. Asylum-seekers who arrived without visas were placed in detention in remote locations internal to sovereign territory in the outback and along the western and northern coasts (Hugo, 2001). Geographic isolation resulted in more restricted access to asylum because detainees remained distant from advocates, information, interpreters, and legal counsel (Mares, 2002).

In 2001, a Norwegian merchant vessel, the *MV Tampa*, rescued 433 Afghan asylum-seekers from an Indonesian ship off the northern coast of Australia. The ship was prohibited from landing on Australian soil, however, so the captain tried to defy orders. He was told he would only be assisted if the ship remained beyond the twelve-mile zone delineating territorial waters. Prime Minister John Howard was up for re-election and had drawn his 'line in the sand' (Mares, 2002). This moment signaled the introduction of the 'Pacific Solution' to extend remote detention practices offshore (Magner, 2004). Australia would not land migrants arriving by sea. Instead, detention was outsourced to islands north of Australia, including the island of Manus in Papua New Guinea, and Nauru. The Solution was a deterrent to smugglers and illustrates the use of islands to manage migration. Since 2001, the Pacific Solution led to offshore detention on Nauru, Manus, Christmas Island, and Indonesian islands. These islands have differing political statuses, economies, and geographies (prompting identification of the 'Indonesian solution' and the 'Indian Ocean solution'), yet were all drawn into the geopolitical sphere of Australian border enforcement.

Following the Tampa incident, Australian Parliament met and retroactively declared parts of its sovereign territory no longer to be included in Australia for the purposes of migration. This was called 'the power of excision.' Taylor (2005) argues that migrants carry this excision on their body, such that even if they later make it from island to mainland territory, they are still excluded from legal channels to asylum by virtue of the location of interception and the corporeal islands that result.

The Pacific Solution also corresponded with creative legal solutions to deterrence in the form of detention on Australian sovereign territory. Although the numbers of asylum-seekers in detention decreased significantly with policy changes in 2005 and 2006, and a number of large-capacity facilities on mainland Australian territory were 'mothballed' and available for re-opening with short notice (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2006), the immigration department nonetheless followed through on a lucrative contract to open a controversial facility in the most remote part of Christmas Island. The new \$400,000,000 Australian detention facility that some referred to as the "Gitmo of Australia" opened in 2008 and offers another example of the creative use of geography to mediate access. Unlike other island detentions of the Pacific Solution, Christmas Island is Australian territory. Numbering approximately 2600 in July 2010, detainees

more than doubled the non-incarcerated resident population of approximately 1100. As was the case when Guam's tent city overflowed, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd increased detention capacity on Indonesian islands and moved recently intercepted migrants there (Marr, 2009).

The island detentions of the Pacific Solution mirrored the strategies and effects of dispersed detentions internal to sovereign Australian territory in that detainees were removed geographically from communities of advocacy located in larger urban centers. The Pacific Solution extended this isolation and invoked creative use of geography to undermine refugee law, exercising sovereign and biopolitical powers by excising islands through aggressive interceptions at sea and bilateral arrangements to detain and repatriate, or cast migrants to 'third countries' in between source and destination. The Australian government relied on third parties to accomplish these tactics, including poorer countries and organizations such as the IOM to whom the work was contracted. Detainees were successfully removed not only from communities of advocacy, but from view all together and from any information on how to access the asylum claims process.

Nauru is a small, recently independent nation-state that was – from 2001 until 2008 – part of Australia's Pacific Solution. Having been mined of phosphate, some predict the impoverished state may disappear as sea levels rise. Migrants intercepted at sea during the Tampa incident and during subsequent interceptions were detained on Nauru. At the time that detentions began in 2001, civil servants on Nauru had not been paid for months (Mares, 2002). Australia contracted the IOM to run the detention center. Conditions in the center were poor and resulting illnesses have been well-documented (Gordon, 2006; Mares, 2002). The Australian government would not allow human rights monitors, journalists, refugee lawyers or priests to visit the island, and even revoked visas in cases where they had initially been granted (Interview, Canberra, April 2006). This shows significant and creative investments of resources to keep asylum-seekers away from sovereign territory, and legal advocates and information away from detainees.

Migrants isolated there had little information about their cases. Monawir Al-Saber recounted his experience of prolonged detention on Nauru in a letter: "The detention camp is a small jail and the island is a big jail. All of the island, same jail. I want to get freedom" (Gordon, 2006). Like Taussig's "play within the play," this statement was written during a letter-writing campaign between activists in Australia and detainees on Nauru that illuminated the presence and isolation of migrants intercepted by the Australian Navy and placed in detention (Burnside, 2003). The statement highlights the compounding effects of detention on remote and impoverished islands. Although detainees were allowed at times to come and go from the detention center, they were not allowed to leave the island, nor were attorneys and human rights monitors allowed to visit Nauru. Through connections with activists in Australian cities, migrants were able to contract a lawyer in Canberra. She represented her clients for more than two years without ever being able to meet them (Interview, Canberra, April 2006). Ultimately, the UNHCR arranged for many detainees on Nauru to be resettled in 'third countries,' including Canada and New Zealand. Still others remained until Nauru's role in the Solution ended in 2008.

While mandatory detention ended in 2008 and the Pacific Solution looked like it would become a thing of the past, remnants of the Pacific Solution continued to haunt potential asylum-seekers en route to Australia through the residual institutional infrastructure of state violence. The facility on Christmas Island opened, and those intercepted at sea continue to be detained there. Persons estimated to be in the hundreds who were intercepted at sea remain housed on islands in Indonesia (Taylor, 2009). The precariousness of those on their way to Australia to make refugee claims is

linked to the asymmetrical neo-colonial relations between Australia and the islands where it contracts out detention. Because nation-states study one another for best practices, Australia played a key role in setting the stage for subsequent exclusions of asylum-seekers arriving by boat globally.

Detention as development strategy: in limbo on Lombok

In December 2007, I visited twenty-one Hazara men, women, and children that had fled Afghanistan in 2001 and were ensnared at sea and subjected to the Pacific Solution. They were intercepted with a larger group of some 240 Afghans by the Australian Navy at Ashmore Reef, and towed to the Indonesian island of Lombok. They had been living in limbo in an open detention facility – an inexpensive motel – in Lombok's capital city of Mataram ever since.

Lombok offers an example of the ambiguity that asylum-seekers confront in detention between states. Asylum-seekers detained there are citizens of Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka (Interview, Mataram, December 2007). They are held in Indonesia by the International Organization for Migration, hired contractually by the Australian federal government to do custodial care of a kind with the cooperation of a complicit Indonesian government. When I visited, Australian activists were still working to ascertain who was building and running the detention centers cropping up on Indonesian islands. Like Nauru, Indonesia is *not* a signatory state to the *Convention*, so asylum-seekers cannot seek protection from Indonesia. Detainees received stipends to buy food from the IOM. They were allowed to come and go from the detention facilities, but could not work or leave the island. They were visited regularly by Indonesian immigration authorities and encouraged to return home in exchange for \$2,000Aus offered as a return package from the IOM. In mid-December, the men were removed from the women and children and sent to isolation detention on Sulawesi Island as a tactic to pressure them to hasten their departure from Lombok.

This island detention prompts a number of questions, including the amount of development offered to Indonesia by Australia in exchange for services. In interviews, immigration authorities mentioned "informal" development projects, such as a new airport computer system, in exchange for Indonesian contributions to Australia's offshore enforcement programs (Interview, Canberra, April 2006). As with detainees on Nauru, activists and advocates in Australia found ways to communicate with and advocate on behalf of detainees on Lombok, particularly successful when pressing the Australian government with the change of prime minister in December 2007. Australian refugee lawyers for the migrants on Lombok struggled to establish their legal status in relation to sovereign territory and to ascertain who was accountable for the conditions or the very fact of their detention. Under other circumstances, their country of origin – in this case, Afghanistan – would negotiate on their behalf, but the country struggled as the detention continued. Through behind-the-scenes negotiations with the new government, the small group was resettled in Australia in 2008. Hundreds of others from Afghanistan and elsewhere remained in limbo on Lombok and on a growing list of other Indonesian islands. Their presence signals the geopolitical relations among states and the power to 'contract out' asylum responsibilities through detention offshore. Although Prime Minister Kevin Rudd supported changes in detention practices onshore, interceptions and detentions offshore continued quietly until coming to light with the publicity surrounding the interception of Sri Lankan Tamils in 2009. Efforts to silence offshore detentions failed repeatedly at the hands of activists and asylum-seekers themselves who communicated their plight via mobile phone, internet, and mainstream media to global publics.

Hiding and denial: Lampedusa

As in Australia, a key element of securitization of migration in the EU involved the 'externalization of asylum' (e.g., [Betts, 2004](#); [Schuster, 2005](#)). As EU states harmonized citizenship policies and eradicated internal borders to facilitate labor migration, they struggled to find common asylum policies. Following signals from the UNHCR to pursue 'preventative' policies, EU states grew more strategic in bilateral arrangements for extra-territorial processing in the regions where migrants originate (see [Betts, 2004](#)). Collaborative policies and practices have subsequently moved asylum-seekers beyond sovereign territory and closer to regions of origin ([Boswell, 2003](#); [Schuster, 2005](#)). Central to externalization is the collaborative policing of water and islands by the EU coordinating agency Frontex, operationalized in 2005.

As processing and enforcement were pushed offshore, certain entry points became 'hot spots' where migrants frequently attempted to enter by sea. In recent years, Italy's Lampedusa and Spain's Canary Islands proved popular 'backdoor' entrances to the EU from western and northern Africa and subsequently, sites of increased enforcement ([Andrijasevic, 2006](#)). Lampedusa is a small island southwest (though administratively part) of Sicily, not far from Tunisia. Over 50,000 African migrants arrived by boat on Lampedusa between 2005 and 2007, and 6500 more had arrived by July 2008 ([Guardian, 2008](#)). The ensuing struggles over entry raised governance issues, as Italy sought to balance its own agenda in relation to broader EU efforts to harmonize migration and enforcement and protect human rights.

Until 2004, migrants who landed on Lampedusa and made an asylum claim were transferred to a reception center on the island of Sicily ([Andrijasevic, 2006](#)). In 2004, however, amid pressure to tighten security and improve enforcement, Italian authorities began to send migrants back en masse on chartered flights to Libya without processing their claims and – reportedly – without adequate time to establish their identities and assess their well-being if returned to and through Libya ([Médecins sans frontieres, 2004](#)).

The UNHCR was unusually vocal in criticizing this decision, along with concerns about conditions in the 'Temporary Holding Centre' on Lampedusa where Italy had successfully blocked entry of human rights monitors for several months after beginning its more aggressive deportation campaign ([UNHCR, 2005](#)). Eventually, pressure mounted, Italian journalist Fabrizio Gatti went undercover and entered the center as a migrant intercepted at sea and reported on conditions he witnessed. Subsequently, the European Parliament succeeded in sending its first delegation to tour the center in June 2005 ([European United Left, 2005](#)). According to human rights advocates interviewed in Rome and Geneva in 2006, the government deported a large charter flight of detainees the night before their arrival and improved conditions by adding mattresses and painting the center (Interview, Rome, May 2006).

Médecins sans frontieres (MSF) is one organization that succeeded in working within the center. After issuing a report that criticized conditions inside the facility, however, MSF was no longer allowed inside. Instead, they were reduced to servicing the medical needs of detainees with brief triage outside the center in a tent on the dock where migrants were brought ashore following interception. In May 2006, as I interviewed employees of the organization, they answered calls from the media about a local who had slashed the tires of their new ambulance.

These struggles show the complexity of detention and the complicity of local populations who are alternately employed by facilities, supportive of and at times hostile to detainees. The games between rights monitors and Italian authorities illustrate efforts to use islands to hide asylum-seekers from view whilst restricting

access. In the case of detention on Lampedusa (as on Nauru), not only was access to asylum inhibited, but advocates and human rights monitors were restricted or removed from the center, compounding the isolation of migrants inside.

Conclusions

Haunting raises specters, and it alters the experience of being in time... These specters or ghosts appear when the trouble they represent and symptomize can no longer be contained or repressed or blocked from view... we are notified that what's been concealed is very much alive and present, interfering precisely in those always incomplete forms of containment and repression ceaselessly directed toward us ([Gordon, 2008: xvi](#)).

As borders move offshore, detainees are haunted by the nexus of sovereign and biopolitical powers, sub-national jurisdiction and biopolitical surveillance. Although remote from mainland territory, islands prove central to understanding sovereign power offshore and detention practices onshore. The dislocation of those detained remains intimately linked to the displacement of the border and its reconstitution in detention centers on islands.

[Taussig \(1997\)](#) argues that states grow more powerful through disembodiment. The dizzying array of institutional actors who carry out detention and processing on islands represents just this disembodiment. Haunting makes it unclear *who* is detained on islands, and *by whom*. Geopolitical arrangements among state and non-state institutions, whether entrepreneurial with third parties or bilateral with other states, carry out the complicated work of processing, deterrence, and detention, re-placing sovereign arrangements in the management of displacement. The mobile border was perpetually reconstituted around the body of the asylum-seeker in a proliferation of sites between states, national and international legal and security regimes, state and non-state actors. The political geography of islands thus entails the study of paradoxical locations (the fluid port-of-entry, the island within the island), with sustained attention to interstitial sites. Haunting is one tool to understand state oppression through the complex geographical arrangements designed to control mobility.

While migration scholars increasingly study spaces of 'betweenness,' islands remain understudied sites of migration processes, where legal ambiguity clouds migrants' status. Though study of nissology is growing ([Baldacchino, 2004](#)), few studies link geopolitics of islands to migration management and precariousness of migration to political status of small territories. Furthermore, despite growth in the detention industry ([Sudbury, 2005](#)), few geographers have taken up work on detention in ways that connect national and global spatial patterns ([Martin & Mitchelson, 2009](#)). Fewer still have studied detention on islands to understand the intersection of asylum-seeking practices with enforcement exercises in sovereign power.

I have argued that islands are key sites of territorial struggle among nation-states and locations where states manage migration and shrink spaces of asylum. A global constellation of European, Australian, and North American islands function as strategic sites of migration management where disputes over legality, access, and sovereignty erupt. While studied in isolated fashion, a geographical analysis that conceptualizes islands not as isolated sites, but component parts of broader patterns proves vital to understanding the relationship between remote detention and the securitization of migration.

Asylum-seeking trends provide insight into geopolitical fields where authorities and migrants negotiate displacement. Island detentions are one containment strategy that reflects broader geopolitical relations between states and prompts questions about

what kinds of power operate in 'exceptional' sites. Geopolitically paradoxical, islands occupy marginal zones far from administrative centers of power, visibility, and public scrutiny. Some become 'back door' entrances to work and asylum. Simultaneously, states utilize islands for processing and detention. In Agambennian terms, detainees are 'bare life,' paradoxically excluded through inclusion, simultaneously hypervisible to island populations yet invisible to international communities and national publics on mainland territories. This analysis thus prompts attention to the dialectical spatial relations between administrative centers and geographical margins of sovereignty, the registers of exclusion and visibility operationalized there, and the urgency of analytical attention to such sites by political geographers.

Most knowledge in the state-centric field of immigration is arranged around a desire to document the experiences of particular categories of people moving from or to particular countries: source country, nationality, ethnicity, legal status, religion, or occupation in 'host' country. Data collected at national territorial scales often overlook exclusion at the border, whether onshore or offshore. I have organized analysis around an alternative geography: management of migration on islands. Global migration by definition crosses borders between states, but little attention is paid to such spaces *in between* (see, however, Das and Poole 2004; Nevins & Aizeki, 2008).

This shift brings sites of struggle over asylum into conceptual models of sovereignty. Asylum-seekers on islands are detained at the nexus between political status that involves partial sovereignty (which means legal ambiguity for the asylum-seeker) and biopolitical power that captures the individual through everyday productions of legal status through surveillance. Intensified practices of exclusion thus require an ontology that accounts for silence and a methodology to document concealment offshore.

Nation-states, meanwhile, continue the restless search for new strategies of exclusion and new islands on which to detain. In July 2010, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced the possibility of processing asylum-seekers in East Timor (West Australian, 2010). One month later, after intercepting a boat carrying asylum-seekers from Sri Lanka, Canadian authorities began public debate of the Australian 'solution' of interception offshore. Globally, when protests erupted and media attention was garnered, migrants were moved elsewhere: from Guam to Tinian, Lombok to Sulawesi, and Lampedusa to Sicily. Amid intensified policing at sea and implementation of Italy's 'push back policy' to prevent arrivals with increased interception and return to Libya, smuggling routes shifted and migrant arrivals grew on nearby Greece and Malta (Lutterbeck, 2009). On boats, migrants themselves pursued new strategies, with one group of Sri Lankan Tamils refusing to disembark when intercepted by Indonesian authorities off the port of Merak, a refusal to enter island detention facilities onshore.

In this paper, I mapped the enforcement archipelago that excludes potential asylum-seekers from accessing sovereign territory to make a claim for protection. The practices outlined here demand that geographers move peripheral zones of sovereign territory from the margins to the center of political geography and develop more sophisticated conceptualization of these sites. Subsequent research must historicize islands in colonial, post-colonial, and militarized landscapes. Next steps thus include close readings of individual islands through historical, geopolitical, and geoeconomic lenses to further understand their role in the intersecting processes of migrant displacement and relocation.

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