

antiAtlas Journal #5 - Air Deportation

ANTIATLAS-JOURNAL #5 - AIR DEPORTATION: EDITORIAL AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Adrian Paci, *Centro di permanenza temporanea*, 2007, video still (excerpt)

Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York and Peter Kilchmann, Zurich

1 The issue 5 of *antiAtlas Journal* addresses questions of Air Deportation through 14 international articles and unpublished researches. It is based on the Air Deportation project led by the political sociologist William Walters (dir.) and the anthropologists Clara Lecadet and Cédric Parizot, and on contributions from a call for proposals. Its design is created by Thierry Fournier, artist and curator. This issue is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC - grant # 435-2017-1008). It brings together articles by researchers analyzing the role of aviation in contemporary migration and border management, original texts and documents by activists, testimonies of deportees and contributions by artists.

Civil aviation is a key infrastructure that the governments of the Global North in particular use for forcibly removing people subject to deportation. We give the name *air deportation* to this system of coerced mobility. Occasionally air deportation becomes visible either because a deportee's struggle gains attention in the media, or an activist group challenges an airline for its complicity in forced migration, or a government decides to make a chartered flight a mediatized operation. But most of the time air deportation operates below the radar. While activists, journalists, human rights organizations and artists have drawn attention to the particular forms of violence and secrecy that accompany removal by air, our knowledge of what air deportation means for the struggles of migrants and refugees, for borders and migration governance, or for the stakes it raises regarding the becoming of our societies is less developed. Likewise our understanding of its ramifications in the airports and countries of destination.

How do various aspects of aviation interact with deportation practices and policies of states? In what ways does aviation empower states, bringing global reach, flexibility and intimidation to their dreams of immigration enforcement? At the same time, and conversely, in what ways does

aviation expose immigration enforcement to new forms of bureaucracy and disruption? In what ways has the iconography of commercial aviation – logos, liveries, symbols, etc. – become a counter-language for antideportation activism?

2 To answer these questions, the contributors to this issue have taken up the original editorial format proposed by *anti-Atlas-Journal*, based on close and diversified relations between texts and media. The militant group **Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants** reports on the protest campaign launched in 2019 against the involvement of British Airways commercial flights in the deportation of migrants, through a contribution based principally on the wealth of iconography assembled in the course of this action. Other articles develop interesting circulation between a text that combines experiences with analysis, and a documentation including photos, videos, diagrams, maps and administrative documents. This is the case of **Helen Brewer** who reflects on the limits and possibilities of the direct action she and 14 others took to stop a deportation charter flight and speculate towards the future of anti-deportation resistance in the UK. Likewise, **Aino Korvensyrjä and Rex Osa** discuss the challenges posed by militant observation and by the documenting of these practices in Germany after 2015 and in post-deportation situations in Nigeria. As for, **Clara Lecadet and William Walters**, they extend this discussion around forms of militantism by retracing the history of anarchist collectives in France in the 1990s and 2000s. By articulating or blurring different registers of expression (literary, academic, etc.) the contributions of **Barbara Lüthi, Friederike Kretzen and Marianne Büttiker**, on Switzerland, and that of **Angela Smith**, Australia, call on readers to reflect on their relationship with deportation and on the implications of these migration control practices on their societies.

While other contributions might rely less on iconography, the compilation and analysis of testimonies and numerous administrative documents obtained through formal requests, unpublished tables, maps and diagrams add significantly to the archives on deportation in Europe, in Oceania or in the Americas. **Sarah Zellner** discusses the role of Frontex in the EU's air deportation infrastructure. Her article documents a polymorphous air deportation infrastructure where national, bilateral and European pathways intersect to exclude people on the move. Inspired by dramaturgical sociology, **Amalia Campos-Delgado** proposes to consider the state-led and crafted visibility of border practices as "dramatic performances". She examines the mass deportation of 311 Indian citizens from Mexico and the intentional official visibility given to this expulsion, as well as the backstage dynamics concealed from the public eye. As for **Lucio Cascavilla**, he completes this unique documentation through accounts and videos, stressing both the singularity of the experiences of the deportees and the difficulty to document and expose the violent they are subjected to.

Besides, the lack of iconography of certain articles, as well as the need to reproduce maps and diagrams from their originals, in fact testify to the obstacles that researchers encountered in collecting visual or aural records, as well as the opacity which the authorities try to maintain around air deportation. Some authors have taken advantage of the gap between dense ethnographic descriptions and the absence of iconography, emphasizing the impossibility of finding traces left by the deportees in the sound or visual landscapes of the airports. On the one hand, **Katerina Rozakou's** article discusses these issues by offering an ethnography of voluntary deportations conducted in the Athens International Airport by the IOM Greece in collaboration with the Greek police; while **Maxime Maréchal** reflects on them through his unique study of the language interpreting practices in the waiting zone in Roissy-Charles-de-Gaulle in Paris. In all, this issue offers, much more than counter-visibility, a practical and experiential

reflection on the material conditions of air deportation and on the many ways of making it and its effects visible and audible.