

Confronting Vulnerabilities: Society, Spaces and the State
March 11, 2011
Fenn Lounge, Carleton University
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Keynote Address

Lisa Mills (School of Public Policy and Administration) - Confronting Vulnerabilities in Mexico: Maternal Health and Health Systems

Panel 1: (In)Securities: The State Giveth and the State Taketh Away
Discussant: Wallace Clement

Ajay Parasram - Erasing Tamil Eelam: Ethnonationalist De/Re Territorialization in the Global War on Terror

On May 18, 2009 President Mahinda Rajapaksa declared victory in the global war on terror (GWOT). Having pushed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) from their functional capital of Kilinochchi, the army blocked them into a football-field sized place, compelling the leadership to lay down their arms and re-enter negotiations. Under white flags, some LTTE leaders crossed the battlefield with their families only to be gunned down by the army and crushed amidst the last physically defensible assertion of the pseudo-sovereign state of Tamil Eelam. Civilians caught between Lanka and Eelam were declared “liberated” by Colombo, only to be ushered into holding camps so “terrorists” could be separated from “non-terrorists” and Colombo could plan its resettlement agenda, ensuring ethnic heterogeneity in Tamil-dominated Northern and Eastern provinces through the use of Sinhalese settlers.

This paper seeks to understand the civil war’s conclusion in the context of the GWOT. Beginning with a historical sketch situating the conflict as a war of competing post-colonial ethnonational imaginaries, my framework explores the contestation of sovereign legitimacy, drawing on insights of Max Weber, Deleuze & Guattari, and Simon Dalby. Two crucial points emerge: a.) erasing the place of Eelam without dealing with the spatial demands for Eelam fails to address the systemic reasons underlying Tamil nationalism, and b.) the ability to control moral perception in the discursive spaces opened by the GWOT enables an imperial geopolitical strategy that most found unimaginable between 1989-2001 and sets precedent for other states ‘plagued with the scourge of terror’.

Jon Scheiding - Technologies of Citizenship: Governing (In)Security at the Site of the Border

There has been a renewed emphasis placed upon the importance of achieving a heightened degree of border security in the post-9/11 world through a variety of technical practices which have profound implications on the nature of contemporary citizenship. As such, the border continues to represent a key site of political struggle whereby the state attempts to govern privileged access to certain rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship by separating legitimate from illegitimate bodies within the polity. Thus whether we consider traditional dividing practices or more contemporary forms of technical administration along newly re-imagined securitized borders, it would seem clear that various discursive representations of citizenship have long been organized around spatial dimensions of inclusion and exclusion, security and insecurity.

This paper will consider how regimes of citizenship are constructed around practices which effectively draw and re-draw borders around, within and through populations to determine access to both real and imagined spaces of rights and responsibilities. My primary point of departure shall focus on two initiatives under the Canada-US Smart Border Declaration which govern citizenship claims through notions of securitization and risk, namely by contrasting the voluntary NEXUS program of privileged access for the mobile business class against more coercive biometric registry programs designed to track the movement of migrants and temporary workers. Within this vein, I shall attempt to demonstrate that although citizenship has long been experienced subjectively on the basis of race, class and residency status, it has become effectively rescaled by new technologies which operate to secure legitimate rights from intrusions by new categories of undesireables in the post 9/11 world.

Kritee Ahmed - Flexibly Working Towards Our Freedom

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of freedom in terms of an individual's relationship with the labour market. It notes that a flexibilized deregulated labour market can seemingly entertain notions of personal liberty, of greater individual economic freedom, but that this concept of individual economic freedom is narrow in its definition because it does not take into consideration notions of security, stability and certainty that can come from regulation, state intervention and social provision; this concept does not mitigate the reality of uncertainty which can result when the labour market is heavily deregulated and when social provision is limited. Moreover, it does not take into consideration other non-market and non-work aspects of life which may be (con)strained by a deregulated labour market. This would suggest that when there is little in the way of security, stability and certainty provided by non-market guarantees, one's ability to control one's labour becomes more rooted in survival. While seemingly contradictory, it is through limiting freedom in the market—through greater regulation, and social provision—that it can become possible to become freer, where one's interaction with the labour market does not become tied to notions of survival. In order to realize this broader conception of freedom, state intervention is required as the state has the power to not only guarantee said freedom, but it can be the apparatus through which transformative social change can be pursued through creating the conditions for change and providing and guaranteeing freedom for all.

Chris Hurl - *Geographies of the Essential: Essential Services, Labour Geographies, and State Formation*

Defying existing labour laws, the federal and provincial governments in Canada have resorted to back-to-work legislation in countless industries deemed to be 'essential'. The use of 'essential services' language in restricting collective bargaining rights has often been portrayed as a 'return to coercion' by a revanchist neoliberal state (Panitch and Swartz, 2001). However, compartmentalizing history too neatly as a swift transition from Keynesian compromise to Post-Fordist coercion neglects to account for the messy problem-space within which a wide array of state agencies have come to classify and regulate essential services in Canada. Drawing from labour geography and theories of state formation, this paper will advance a genealogy of 'essential services,' examining the emergence and consolidation of this discourse in the wake of public sector unionization through the 1960s. Against the view of the national state as a container within which labour relations are actively and unilaterally reconfigured, I will argue that it is necessary to decentre the state and expose the uneven and fragmented construction of state spaces through the mundane material practices of public workers. By no means should workers be viewed as simply passive victims in this process. Examining the history of struggle over essential services provides a means of demonstrating how labour is not simply contained under state agencies or pre-existing labour markets; rather, the constitution of state spaces is directly negotiated through the labour process itself.

Panel 2: Conversations in Resistance: A Diversity of Tactics

Discussant: Justin Paulson

Jeff Monaghan and DT Cochrane - *Trees Not Gunns: Direct Action and Differential Accumulation*

Vulnerable people have a habit of resistance. This introduces uncertainty into the calculations of the powerful, as they count on obedience. Informed by the theory of 'capital as power' (Nitzan & Bichler 2009), we argue that business disruption campaigns can be assessed based on the ability of activists to insert themselves into the calculations of the owners of capital, ideally by disrupting certainties of accumulation. Analysis of particular tactics aimed at specific targets can reveal the vulnerabilities of the powerful and offers one means of assessing campaigns that aim to disrupt corporate actors. This article details a campaign against Australian forestry corporation Gunn Ltd. Under the banner 'Trees Not Gunns,' activists combined local acts of direct action with a global support movement to protect Tasmania's ancient growth forests. While there are a number of aspects to consider when assessing the success of social movements, this article contends that one such device is the vantage point of capitalists themselves: the bottom-line. Nitzan and Bichler argue that capitalism is a 'mode of power' (2009), in which the capitalization formula measures the capitalist's ability to transform control over broad social processes into earnings. Informed by their conception of accumulation as a relative - and not absolute - process, we contrast the capitalized values of various relevant market actors in order to 'quantify' the business disruption impacts of 'Trees Not Gunns.' The campaign offers an opportunity to examine how diverse tactics can impact processes of accumulation despite the perceived vulnerability of those resisting. The article argues that assessment of the measured impact on accumulation will help the

vulnerable ensure their resistance counts.

Cynthia Mara - Feminist Networks and the State: the Gender Mainstreaming Incorporation in Brazilian and Canadian Governments before the Beijing Conference

The study examines how the feminist networks incorporate the gender mainstreaming into Brazilian and Canadian governments after the Beijing Conference (1995) produced by United Nations - UN. With the Beijing Conference gender issues previously relegated to the domestic domain of national jurisdictions passed into the realm of global concerns. The networks to be analyzed are: Articulation of Brazilian Women (AMB) established in 1994 and Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) established in 1999. This is a comparative study that aims to analyze the relations of feminist networks with the government of Brazil and Canada in relationship to gender mainstreaming initiatives. Despite some similarities between Brazilian and Canadian cases, such as the presence of the specific Ministries for women's questions and public policies for women, the feminist networks in each country face different political opportunities and constraint to advancing gender mainstreaming. The objective is to explain the differences the feminist activism and to understand the interaction between the social actors (in this case feminist networks) and political institutions in both countries. The study seeks to answer how can feminist networks challenge structures of institutions in order to make them more responsive to feminist demands. To what extent are institutions open to dialogue with the feminist networks and to what extent they are committed to gender equality? To unravel these questions the relations between feminist networks and the State that resulted in gender mainstreaming in Brazil and Canada are the focus of this study.

Sarah Levesque-Walker - Community Gardening: An Effective Part of Ottawa's Food Security Strategy?

There is a growing body of literature on the benefits (both predicted and observed) of community gardening, which has recently been gaining popularity as a component of local food security strategies. Using feminist and critical analysis, this paper defines food insecurity, outlines the ways in which community gardening can contribute to food security strategies, and focuses on the Ottawa Community Garden Network in order to determine how well the group is addressing food security, which according to the Ottawa Food Security Group: exists when all people, at all times, have physical, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs, as well as to culturally acceptable food preferences... foods are produced as locally as possible, and their production and distribution are environmentally, politically, socially and economically just. (OFSG, 2001, np).

Community gardens have been identified as a strategy for marginalized community members to improve access to fresh, affordable, organic and culturally appropriate food, particularly since many community gardens are located in low-income downtown neighbourhoods. By combining elements of social and environmental activism, community gardening can be a potent act of political resistance, as marginalized groups organize to claim urban space for non-commercial purposes. In Ottawa, it is difficult to evaluate the degree to which the Community Garden Network is successfully addressing the food security needs of marginalized populations due to a lack of research on the topic. In conclusion, this paper points to gaps in the literature, and suggests further directions of study.

Brynne Sinclair-Waters - Restructuring Food: How the local food movement can challenge the neoliberalization of the global food system by articulating a general interest

This paper explores the local food movement's potential to articulate a general interest that could become the basis for the transformation of the global food system. Over the last few decades, the global food system has been neoliberalized through uneven deregulation motivated by corporate interests. The uneven impacts of neoliberalization have created vast inequalities as power and wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few multinational corporations. Up against global forces of destruction, disempowerment, and alienation, many people have turned to the local as an alternative. In North America, the turn to local food has been demonstrated by increasing popularity of farmers' markets, community supported agriculture and community gardens. The benefits of local food are clear: quality food that is fresher and tastes better. Its ability to lead to social transformation, however, is more uncertain. By viewing food through a broader lens that includes social, political and environmental concerns, the local food movement can promote values, such as community, identity, pleasure, and justice, which are in the interest of our whole society and are also desirable. Alternative food systems in which communities have more control over the processes that bring their food to their plate has the potential to benefit everyone, regardless of economic class. The local food movement is exciting because it has this potential to articulate a general interest, which could inform a new common sense about food and become the foundation of a more just, sustainable, and healthy food system.

Panel 3: The Other Bodies: Intersections of Sex and Ideologies

Discussant: Dawn Moore

Emerich Jo Daroya - Potatoes and Rice: Exploring the Racial Politics of Desire and Desirability in the Gay Community

Desires and desirability have an important role to play in theorizing sexuality, but this area has been largely ignored by scholars studying sexuality. Thus, to provide a study of the sociology of desire, I have adopted Green's (2008) concept of 'Erotic habitus' to examine the following: first, the dominant erotic habitus of gay men; second, the erotic habitus of Asian men; and third, the erotic habitus of 'rice queens' (i.e., white men who are particularly attracted to Asian men). Situating the analysis via Bourdieu's field, capital, and habitus, I employ critical discourse analysis of popular cultural vehicles in the gay community such as personal ads on Craigslist's Men Seeking Men section and Fab Magazine to find the social structural forces which produce what gay men consider to be desirable, which are also simultaneously reproduced through these vehicles. These structural forces put white, upper and middle-class, masculine and muscular men as the most desirable both by gay white and Asian men, creating hierarchies of desirability via 'erotic capital' which informs one's 'value' in the field of gay desire. Conversely, the rice queens' erotic habitus is largely informed by fetishizing 'Orientalist' stereotypes around the Asian male: having a small and smooth body, youthful, passive, and feminine. These stereotypes are used by Asian men as 'erotic capital' to gain access to white privilege. Thus, structural forces influence our desires confirming that race, gender, class, and the body play an important role in creating hierarchies within the gay community.

Ghadah Alrasheed - Narratives about the Other: A critical analysis of visual and textual representation of Afghanistan in two documentaries

For Foucault, knowledge is determined by a combination of social, institutional and discursive pressures and therefore, he found it necessary to shift from the subject to processes through which intrinsic patterns of discourses and institutional and cultural forces shape our perceptions of the 'real' (Foucault, 1991). The Foucauldian theoretical assumption about power being diffused and embodied in discursive 'regimes of truth' is necessary for the argument of the essay since the paper is an attempt to invoke different narratives that constitute the visual- textual grammar of two documentaries, the Beauty Academy of Kabul (2004) and Afghan Star (2008). Through critical reading of the two films, it is shown that the discourse and imagery of the documentaries are grounded in three ideological narratives: colonial legacy, "corporeal modernity" (Fluri, 2009) and political rhetoric. These narratives, however, are not separate from each other; they have been intertwined "in the long baking process of history" (Foucault, 1977, p. 79). The paper aims to illustrate, through this analysis, discursive patterns and visual techniques that characterize geopolitically and ideologically loaded presentations of the Other, and to add to feminist and post-colonial critiques of constructions and practices that shape epistemological and ontological conceptions of Afghanistan.

Alicia Baker - Cross-dressing Terrorists: Heteronormative Practices of Airport Profiling and Surveillance in North America

Conversations in trans studies have largely dealt with addressing oppressions that impact the daily functioning of gender variant people, with little attention paid to the increasing effect of post 9/11 securitization policies on those same individuals. This paper argues that trans and gender variant people are deeply entrenched within security discourses due to the heteronormative gender policing aspects of national security doctrine. Working within a North American context, the paper investigates the dichotomous role of gender variant individuals as both oppressed and oppressors by considering the social and economic factors involved in the practice of profiling and surveilling 'deviant' bodies within airports in a post 9/11 context.

Adopting an intersectional analysis which also considers race, class and (dis)ability, the paper concludes that current national security policies, as implemented within the practice of airport security, have a disproportionate impact on some gender variant bodies because of the state's attempt to regulate and maintain heteronormative gender and sexual boundaries.