

# Open Research Online

---

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

## Politicising mobility

### Book Section

How to cite:

Squire, Vicki (2011). Politicising mobility. In: Squire, Vicki ed. The Contested Politics of Mobility: Borderzones and Irregularity. Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics. Abingdon: Routledge.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2010 Taylor Francis

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415584616/>

---

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's [data policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

---

[oro.open.ac.uk](http://oro.open.ac.uk)

## Part I

### Politicizing Mobility

## **Politicizing Mobility**

*Vicki Squire*

The essays in the first part of *The Contested Politics of Mobility* speak to the theme of politicizing mobility. Specifically, each essay examines how mechanisms or technologies of control bring to bear different forms of politics, which work to shape and define the meaning and practice of both mobility and irregularity. Speaking to the question of how the movement of people – in particular the unauthorised or ‘irregular’ movement of people – is constituted as an object of and as a subject of politics, the essays thus provide answers to questions about how irregularity is produced, by whom and/or by what means irregularity is produced, and what the consequences or implications of such processes are. They also shed light on the ‘analytics of irregularity’ that was introduced in Chapter 1. In so doing, they allow us to see how mobility is politicised by national, international and transnational policing and security agencies through struggles of various forms.

There are various ways in which the struggles that constitute the politics control are conceptualised here, each of which speaks to the theme of irregularity in a distinctive way. Didier Bigo’s essay points to the politics of control as a mundane activity associated with security professionals and a ‘politics of unease’, with irregularity conceived of as a condition produced through processes of (ab)normalization. Paying similar attention to what might be called a micro-politics of control, William Walters draws attention to the importance of addressing the formation of technological zones, which turn on the ‘standardization of things’ as well as the (ab)normalization of migrants. Taking a somewhat different focus, Jonathan Inda examines how the

production of irregularity entails both the more dramatic moment of a workplace raid as well as everyday policing activities in an institutional context of ‘governing immigration through crime’. A more exceptionalist account of the politics of control is developed in Nicholas De Genova’s essay, which highlights the spectacular dimensions of Homeland Security measures by focusing on the linkage of anti-terrorist policies with the technology of deportation or deportability. Collectively, the essays thus tell us a complex story about contemporary struggles to master movement, extract labour and contain space. On the one hand, the essays warn us of the dangers of an ‘incipient Global Security State’ (De Genova) while, on the other, they remind us of the continuous ‘technological work’ that renders such a totalising project impossible (Walters). On the one hand, the essays tell us about a politics of control which divides subjects into the regular and the irregular through a wide range of mundane technologies and techniques (Bigo, Walters), while on the other hand they tell us about a politics of control that divides subjects through dramatic events and spectacular technologies (Inda, De Genova).

Although there are tensions in the stories and differences in approach that each of these essays present us with, when engaged productively they allow us to highlight some distinctive dimensions of the politicisation of mobility at the contemporary juncture. First, the essays indicate that the contemporary politics of control is constituted through various modes of *power*. Sovereign, pastoral, disciplinary and biopolitical powers come together in the contemporary context as part of the struggle to master movement, as Didier Bigo’s analysis of the development of ‘smart borders’ demonstrates. Second, the *agents* of control are multiple, and can often be unpredictable. As William Walters’ analysis shows, commercial, technological,

professional and political interests are played out in the standardization of e-passports. Even the parents or carers of young children can play a role in the standardizations through which technologies of control are constituted. Third, the *sites* where a politics of control is constituted are increasingly diffuse or dispersed. The home and the workplace are equally important to the contemporary politics control as the territorial border, as Jonathan Inda's essay on raiding indicates. Finally, the *effects* of control are not always as one might expect. Deportability and detainability, as much as deportation and deportation, are powerful mechanisms of control in and of themselves, as Nicholas De Genova's essay demonstrates. The production of irregular subjects through dataveillance, standardization, criminalization and precarization in this regard all come together as part of a politics of control – a politics of control that is heterogeneous in its constitution and that is crossed with a range of complexities and tensions.