

SC 2217 TRAVEL MATTERS

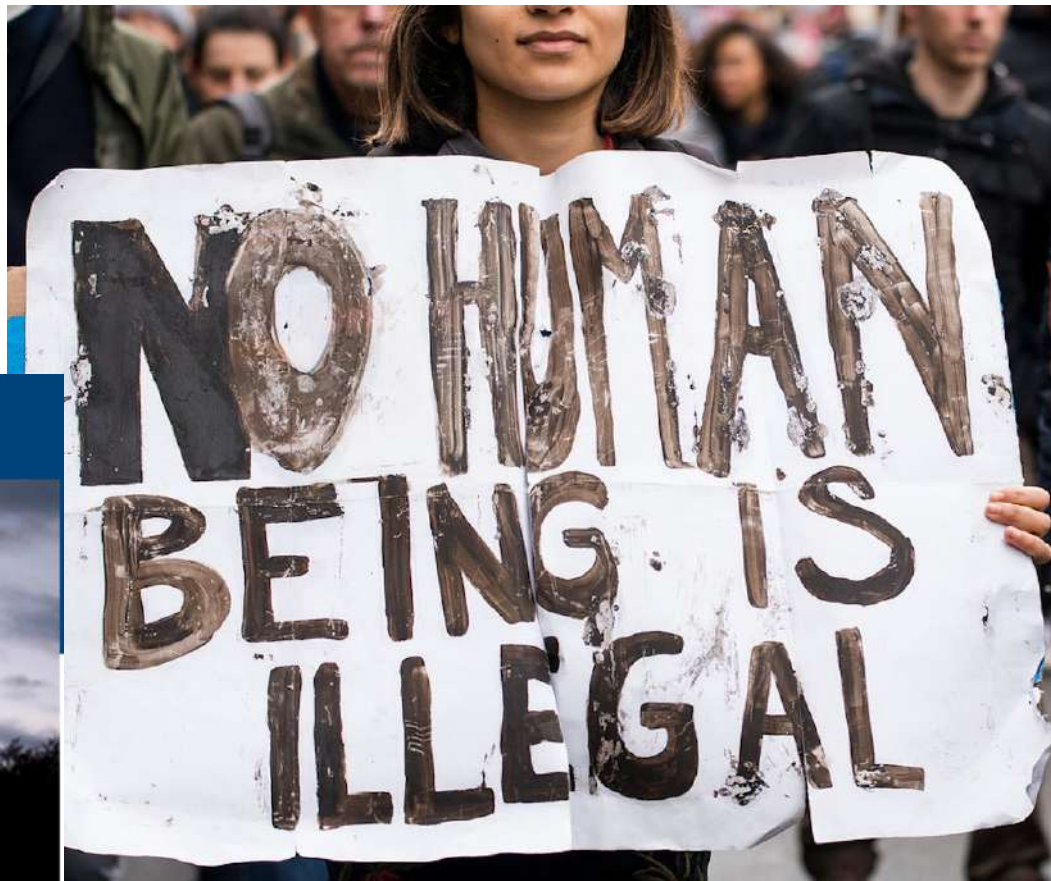
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Malaysia arrests over 20 illegal migrants

Group of 16, including women apprehended on way to Malaysia from Philippines

Riyaz ul Khaliq | 18.09.2019

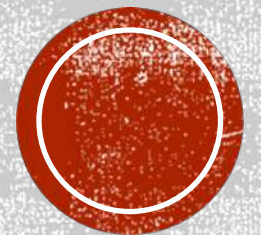


Thai authorities detain illegal Myanmar migrant workers

Arrests highlight plight of thousands of poor people from neighboring countries who depend on work in Thailand



WEEK 3: "ILLEGAL" MIGRANTS





BORDER THINKING

“This map of Southasia may seem upside down to some, but that is because we are programmed to think of north as top-of-page. This rotation is an attempt by the

editors of *Himal* to reconceptualise regionalism in a way that the focus is on the people rather than the nation-states. This requires nothing less than turning our minds downside-up.”

- *Himal Southasian*, 1996



neat flat surfaces are clearly separated from each other -

but mosaic of villages/town

Cultures are similar near the border
as compared to across the country

- but considered different countries

BORDER THINKING

- Borders on the political map have become **naturalized**, creating the idea of an even, **flat surface world** = national geographic framework
- **Borders shape perception** of the world in terms of social, cultural, political meaning rather than other way around
- Where there are borders, there will be “illegal” border crossing
- **Violation/questioning of borders** upsets this “ethical and aesthetic norm” (Khosravi, 322)





The “illegal” traveller

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MIGRANT ILLEGALITY

“‘illegality’ (much like citizenship),” De Genova
argues, “is a juridical status that entails a social
relation to the state” and is thus a “pre-eminently
political identity” (2002:422).

border transgressors are extremely vulnerable as they are fully under control of the smuggler because they have no protection from the state



MIGRANT ILLEGALITY

■ Legal-bureaucratic status

- Overstaying
- Unauthorized entry
- Violating conditions of visa/permit

■ Identity or qualities of persons

- “victims” of smuggling or trafficking
- criminals/villains as law-breakers

■ Lived experiences of migrants

- Existential uncertainties
- Social relations
- Creative agencies



WHAT WORK DOES "MIGRANT ILLEGALITY" DO ?

THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF LAW

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

"Everything Must Match": Detection, Deception, and Migrant Illegality in the India-Bangladesh Borderlands

Sahana Ghosh ✉

First published: 25 September 2019 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13313> | Citations: 3



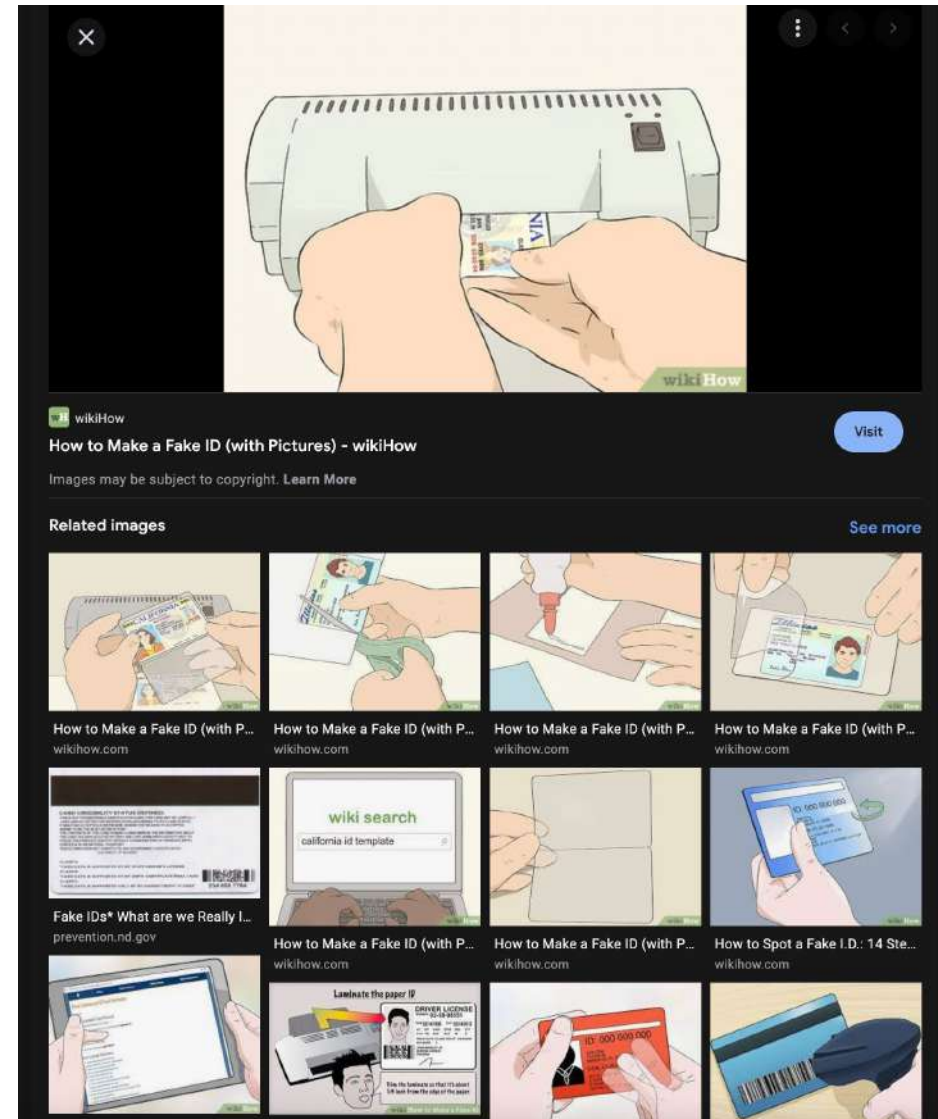
SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY OF MIGRATION

1. Lived experiences from migrants' points of view
 - Of state
 - Of range of actors e.g. police, brokers, moneylenders, friends, family
2. Socio-cultural meanings of mobility and immobility
3. Stories show layers in STRUCTURES and PROCESSES
4. Connects micro with macroanalysis



“AUTHENTIC” DOCUMENTS

- legal vs undocumented
- Documents and individuals must match
- Identity produced by performance
- Documents alone do not guarantee protection from suspicion or policing
- Legibility comes from social relations AND documents





**BORDER
CROSSING AS
■ PERFORMANCE**





Role of police/law enforcement actors

Status is fluid, not fixed, of both people and documents →

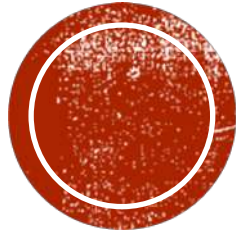
“Documents are never entirely knowable and never completely transparent” (Reeves, p. 509)

A space of relations – possibility & uncertainty – instead of a fixed, unambiguous line

BECKY'S JOURNEY (DIR. SINE PLAMBECH, 2014)



1. Between legal and licit
2. The line between state and non-state actors are blurred in the margins of the law
3. There is profit/money to be made!
4. Smuggling vs trafficking
5. Productive of identity, opportunity
6. Law and the absence of protections



Smuggling, smugglers, business of clean fakes

Role of documents, documentary regimes and
☞ rule of law” in normalizing suspicion towards
ethnically and racially marked bodies

☞ Documents expand uncertainty and gray
spaces rather than eliminating them

Exploitation of labor and reproduction of socio-
economic inequalities at local & global scales is
tied to “migrant illegality”

Fear of immobility, exclusion, loss of rights
creates further vulnerabilities

UNCERTAINTY
AS
VULNERABILITY



UNCERTAINTY AS PRODUCTIVE

“The border ritual reproduces the meaning and order of the state system.” (Khosravi, p. 330) – uncertainty allows the state to perform its strength/sovereign power

Migrants display tremendous creativity, agency, and determination in pursuing desires and better lives

Gray space shows blurred lines between legal/illegal – creates possibilities

☞ Staying legal' less about fixity, more about successful socially-grounded performances

