

Negotiating Strangeness: Narratives of Forced Return Migration and the Construction of Identities

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Abstract : Historically, the movement of people has been the subject of socio-political and economic regulatory policies which congeal to regulate human mobility and establish geopolitical and spatial identities and borderlands. As migratory practices evolved, so too has the problematization associated with movement, migration and citizenship. The emerging trends have led to active development of immigration technology governing human mobility and the naming of migratory practices. One such named phenomenon is 'deportation' or the forced removal of individuals from their adopted country. Deportation, has gained much attention within the human mobility landscape in the past twenty years following the September 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. In a reactionary move, several metropolitan countries, including Canada and the United Kingdom enacted or reviewed immigration laws which further enabled the removal of foreign born criminals to the land of their birth in the global south. Existing studies fall short of understanding the multiple textures of the forced returned migration experiences and the social injustices resulting from deportation displacement. This study brings together indigenous research methodologies through the use of participatory action research and social work with returned migrants in Trinidad and Tobago to uncover the experiences of displacement of deported nationals. The study explores the experiences of negotiating life as a 'stranger' and how return has influenced the construction of identities of returned nationals. Findings from this study reveal that deportation has led to inequalities and facilitated 'othering' of this group within their own country of birth. The study further highlighted that deportation leads to circuits of dispossession, and perpetuates inequalities. This study provides original insights into the way returned migrants negotiate, map and embody 'strangeness' and manage their return to a soil they consider unfamiliar and alien.

Keywords : stranger, alien geographies, displacement, deportation, negotiating strangeness, identity, otherness, alien landscapes

Conference Title : ICMDHS 2015 : International Conference on Migration, Development and Human Security

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : January 23-24, 2015