Public Lecture Series Spring 2018

Thursday, 26 April 2018

Asylum Determination in Europe: Ethnographic Perspectives
Prof. Nick Gill, Geography Department, University of Exeter

Discussant: Prof. Christin Achermann, Centre for Migration Law and Center for the Understanding of Social Processes, University of Neuchâtel

18:15 – 19:45 h
University of Neuchâtel, Rue Abram-Louis-Breguet 2, Room R.113.

Abstract
How are claims for international protection under asylum law from some of the most marginalized people in the world being handled in Europe? This lecture adopts an ethnographic approach to this question, drawing on a collection of ethnographies of asylum determination soon to be published as an edited book. Ethnography of asylum determination offers a window into a complex, obfuscated and politicized area of law that is central to foundational debates about the viability of the European Union and the moral obligations that Western developed states owe to vulnerable outsiders. Ethnographic approaches to law have the potential to destabilize hidden assumptions and reveal
concealed inconsistencies in legal processes and concepts. Laws tend to give the impression of coherence and uniformity, which can be misleading, and unraveled by careful, intensive observation. Asylum determination in Europe faces the tension between fairness and efficiency, and between consistency and variety, among plenty of other challenges. By examining these tensions from a range of disciplinary viewpoints, it is possible to lay bare the confusion, improvisation, inconsistency, complexity and emotional turmoil inherent to the process.

Curriculum Vitae
Nick Gill is a Professor of Human Geography at the University of Exeter, UK. He is a political geographer whose work focuses on issues of justice and injustice, especially in the context of border control, mobility and its confiscation, incarceration and the law. His work is highly inter-disciplinary and he has published academic work in anthropology, economics, law, sociology and migration studies, as well as in geography. Gill believes in the effectiveness of multiple methodologies and employs interviews, ethnography, focus groups and quantitative analysis in his work. His current research project, ASYFAIR, examines consistency and inconsistency in asylum determination in Europe.

Selected Publications