



Public Lecture

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Wednesday, 22 January 2020

Displacement and Exile: Narrative and Knowing

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**Prof. Omid Tofighian, University of Sidney and Behrouz Boochani,
Iranian-Kurdish journalist, writer and human rights defender**

**Discussants: Dr. Annika Lindberg, University of Bern and
Dr. Lisa Marie Borrelli, HES-SO Valais-Wallis**

18:15 – 19:45 h

Location: University of Neuchâtel, Avenue du 1er-Mars 26, Room B32.

Abstract

Literature, films, artworks, and journalism are used to offer unique insight into the lived experience and endurance of people subject to racialized government policies, intersectional discrimination, and systemic exclusion. They introduce unique philosophical standpoints and act as critical interlocutors in debates pertaining to border politics. This discussion between Behrouz Boochani and Omid Tofighian focuses on the experiences and knowledge produced under conditions of displacement and exile and addresses the complexity of these experiences when they intersect with imprisonment in state-run refugee detention centers - particularly the phenomenon of indefinite detention.

The discussion introduces narratives and critical perspectives often discussed, analyzed, and criticized but rarely prioritized in public discourse and silenced by prominent media platforms. The dialogue provides insight into the book 'No Friend but the Mountains: Writings From Manus Prison' (Picador 2018) written by Boochani who was held in indefinite detention on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea from 2013 to 2019 as part of the Australian government's policies on refugees. Boochani and Tofighian, the translator of the book, discuss how the work presents an extraordinary aesthetic, philosophical, and political challenge to think through and interrogate the mechanics of detention within a framework of colonial dispossession and the neo-colonial strategies that maintain and reinforce border violence.

Curriculum Vitae Behrouz Boochani

Behrouz Boochani is Adjunct Associate Professor in Social Sciences at UNSW, author, and journalist that has been incarcerated as a political prisoner by the Australian government on Manus Island. The presented book 'No Friend but the Mountains: Writing From Manus Prison' has won numerous awards including the 2019 Victorian Prize for Literature. He is also a non-resident Visiting Scholar at the Sydney Asia Pacific Migration Centre (SAPMiC), University of Sydney, and Honorary Member of PEN International. He won an Amnesty International Australia 2017 Media Award, the Diaspora Symposium Social Justice Award, the Liberty Victoria 2018 Empty Chair Award, and the Anna Politkovskaya award for journalism. Boochani is co-director (with Arash Kamali Sarvestani) of the 2017 feature-length film 'Chauka, Please Tell Us The Time', collaborator on Nazanin Sahamizadeh's play 'Manus', and associate producer for Hoda Afshar's video installation 'Remain' (2018).

Curriculum Vitae Omid Tofighian

Omid Tofighian is an award-winning lecturer, researcher, and community advocate, combining philosophy with interests in citizen media, popular culture, displacement, and discrimination. He is Adjunct Lecturer in the School of the Arts and Media, UNSW, Honorary Research Associate for the Department of Philosophy, University of Sydney, faculty at Iran Academia, and campaign manager for 'Why Is My Curriculum White? - Australasia'.

Selected Publications

- Behrouz Boochani (Author) and Omid Tofighian (Translator) (2018). *No Friend but the Mountains: Writings From Manus Prison*. Sidney: Picador.
- Omid Tofighian (2016). *Myth and Philosophy in Platonic Dialogues*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Omid Tofighian (2019). Displacement, Exile and Incarceration Commuted into Cinematic Vision, *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* 18, 91–106.