



Book Review — *Deportation Limbo: State Violence and Contestations in the Nordics*, by Annika Lindberg.

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Annika Lindberg's *Deportation Limbo: State Violence and Contestations in the Nordics* is an anthropology of regimes of deportation. Lindberg takes Denmark and Sweden as paradigms of the highly bureaucratised Nordic welfare state, situating political ethnographies of institutions and individuals within broader narratives of state violence. The emergent claim is that deportation in these countries is not the result of policies or systemic technical failures but a form of state violence; the continuation of policies of deportation despite clear ineffectiveness and, as Lindberg depicts, brutal consequences, is Lindberg's setting. The result: "deportation limbo". This "deportation limbo", the central theoretical concern of the book, describes the experience of deportees in the Nordics. Lindberg breaks down this term into a number of key components: a liminal legality, a spatial liminality and a temporal indeterminacy. With this framework, Lindberg effectively straddles the gap between multiple fields of study, bridging anthropologies of law, space and temporality with deportation studies, border-migration studies and studies of state violence. Situating this case within the existing literature, Lindberg produces a comprehensive image of the deportation experience, contrasting with great effect the "state fantasies of effective enforcement" and the "violent realities they generate" (p. 11). The task of the book, then, is to effectively motivate the notion of "limbo" as a form of state violence.

Lindberg's methodological approach is, as described, somewhat hybridised; she visits detention centres, deportation camps and welfare offices, interviewing prison officers, migration officials, police, NGO staff and a mixture of im-migrants and asylum seekers. In drawing from such diverse sources, Lindberg supplements the argument that the state violence at play is totalising, bleeding into every facet of life for migrants and those

working in migration. How this “slow violence” is enacted, normalised and justified is sketched out by Lindberg in great detail at every level of society save for the very top. The “patchworks of ethnographic observations and engagements” (p. 19) leads to a broad view of deportation and effectively probes those on both sides of the border. The sections on Lindberg’s shadowing of frontline workers in detention camps are highly effective in evoking sympathy in the reader whilst also contributing conceptually to understandings of the legal, spatial and temporal limbo. In spite of this, Lindberg appears to miss the final piece of the deportation puzzle: the involvement of politicians or policy makers into her ethnographic approach to propose a complete view of the deportation system.

Subtly present within this multifaceted investigation is a question of liveability: liveability for those who are threatened by deportation and forced into the aforementioned limbo, but also the question of the lives of those who are the enforcers of the deportation regime, the arbiters of that limbo. In the final chapters of the book, having moved comprehensively through a series of institutions, Lindberg turns to the effects of this violence in a psychological sense, using the term “colonise” to describe the power of the violence over its participants. Lindberg’s application of Césaire’s famous framing of colonisation as damaging to both the colonised and coloniser is worked neatly into her conceptual apparatus. Sustaining order as a necessary evil has, she claims, become a developed supposition of many frontline workers who enforce deportation. Despite investment into humanising reforms, the slow violence appears to have a way of creeping in. In line with Césaire, Lindberg’s ethnography could, as mentioned, push to higher policy making positions. Although it is unlikely that honest accounts of state violence would emerge through this method, it would be productive to see whether strands of necessity that are found in frontline works are present or whether policy failures are well accounted for by policy makers.

Overall, Lindberg effectively proves that the deportation limbo can be seen as a form of state violence. The slow violence that has a corrosive effect on both those that are the victims and those who are the upholders of it is explored in sufficient depth; the connection of this case to extensive anthropological understandings of time and place on the other hand and theories of state on the other is highly successful. Lindberg’s synthesis of these modes is the main success of the book, without which ‘limbo as

violence' may not be entirely convincing. By embedding the concept of limbo, played out as the torture of waiting on account of critical state failures, Lindberg shows a tangible form of violence against the deportees. It is the accumulation of the effects of suspension and indeterminacy that play out here in full force.

Lindberg's work appears at a time in which deportation studies is of paramount importance. The dismantling of the "myth of Nordic innocence" to reveal a critical mishandling of state powers that has disillusioned many of those participating in its systems is of pressing concern, both politically and academically. Of particular significance is Lindberg's straddling of multiple fields of academic study, the major voices of each of which are accounted for in this text; this ethnographic dimension may well be applied to other regions and political contexts to great effect. Lindberg's framework is productive for further studies in the emerging discipline of deportation studies. Further, the placement of this text in conversation with other major proponents of state violence research points to a number of new avenues for research. The book is therefore of great value to any scholar interested in the fields of migration studies or as modern application of diverse ethnographies to contribute to a theoretically justified whole.

LEWIS EBERT is a doctoral student at the University of Oxford, where he previously completed his BA and MPhil. His research focuses on the historical development of steppe cultures in Mongolia, with particular attention to the intersections of cuisine, medicine, and cosmology. His DPhil thesis examines the period of Mongol rule in China, analysing how the influx of steppe cultural practices reshaped established dietary and medical frameworks. Through a close reading of contemporary dietary manuals, the project combined textual, historical, and anthropological methodologies to reconstruct the culinary cosmologies of the period and to trace their lineages into the present. His current book project with Bloomsbury Publishing, *Food Cultures of Mongolia: Cuisine, Customs, Issues*, offers a culinary history of Mongolia, tracing foodways from the Bronze Age to the modern era. His broader engagement with Eurasian history has led him to research across multiple dimensions of steppe culture, including religion, political history, and art history, on which he has published and presented widely. Underpinning his work is a sustained interest in the cosmological relationships between ritual, culture, and everyday practice on the steppe, which continues to inform his interdisciplinary historical approach.