

I'm not going to try to convince you that indefinite immigration detention is wrong. We all know that, that's why we're here. I'm not even going to try to convince you that immigration detention is wrong. I suspect that most people in this room also believe that too. But there are a lot of people we need to convince out there. So we need to think about: How is it that indefinite detention can be OK? And more particularly, what kinds of arguments would the person in the street use to say it's OK? What does that tell us about the tools we need in our conversations, not just about indefinite detention, but about immigration more generally? I want to suggest that facts are not enough, and that we need to encourage completely new ways of thinking about immigration. Too often immigration is represented as a competition for the privileges of membership. But what is bad for migrants is often also bad for citizens, especially the low waged and the unemployed. Supporting migrants and asylum seekers is not only about solidarity, it is about shared interests. These new ways of thinking and doing politics aren't going to come from the universities, or detention centres, or migrant groups, or human rights organisations, or political parties on their own. We need to do this together.

So let's caricature a response that explains why detention is necessary. Typically this effectively blames people who are detained for their own detention: we can't have rapists and murderers stalking our streets, we should lock them up until they leave the country... Immigration detention is not really indefinite, this claim goes; detainees are effectively imprisoning themselves, because they can always go 'home'. It's their own fault that they are detained.

You'll know some of the facts here: that more than half of the people in immigration detention are asylum seekers not violent criminals, and that many of those detained after serving a criminal offence are people who have been brought up in the UK. But we should reflect on what the prevalence of this argument tells us about the association of migrants with criminality, and, relatedly, how much easier it is to deny rights to people who have served or are serving time in prison. This is strange because you might think that these are precisely the people that are most likely to need to have have recourse to human rights.

This kind of argument is in a lot of different situations to suggest that we are all happily choosing to do lots of things we don't actually want to do like going to work or shopping in Tesco's. It does this by ignoring the many factors that constrain and shape our lives, and, in the case of detention, by ignoring the fourth wall which is often fear of return. As we know many people who have been refused asylum are nevertheless in fear of their lives. And this is not only the case for asylum seekers. At least five people who were deported from the UK have been murdered in Jamaica in the past 15 months.

This violence is usually depicted as a product of other countries' histories, dictators, and cultures. Certain regions are imagined as inherently violent and uncivilised. It is bad luck if you happen to come from them. Even though the UK and Europe are directly implicated in the foreign policy that motivates flight from states like Syria, Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq, which have been subjected to sustained foreign bombing and destruction, there is little sense of the duty owed to the ordinary people who have carried the cost. And this is not only confined to these states. Regional destabilisation, emplacing and propping up dictators, profiting from arms sales, our leaders, political and business, have been busy at all these activities. Furthermore, as well as the direct violence of dictatorial rule and war, there is the longer, slower and entrenched violence of zones of sacrifice, areas where other people have to accept the necessity of extraction, its pollution, environmental degradation and destruction, or the dumping of waste and filth in waterways, sea and earth. In the past few weeks hundreds of people in three cities in Nigeria have been killed in oil pipeline and tanker explosions. One person described it 'as hell on earth'. Bad luck. You were born there.

Bad luck too when it comes to wages and working conditions. In the last fifty years we have seen a massive shift of production processes, of making things, to low wage economies. The basics of life like clothes are affordable for low income people here, because the making of them has been moved to places where people are paid below subsistence wages and where they do not have the right to organise. Today if you earn more than £26,800 you are in the global 1% of income earners. So should we be surprised that people want to work and earn a hard currency to feed their loved ones? These shifts follow a pattern with its origins in centuries of colonial plunder and exploitation. Their history is our history, a continuation of old relations and practices. As Clara Osagiede, an RMT organiser of London Underground cleaners who lived as an undocumented worker in Britain for many years put it: 'You can't rob me and then call me a thief'.

But Clara is wrong, you can rob me and call me a thief, and people do. Histories of robbery are forgotten and current political and economic relationships are ignored or naturalised. Every year the law firm Henley and Partners produces a list that orders the passports and visa free entry, from the passport that offers most visa free entries, to the passport that offers least. The UK is fifth with visa free entry to 185 countries. Bottom of the list? Afghanistan and Iraq with 30, though they are preceded by Somalia and Syria with 32.

People have moved for good reasons with long histories. This is the fourth wall that locks people into immigration detention and gives the lie to the three walls argument. World Bank research has found that 150 years ago, when income figures first started being collected, the key factor that affected your position in global inequality is whether you were a worker or a boss, but that today the key factor is where you are born. It also is the key factor that determines whether you will survive childhood and what your life span will be.

Our economies and our histories are all interconnected, and this is reflected in our societies. So far I've been arguing that wealthy countries have a responsibility to admit people who are looking to better their lives or to escape persecution. But that's different from common interest. What would British people share with 'migrants'? After all British people living abroad rarely think of themselves as 'migrants' and certainly not 'illegal immigrants' whatever their status in practice. They are expats. The middle class, wealthy and white may experience immigration controls as collateral damage, but they do not imagine themselves as the primary target of controls, and very often they are right. Except that some British people can be described as 'migrants' even if they have never crossed a border in their lives. The everyday terminology of 'second generation' migrant tells us that migration is bound up with ideas of race.

The hostility to migration in many states today cannot be understood independently of migration (and asylum) as to do with race. Once migration is no longer at the border it becomes 'race', and minority ethnic citizens are often already turned into migrants. Perhaps the paramount example of this in Europe are Roma people who may be EU citizens, yet nevertheless they are often removed/deported as criminals (France), nomads (Italy), or homeless (UK). In the US work by Jaqueline Stevens (2011) has found that thousands of US citizens have been (illegally) deported. Typically these deported citizens share characteristics with people who are recognised as vulnerable to signing false confessions: Black, with poor literacy and mental health challenges. And of course we have our own home grown experience of this with the so-called Windrush Scandal. The lives of large numbers of Black British citizens and long term legal residents who had lived in the UK for decades were destroyed – evicted, denied medical treatment, refused entry to the UK, summarily sacked, detained – because they were unable to demonstrate their citizenship. The hostile environment, coupled with the rolling out of responsibility for immigration enforcement to a whole range of different non-immigration

actors: not only employers but drivers, landlords, registrars, public service providers, even academics, has had significant consequences for BAME people.

But it also has consequences for all UK residents. You have to show your passport to prove you are NOT a migrant. We have had to get used to showing passports in a wide range of situations. This can be difficult for some people, and there is evidence that working class white people who do not have passports have found landlords will not rent properties to them because they cannot prove they have a so-called 'right to rent'. This has led to concerns about the prospect of similar issues arising with respect to EU citizens and settled status in two or three decades' time. Citizens are affected by immigration law and citizens too can find themselves caught up in the immigration net and this is not confined to the UK. Immigration enforcement bears down disproportionately not only on minority ethnic citizens, but also on those who don't have money. Consider the income demands that are now standard across most EU member states that require citizens to have minimum earnings before being able to be joined by third country national partners and by their children.

Citizens are also affected by immigration law as a consequence of the requirement to enforce. Across Europe the criminalisation of citizens via immigration laws has been increasing. There has been a significant rise in what the Institute of Race Relations has called, 'crimes of solidarity'. Journalists working with Open Democracy have found 250 cases of citizens in Europe charged with providing food, water and shelter to migrants over 5 years, but worryingly at least one hundred were arrested, charged or investigated in 2018. That is the number of reported cases is escalating.

Immigration law affects all of us. But also it is only one of the multiple ways in which people's movement has been guided and constrained over the centuries. What are immigration controls but attempts to control the mobility of the poor, to tie certain people to places, albeit allegiance is now owed to nation states rather than lords. Even before the introduction of welfare states, in many European states poor relief was limited to parish residents and the poor were liable to be 'moved on' if there was any suggestion that they might become unemployed, stay long enough to make a claim on the parish, or have a baby that would be born in the parish and therefore the parish's responsibility.

While a citizen may have a right to be present on the territory that does not give them the right to be in any public space. Citizens who are homeless or who beg can be prohibited access to certain spaces or moved on. This is often done at local authority level: in Barcelona for example, begging by citizens can be prosecuted as obstructing the "peaceful free movement" of citizens. To allow some citizens their rights of free movement, others are immobilised, fenced in or fenced out.

In the UK unemployed citizens are often considered not mobile enough. Stuck in housing estates or rural areas, not prepared to get on their bike they must be prodded off their sofas and into employment. These prods can be delivered by welfare benefit requirements, which demand a person be prepared to travel a certain distance to work, but at the same time, moving around too much can raise issues when one wants to make a claim on the state. Indeed, access to the welfare state has replaced the levers of immigration controls as a means of controlling the international mobility of certain EU citizens. To deter non-earning people who do not have the resources to support themselves, complex restrictions on access to certain non-contributory benefits are imposed. Importantly returning nationals are not exempt from these restrictions – they may be legal citizens but they are no longer local residents.

2011 Localism Act – hostility to 'migrants' displaced on to citizens.

Our challenge is to draw out the connections between the crises of increasing European poverty and associated popular anger and resentment on the one hand, and immigration controls on the other. Fantasy citizenship benefits from the affective pull of the nation, from which the state derives legitimacy. In an age of precarity it seems that the nation has an even stronger affective pull and worker solidarities can be difficult to generate in a gig economy and accelerating inequalities at all scales. Thus the coupling of economic squeeze and immigration is always in danger of being reduced to a simple message: 'We must look after our own first. We must first attend to the housing, benefit and health needs of our population. Sorry but there is just not enough to go around'. The 'we' here is the citizen talking across the border, but in addresses within the border, the 'we' may be the taxpayer, or residents in a municipality, or homeowners.

Promises of strong control over immigration appeal to the hope of a national labour market and economy, a stable cohesive national society and representative democratic politics. These hopes are eminently understandable, but they will not be attained by exerting ever tighter control over immigration. Indeed, the risk is that the obsession engendered by immigration only increases exploitation in labour markets, destabilises neighbourly relations and caricatures democratic politics. Mobility and international migration are indications of our interdependence; the challenge is how to make these interdependencies visible. Perhaps we can start from the insight that what is bad for migrants is not good for citizens; indeed, it is often bad for citizens as well.

*A lunchtime talk given by Professor Bridget Anderson at Kingston during Refugee Tales 2019*