

On the Ghostly Presence of Refugees in between spaces

Stathis Papastathopoulos (University of Ioannina)

The aim of these presentation is to discuss emergent issues about the public policies and social conditions that make and unmake the presence of the Refugees in and between the Refugee camps/ shelters and public spaces. By employing the concept of "differential inclusion" (Yen Le Espiritu, 2003), we can think refugees movements as a quasi-presence that depends on their inclusion as a "second-class citizens", as a "subordinate others" or "outcast population" in the European host societies. How can we conceptualize the presence of a person that is not granted citizenship, is in the process of asylum application, living in a camp, in a hotel or an apartment, over or inside the limits of a foreign town, that doesn't speaks the local language, that lacks knowledge of the local conventions (a stranger) and other resources to organize his/her movement? What questions does this ghostly presence open for the local societies? The silent passing of a refugee family in the street? Her/his waiting outside a medical office in a camp? A row of boys pushing empty baby strollers inside a camp? A silent protest of families in a city square? How the uncanny presence of the refugees can defamiliarize what is taken as our "our homely space"? How the unmet or unlimited obligation of hospitality demands an unlimited or unmet destabilization of the host? Rethinking public spaces as common spaces? The "double absence" (Abdelmalek Sayad, 1987) of the refugee from the society of origin and the "welcoming" society, can be reconceptualized as a productive haunting that claims a "revènge", a comeback on the transparency, on the obviousness of the social spaces we inhabit.