

Life and Death on the Balkan Route: Traces and haunting

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Violent borders and routes of forced displacement are spaces of disappearance and haunting. The violence that is enacted in enforcing border policies at EU's external borders in Hungary, Greece and Italy, and its externalized border practices in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, have long resulted in physical harm, death and disappearance of people seeking refuge. Throughout the 'Balkan Route' to and through the EU, abandoned refugee camps, rivers, forests and railways conceal violence - traces of those who drown in river borders are buried in unmarked graves in Bosnia; Greek island camps are demolished or burned, and the left-behind spaces are 'dememorialised'. In this panel, we examine how violence against people on the move also includes the processes of attempted erasure - the concealment of border deaths, the left-behind camps - but also in traces left behind. The panel uses the themes of hauntology, disappearance and trace (Fiddler et al, 2022) to examine how often everyday spaces such as rivers, forests and camps witness spectacles of horror and loss, border violence and dememorialisation (Sendyka, 2016). We examine what disappears as these spaces fall back from public view, lost in the memories of those who still exist or in the stories of the lives that have passed through. In doing so, we also turn our attention to the traces, practices and witnessing by people on the move and solidarity activists, as attempts at place-making and countering the erasure of border violence.

Membership

Track Classification: South East Europe Working Group