Island upon island, sovereignty upon sovereignty: mapping the carceral archipelago through island detentions

Border enforcement has shifted spatially into an enforcement archipelago that operates onshore and off. In the archipelago, states increasingly govern intimacy and isolation through detention. The Island Detention Project explores struggles over migration that occur on islands where transnational migrants and asylum-seekers choose to land or find themselves towed as they travel between regions. Fieldsites include highly politicized, publicized, and liminal locations where policies and practices pertaining to asylum-seeking, border enforcement, and detention unfold: Lampedusa, Christmas Island, Guam, and Saipan. There, migrants enter into periods of extended spatial, temporal, and legal limbo as they are processed. This talk discusses findings of research in these locations, building on recent scholarship on the transformation of geographies of sovereignty, with particular attention to struggles over sovereignty on islands. Biopolitical and sovereign power operate at the intersection of political status and legal status for those detained on islands. Detention facilities thus function as islands upon islands, prompting exploration of relationships between interiority and exteriority, onshore and offshore, containment and transgression, legality and sovereignty.

Alison Mountz is Associate Professor of Geography and Canada Research Chair in Global Migration at the Balsillie School of International Affairs and Wilfrid Laurier University. Prior to moving to Canada, she spent eight years on faculty of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. Her current research examines struggles over border enforcement, asylum, and detention. In 2010 Mountz published *Seeking Asylum: Human Smuggling and Bureaucracy at the Border* (University of Minnesota Press). In this monograph, she examines how Canada and other countries respond to human smuggling with changes in border enforcement. *Seeking Asylum* was awarded the 2011 Meridian Book Prize from the Association of American Geographers.