

Master's Thesis theme: Borders, Citizenship, Statelessness and Existence-in-between

Contact: jasnea.sarma@geo.uzh.ch

Borders, citizenship, statelessness, and existence in-between



Centuries of border-demarcation, conquest, colonization, sub-division, settlement, partition, and militarisation gave rise to modern nation-states; and with it, the identity and idea of the 'citizen.' Borders are not only at the margins of the nation-state; but also at the heart of questions about who constitutes a legal, legitimate citizen – where the moral and legal rights of a certain group/community can be guaranteed, but also stripped away on allegations of their existence as 'outsiders' living 'illegally' on the so-called wrong side of the border or citizenship regime.

Master's theses on this topic will examine the contemporary limits of citizenship. What does it mean to be living members of a specific society, state, and territory, bounded by specific borders? What does modern citizenship exclude, and who gets to enjoy citizenship(s), why, and where? Who gets caught in between living as citizens, asylum seekers and refugees; why and where? What do passports enable, and what/who do they disable? How is citizenship tied to colonialism, slavery, and border-making? How do immigrants and diasporas relate to emplaced and emotional citizenship? How do majoritarian societies define citizenship? Can one be a citizen, but emotionally stateless?

The master's thesis will engage critical literature on borders, colonialism, citizenship, statelessness, migration, and concepts like liminality, emotional citizenship, and precarity. A Masters thesis may focus on single or multiple contexts to explore the questions above. For example, a thesis may focus on the struggles of 1.9 million people almost stateless in the Indian state of Assam, 2 million Rohingya living in Coz Bazaar as stateless refugees, and the treatment in Europe of citizen refugees from certain places (e.g. Ukraine) compared to other states (e.g. Syrians), Italy's stateless Roma or children born to non-Italian parents, or asylum seekers in Switzerland or Europe.

Students can use ethnographic fieldwork, historical analysis, or discourse analysis, or a combination of these. Theis that highlight the lived histories, words and voices of migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and non-citizens are encouraged. For fieldwork in Asia, students can be linked with journalists and organizations NGOs in India, China, Bangladesh and Myanmar through the supervisor. Discourse analysis with documents/interviews with Geneva-based organizations and EU-based ethnographic fieldwork is also encouraged.

Key texts

- Jones, Reece (2014): *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*. New York: Verso. [Intro, Chapter 1 and Conclusion]
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. (1987). *Borderlands: The New Mestiza – La Frontera* (1. ed, Version 1. ed). San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Uddin, Nasir (2020). *The Rohingya: An Ethnography of 'Subhuman' Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Language: English

Supervision: Please get in touch with **Jasnea Sarma** (jasnea.sarma@geo.uzh.ch) if you are interested to write a Masters thesis on this topic.