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Islands Within Islands
Detention as Archipelagic Sovereignty, Art as Resistance to Invisibilization

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Abstract
This essay explores the global proliferation of detention of non-citizens on islands, and film as an art form arising within and as resistance to these detentions. The empirical growth in island detention challenges conventional understandings of the locations and images of international borders, in an effort to hide from view the enforcement mechanisms designed to exclude people from seeking asylum or livelihood on the sovereign territories of wealthy nation-states. Maritime borders and island detention facilities are often distant from mainland territories and therefore out of sight for national and global publics. Resistance to island detention has come in the form of art. Mapping the global proliferation of island detention, I discuss the idea of archipelagic sovereignty as the operation of power across these sites. I explore art emerging from people confined in detention, focusing on the feature-length film Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time (2017). The work demonstrates the notion that through art, ideas, people, collective resistance, and social movements migrate globally to contest state efforts to contain people. This essay contributes to existing knowledge an examination of the notion that art can document, bear witness, and also contest the violence of remote detention on islands.

Introduction

This essay explores the global proliferation of detention of non-citizens on islands. The empirical growth in island detention challenges conventional understandings of the locations and images of international borders, in an effort to hide from view the enforcement mechanisms designed to exclude people from seeking asylum or livelihood on the sovereign territories of wealthy nation-states. Maritime borders and island detention facilities are often distant from mainland territories and therefore out of sight of national and global publics. As such, research about and political resistance on islands as sites of bordering and exclusion require creativity, and indeed creative resistance to island detention has come in the form of art.[1] I discuss the idea of archipelagic sovereignty as the operation of power across a global constellation of sites designed to confine human mobility, and argue that such occlusion underscores the importance of art about these places, often emerging from people being confined on islands.

I begin by briefly mapping the global proliferation of island detention with examples drawn primarily from

countries that detain on islands, including Italy, Australia, and the United States. This proliferation engenders discussion of archipelagic sovereignty at work across these sites. As enforcement expands offshore, routes to safety shrink, and islands come to the fore. I then turn to art emerging from people confined in detention, focusing discussion on the recent feature-length film *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time* (2017), by Iranian filmmakers in exile Arash Kamali Sarvestani and Behrouz Boochani. I discuss the film and its screening on my university campus. The film demonstrates the notion that through art, ideas, people, collective resistance, and social movements migrate globally, contesting state efforts to contain people. This essay contributes to existing knowledge an examination of the notion that art can emerge to document, bear witness, and also contest the violence of remote detention on islands. This requires first establishing the phenomenon and its spatial patterns, which I do in the next section.

The Proliferation of Detention on Islands

The growth of detention on islands must be located at the intersection of three global trends that signal shifts in global migration and the search for asylum trends that have been occurring since the 1990s. First, as migration by boat increased, wealthier states of the Global North have been offshoring border enforcement, mobilizing resources to slow migration deeper in transnational journeys. As a result, people are intercepted and detained en route to sovereign territory, where they aspire to make a claim for political asylum or to enter unauthorized to work.[2] Not only is border enforcement happening farther away, so too is the processing of asylum seekers and asylum claims (the second trend), with requirements by the United States, as one example, that Central Americans submit their claims in Mexico without the right to enter the United States. Simultaneously, since the 1990s, asylum seekers are part of what policymakers call “mixed flows” of people on the move, a category that obfuscates asylum seeking and refugee mobilities, conflating them with specters of “illegality” and “undesirable” migrations. Their criminalization has continued apace as their movement is associated with criminality of unauthorized entry and especially since 2001 terrorism.

Many of these migrations involve maritime crossings, or boat migration. Sometimes people migrating by boat in search of safe haven land on islands as the closest piece of sovereign territory they reach, where they can make a claim for asylum. At first, many of the islands that house detention facilities were spaces of passage to safe haven in the form of asylum claimant processes. Over time, as interception and exclusion intensified, these islands increasingly became sites of detention, containment, and exclusion of asylum seekers. Islands themselves therefore moved from being spaces of passage to carceral spaces of bordering, containment, and expulsion.[3]

These islands prove geographically remote, closer to regions of origin than destination, which again shows their dual geographical roles the closest bits of land that people can reach to make a claim, or to enter sovereign territory, and also far flung, remote places whose residents are themselves marginalized and hidden from view of the mainstream public, where access is mediated, and increasingly obstructed and contained. The islands with growth in detention are located in the borderlands between mainland sovereign territories, in sites of maritime crossing between disparate economic regions. As such, they map an economic geography of travel between asymmetrical regions for livelihood and survival. They also bring into relief a legal geography, showing where people can seek protection, taking journeys to sovereign territories where they can make claims for political asylum or enter to work, or where states impose extraterritorial and extrajudicial buffer zones.

As a third trend, the last twenty or so years have also seen the global growth in detention of non-citizens, both in refugee resettling countries but also “offshore,” along maritime routes, the countries crossed between regions of

origin and destination (e.g. Central America, Mexico, Indonesia, and Pacific Islands).[4] These borderland regions tend to be sites of crossing between poorer and wealthier countries and regions. The result is that wealthier states are shrinking paths to spaces of asylum, making moves to contain displacement and the search for livelihood to the Global South. These investments in border enforcement and detention fuel the growth of an enforcement archipelago that states design and operate in tandem on- and offshore. Notably, the countries that are leading the way in detaining offshore such as Australia and the United States also possess extensive capacity to detain onshore.

Each of these trends the offshoring of borders and the global growth in detention is well-established in existing literature. I am interested here in their geographical intersection in the borderlands. While migration studies generally suffer from methodological nationalism, or the failure to account for and explain what happens beyond national boundaries, it is essential to look to the borderlands to understand how enforcement practices and paths to safe havens are changing. The border is being mobilized and affixed to racialized bodies, altering politics and spaces of exclusion and resistance by shifting them to more remote locations obscured from view. As a result, people on the move enter into bewildering, prolonged periods of limbo and containment en route to other lives in other places.

These trends followed similar spatial patterns across distant regions.[5] In the 2000s, for example, Italy increasingly detained on Lampedusa island, and shifted resources and maritime policing offshore by entering bilateral arrangements with Libya and training the Libyan navy to intercept.[6] During this same period, entry, enforcement, and encampment intensified on Greek islands in the Aegean as well. Australia implemented the Pacific Solution in 2001, following US practices of intercepting and detaining offshore by opening detention facilities on Australian overseas territory of Christmas Island, on Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island, and eventually across the Indonesian archipelago.[7] The Pacific Solution involved interception of asylum seekers traveling by boat, and transporting them to Pacific islands, where they were detained and had much more limited access to apply for asylum no legal representation, less process, few resources, supports, or connections to community. The United States detained across the Caribbean on military bases most notably the US naval base in Cuba, Guantanamo Bay and on Pacific islands of Guam and Saipan.[8]

These detention facilities tended not to be promoted publicly by either the global institutions tasked with managing migration, or the government authorities implementing these policies. They transpired rather quietly, often narrated along the the humanitarian enforcement spectrum. But policies of containing displaced people in regions of origin, usually in the Global South, in remote areas, have roots, funding, and political support in mainstream efforts by the UNHCR.[9] Whereas border enforcement operations are usually associated with the spectacles that accompany shows of enforcement, the spectacular operates simultaneously to obscure the violence carried out quietly against migrants.[10] As enforcement intensifies offshore, there are many casualties, including people making maritime crossings, and small island communities drawn into the labor and economy of detention. Because of this increased enforcement offshore, people migrating find themselves in prolonged periods of limbo, often taking years and multiple journeys to cross multiple borders. If the border ever functioned as a line, with the primary spatial metaphor that of crossing the primary spatial metaphor of the border has increasingly become the island, a space of containment.[11] That is to say, now one of the primary experiences of the border is that of confinement: migrants experience proliferating islands, a series of spaces of confinement en route in multiple countries.

As a result of the global growth in and geographic sprawl of detention and border enforcement, spaces and periods of confinement that migrants experience during their journeys across borders have increased. Although

this deterrence proves largely unsuccessful, in that it does not stop people from migrating, states continue to invest, and people continue to migrate, taking greater risks to do so to avoid enforcement, and encountering more forms of confinement as enforcement proliferates. Many spend years in detention in highly varied spaces of confinement, ranging from the formal high-security, purpose-built facilities to more informal and ad-hoc detention spaces where authorities intercept people. Individual journeys now involve crossing several international borders, and experiencing a series of times and spaces of confinement in multiple national jurisdictions en route to hoped-for destinations. Scholars have been documenting these circuitous transnational journeys.[12]

In the next section, I will explore the spatial form of the island as lens through which to witness sovereign power acting against asylum seeking.

Island Detention as Archipelagic Sovereignty

Whereas I was drawn to research island detention as an empirical phenomenon, and have briefly explained its empirical contours, I also engage here with the power of islands as a conceptual lens through which to understand contemporary forms of border enforcement, sovereignty, and intensified containment and exclusion that are part of the politics of migration. In developing the notion of archipelagic sovereignty, I draw on existing scholarship in the fields of political geography, island studies,[13] and refugee studies,[14] with particular emphasis on the placing of camps.[15] By "archipelagic sovereignty", I refer to the endless push to design spaces of containment, not only to use islands, but create islands elsewhere, mobilizing them onshore and off with efforts to contain human mobility, and mediate access to rights accrued on sovereign territory. The form originates with offshore moves, but proliferates everywhere, not unlike Giorgio Agamben's argument about the potential for camps to be established, confining displaced people to an ever-expanding series of spaces of confinement.[16]

Conceptually, what sense can we make of the offshore growth of the enforcement archipelago, its relationship to in/visibility, sovereignty, and art? I begin with the examination of the relationship between the phenomenon of island detention and sovereignty, with the strategy of placing island detention in a lineage of studying the nexus of displacement, geographies of containment, and sovereign power. Placing islands within this lineage on modern politics begins, necessarily, with Hannah Arendt, who posits the refugee as a paradigm of a new historical consciousness:

> *What is unprecedented is not the loss of a home but the impossibility of finding a new one. Suddenly, there was no place on earth where migrants could go without the severest restrictions, no country where they would be assimilated, no territory where they could found a new community of their own… Nobody had been aware that mankind, for so long a time considered under the image of a family of nations, had reached the stage where whoever was thrown out of one of these tightly organized communities found himself thrown out of the family of nations altogether*.[17]

More recently, scholars have looked to the camp, working often with Agamben,[18] who traces the genealogy of the camp that is now widespread: "the hidden matrix of the politics in which we are living."[19] Agamben urges readers to "learn to recognize [the camp] in all its metamorphoses" (e.g. cities, airport detention centers).[20] Agamben theorizes the historical trajectory of the modern camp as one that is perpetually reconstituted.[21] For him, the camp always looms as a threat that can be mobilized in any time and place to exclude, ultimately threatening to everyone not only to refugees.

Many scholars draw on Agamben's conceptualization of "the camp" as paradigmatic of contemporary forms of sovereignty and political violence.[22] Claudio Minca extends this work into a new spatial ontology of power, with the camp and permanent state of exception "a new *nomos* on global politics."[23] Agamben's theory is well-rehearsed, critiqued, and expanded upon in existing literature on refugee camps. Adam Ramadan, for example, argues that the camp can be understood as a space where refugees forge solidarity and identity, and exercise human agency.[24] For Ramadan, the refugee camp is a place where sovereign power is spatially configured in particular ways. Ramadan works both with and against Agamben in his analysis of how sovereignty operates:

> *if the prison camp has "returned", the refugee camp never went away. In this age of conflict, mass migrations and climate change, the refugee camp has been and remains a crucial spatial formation in the struggles over territories, borders and identities. Indeed, if Arendt was right to propose the refugee as the paradigm of a new historical consciousness, then perhaps the camp is the paradigm for future human settlements and communities*.[25]

I extend Ramadan's analysis to remote detention, asking whether the island *is* the new camp. For scholars in the field of nissology, islands function to tell us about sovereign power precisely because they capture the geographical imagination of authorities as sites of experimentation and control. Phil Steinberg argued that the placement of islands on portolan navigational charts foretold modern forms of sovereignty and statehood, whereas more recent scholarship has brought the relationality of islands to the fore with what Jonathan Pugh calls "archipelagic thinking".[26] Many scholars have studied forms of American empire on islands.[27] Existing efforts to understand refugee camps have been extended to study more carceral geographies[28], here including spatial patterns of detention, confinement, and isolation on islands. These patterns operating across camps and islands are not ubiquitous, universal, or totalizing, but historically and spatially patterned.

Working on one such island, Paolo Cuttitta locates Italy's Lampedusa as a stage on which to see performed the politics of migration, the Italian response to contemporary displacement unfolding in three acts.[29] Similarly, Natahlie Bernardie-Tahir and Camille Schmoll explore islands as sites through which to understand global migration.[30] The island foretells modern forms of exclusion, containment, and foreclosure upon asylum-seeking. Abundant documentation exists of the increases in border deaths in recent years.[31] Physical deaths abound in the borderlands, across the Sahara and the Mediterranean as well as the US-Mexico border. But I want to signal a different kind of death, and that is the death of asylum; this death is acutely visible in interstitial spaces of crossing and confinement offshore. By death of asylum,[32] I am in conversation with Judith Butler's work on precarious life to understand this death in three ways: physical, ontological, and political.[33]

The growth of remote detention geographical locations designed to inhibit access and paths to asylum capitalizes on ontological insecurity, prioritizing the precarity of legal limbo and the violence of detention over refuge and contributing to the ontological death of asylum. Ontological death differs from ontological insecurity.[34] Whereas ontological insecurity introduces precarity and threatens existence, ontological death means the end of that existence. For example, by preventing asylum seekers from landing on sovereign territory, where they become asylum seekers by virtue of the legal recognition of a claim to asylum, they will never actually become asylum seekers; this category of people ceases to exist. This growth in detention offshore mirrors the dynamics of enforcement across the archipelago, where, by preventing their landing, people are prevented from becoming asylum seekers. Remote detention therefore proves fundamental to the ontological death of asylum; by removing people from view, they become paradoxically hidden *and* securitized by the spectacular nature of this security industry. The search for asylum is lost in this double move, disappearing

alongside asylum seekers themselves.

Within this geographical morass, islands emerge as paths to protection, a space of refuge, or passage to safety, as entrypoints. But as migration there increases, island spaces are transformed from space of passage, to carceral space of expulsion where people are intercepted and detained, where authorities mediate and outsource access.[35] This third-party mediation sets the stage for legal struggles over entry and exclusion as tensions between humanitarian rescue and securitization rise. This is the case on Lampedusa, a small island with approximately 6,000 residents, and two main industries of fishing and tourism. Migrations across the Mediterranean and through Lampedusa reflect unrest and conflict at home in countries of origin, with notable spikes in arrivals following “the Arab Spring” and conflict in Syria in 2014. Originally a space of passage into agricultural work in Italy and the EU, once Italy joined the EU, the island increasingly became a space of containment and expulsion.

The social distance between people who land on Lampedusa from inhabitants in the rest of Italy and Europe is not only geographical, but accomplished visually. Images of masked authorities intercepting and offloading ships, counting and medically treating racialized migrant bodies, checking for diseases, have become common. Some have identified this as the militarization of the Mediterranean, while others explore the humanitarian/security nexus. Less visible are state actions and their costs, such as push-back policies, or *respingimento,* and interceptions on high seas closer to Libya, cooperation with Libyan authorities to police European borders closer to North Africa, and spaces of detention in North Africa. Kira Williams identifies these interceptions as themselves a form of paradoxical inclusion through exclusion.[36]

With increased enforcement, deaths quietly increase too; deterrence fails and pushes people to take greater risks, endure greater precarity, and more deaths. Even numbers of border deaths remain abstract: we are distanced from them, from the humanity of those who died. Which is why their proximity, and embodied intimacy of these lived realities, precarious journeys, and the hidden violence that occurs to people offshore, is so importantly rendered in art forms that restore human forms and narratives to migration and detention. When placed in such close proximity on the screen, it is harder to look away, to deny these deaths and the fact that we are all intimately connected to them, that they are racialized, with primarily black and brown bodies excluded.

People who survive remote detention for prolonged periods of time acutely feel the stress of uncertainty and limbo that is psychological, legal, spatial, and temporal. Research on health and mental health, much of it conducted in Australia, shows greater degrees of self-harm, hunger strikes, and suicide attempts among those detained remotely. The longer and more remote the detention, the more devastating this violence affects physical and mental health and well-being of people detained. In my research on islands, people spoke frequently of stomach aches, headaches, inability to sleep, and other physical symptoms of the stress of limbo as they awaited the resolution of their cases, and hoping for freedom. Islanders who work in the facilities experience secondary forms of trauma too, as they engage with emotional landscapes and struggles over the recurring rhythms of spectacular crisis and quiet, mundane forms of violence: death, drowning, life suspended. Island residents themselves also live the cycle of displacement as a form of uncertainty as arrivals wax and wane responding alongside migrants authorities, and humanitarian workers who arrive on the island during heightened moments when small islands become inundated with migrant boat arrivals.

Spaces of offshore containment do not remain offshore. The spatial form of the island moves onshore, and is simultaneously reproduced in proliferating fashion on mainland sovereign territories, often tied to boat arrivals.

Jenna Loyd and I have developed this argument in demonstrating the relatively recent history of building the US detention system, and the accompany archipelago of detention facilities on military bases in the Caribbean, with resonance in the containment practices of racialized Haitian and Cuban asylum seekers both onshore and off.[37] Other scholars have explored the meaning of island detention funded by Australia.[38]

The containment of migrant bodies on islands mirrors the treatment of migrants *as* islands in the creative manipulation of geography and law, asylum seekers carrying with them the geography of the journey, even after it has seemingly ended. Migrant bodies are imported into a carceral archipelago and into law and detention facilities designed to thwart access. But, people are not islands; we are connected by our sociality and relationships to others, and art can become not only a form of expression, but the very weaving of the lives of detained people experiencing unfreedom to those experiencing freedom outside, elsewhere. Such is the origin of the powerful film, *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time*, a collaboration between Behrouz Boochani (then detained on Manus) and Arash Sarvestani, a fellow Iranian living in Holland.[39] Agamben's work has been critiqued for the totalizing vision of sovereignty it conveys, for its foreclosure upon forms of resistance and human agency.[40] Yet such resistance is thriving not only in the human agency of people detained, but in their artistic creations across the enforcement archipelago.

Art as Resistance to Detention on Islands

All kinds of artistic forms emerge from the ever-expanding enforcement archipelago. Many, in fact, begin with memorialization witnessing, documenting, recording, and distributing violence hidden from view, whether memorializing deaths at sea or in detention. Scholars have documented art as a form of activism emerging from within and working against detention,[41] while also being critical, as Sarah Hughes has been, of the notion that art itself is necessarily a form of resistance.[42] Creative work offers forms of expressions of resistance to island detention, some emerging from people inside, others from people outside. Key is the potential for art to cross borders and travel, to reach and provoke national and global publics and transnational solidarities. There are everyday kinds of artistic expression that help people to survive and share life behind bars, by definition hidden from view, with the outside world. Art and creative practices offer potential to restore human dignity and expressions of agency within spaces of confinement and unfreedom, placing these in stark contrast with often exploitative and undignified images that so often circulate in the media about sites of detention.[43] Much of this work is visual, with materials available in detention, or music, and even performance art, as with the man detained on Australia's Christmas Island who dug his own grave and slept in it. Here, I want to discuss a more sophisticated and prolonged endeavor, a feature-length film that emerged from Australia's offshore detention regime on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island, *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time*.

Filmmakers Boochani and Sarvestani used social media and smartphone technology specifically, the application WhatsApp to painstakingly record and send several thousands of texts and video recordings with hidden cell phones, in violation of various rules of the detention center. Sarvestani and Boochani collaborated throughout the process, from discussion of storylines, how to frame shots and re-enact scenes, and editing, all while concealing the work that Boochani was doing while in detention on Manus. The result is a film that accomplishes many important objectives, at once artistic and political. The film captures both the mundane experience of waiting in limbo with frequent perspectives on a life of unfreedom, shot through fencing and bars, gates and into cells, while also documenting the abuses that befall people who have had their freedom and mobility taken away. Visually, the film is relatively quiet and slow at times, with the grey metal of fencing and buildings as the backdrop to daily life of waiting in detention on Manus. Just beyond the grey fencing lie lush green vegetation, tropical beaches, and local children who approach the fencing with curiosity and laughter. Boochani frames

these snapshots of his shared life with other detainees with several quiet shots of him sitting at the fence, watching local children as they watch him.

Emotional climaxes disclosing the terror of violence inside detention drive the film forward, and include tearful phone calls home to family members with attempts to describe the stress of the situation, interviews sitting on beds recounting sequestration to a separation isolation unit, called Chauka. This separate isolation unit functions as a form of punishment within punishment, detention within detention, isolation within isolation, island within island, a hidden scene within a hidden scene. Chauka is the name of the local bird, a soure of pride for islanders, but shamefully assigned to this unit where detainees are moved for punishment when they have carried out self-harm or witnessed violence authorities enacted on fellow detainees. By using technology and social media, the filmmakers act as medium for a global audience. Detainees asked to bear witness for Boochani transmit the trauma of torture and confinement directly to audiences of the film, now forced to bear witness to this concealed violence enacted on people displaced, intercepted, detained, separated from their families and global publics, suspended in time and place. The film becomes a document and living testimony that fuels transnational solidarity and abolition movements, as well as efforts to resettle Boochani himself and others detained alongside him on Manus and Nauru.

John Donne famously wrote “No man is an island.” Instead, we are intimately connected. I was reminded of this in January of 2019 when I first met Sarvestani, when we both spoke at the symposium on art and migration organized by the editors of this special issue of *PARSE*. On the flight back to Amsterdam, Arash kindly traded seats with my neighbor so that I could watch this film. I was transfixed as I listened through a headset with only one working earbud. I was torn between watching the film, and tearing off my headset to talk with Arash about how much the detention infrastructure I saw on Manus reminded me of facilities on Christmas Island, where I had done research.

In September 2019, as our students returned to campus at Canadian universities, we hosted Arash and Behrouz remotely, using teleconferencing technology. Although moved from Manus, Boochani was still in Papua New Guinea, his future uncertain. At that point, with the facilities shut down, all remaining people still being held had been moved to other locations. Although Manus is very far away from Waterloo, Ontario, where the film premiered at the beginning of a week of screenings in Canada, we were locally connected to this distant place depicted in the film in many ways, and to the people and themes presented in the film. As an important metropolitan site of resettlement, thousands of refugees and asylum claimants in the region had spent time traveling by boat, living in refugee camps, and surviving detention centers like the one depicted in the film.

After watching their film, we discussed the process of making the film and its post-production life, especially in Australia, and what has happened on Manus Island since the two completed the film. In December, a few months after this event, news broke of Boochani’s release and landing in New Zealand. Social media once again communicated to his global audience, in a brief interview at the airport, his face lit up with a smile.

The film is important for many reasons, and here I mention but a few. First, Papua New Guinea’s Manus Island is remote, but not isolated. Nor is island detention an isolated incident: it is an empirical phenomenon that has been growing in use in recent years, and for decades ever since the US began intercepting the boats of Haitian and Cuban asylum seekers and detaining them on US military bases across the Caribbean in the 1980s and 1990s.[44] It has arisen because countries that observe the Convention in relation to the status of refugees including Australia, the United States, and Canada are policing their borders remotely offshore in order to prevent potential asylum claimants from landing on sovereign territory where they accrue the right to make a

petition for asylum. Detention on islands capitalizes on remote geographies and isolation. Islands render extreme the logics of isolation happening in all prisons and detention centers. What is a prison, if not an island?

One of the main things I found in my research about island detention is the repetition of the spatial form of the island within the island, which carries with it a certain degree of absurdity along with inhumanity the maximum security facility on a remote island surrounded by rough seas, as is the case on Christmas Island; the construction of solitary confinement cells, and other forms of isolation depicted in *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time* that compound isolation and dehumanization.

Island detention also involves repetition, not only across space, but also time. Australia has a settler colonial history of containing indigenous peoples, and was also developed as a penal colony; the modern Australian state now exploits other smaller island states to carry out projects of containment, which are also always racialized geographies.[45] Even within this contemporary round of offshore detention, there is a bewildering, haunting repetition the opening and closure of facilities, the constant movement of people from one facility to another, from one island to another. Caught up in this churn, and in the hysterical politics of borders, are actual people living the trauma of these decisions and that is what makes the story of Chauka at once highly situated and also connected to similar kinds of operations and forms of resistance in other locations.

Australia is now a model for other countries. This has made chances for resettlement for those found to be refugees on these islands complicated. Shortly before US President Barack Obama left office, he struck a deal with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull for Australia and the US to trade politically unpopular asylees. Shortly after Donald Trump entered office, he called this a bad deal in a heated phone call and apparently hung up on Turnbull. But some 700 people have quietly been resettled in the US, and some in Canada.

Much of the plight of people detained in faraway places remains hidden from view. Detention on remote islands is not an effective form of global governance, in that it is harmful to people, separates families and communities, and does not allow people interaction with the rest of the world. It is both extremely expensive, and ineffective: in other words, research shows that greater investments in border enforcement do not stop or deter people from traveling, but they do prompt them to take more precarious journeys to evade authorities. And yet, the political will and popularity of deterrence measures persist, with other governments following suit. In December 2018, the Danish Parliament decided to detain asylum seekers on a small island not far from Copenhagen with a budget that involved the rehabilitation of an animal testing facility not far from the capital to be repurposed to detain asylum seekers awaiting deportation.[46] Most recently, in 2019, Bangladeshi authorities contracted Chinese and British engineers to build out a silt island with a plan to begin to move 100,000 Rohingya refugees from Cox's Bazaar to the island, and with the capacity to eventually move up to 1,000,000. This plan was critiqued for the risk of physical harm to refugees; the island sits in the path of storms during the monsoon season, and is low-lying, at risk of flooding. Refugees would also be placed at more risk of violation of their rights; once moved to the island, they would not be allowed to leave unless agreeing to do so to return home. This gaining of momentum threatens the moral center of political asylum, the notion of safe haven in fact, island detention is synonymous with the political death of asylum.

Social media offer important means through which to challenge the isolation of island detention, and *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time* is one of the most exciting examples. If Agamben's camp is a totalizing narrative vision of sovereignty, like Boochani's literary award-winning memoir, *No Friend But the Mountains*, the film portrays the perils of unfreedom while also showing the power of art to expose the violence that state authorities attempt to hide from the view of transnational publics.[47] As such, art emerging from island detention fuels social

movements that seek recognition and demand change alongside visibility in an effort to move beyond the memorialization of those lost.

Conclusions

Art has the power to travel, connect, transform, proving a key thread in transnational solidarity movements built with commitments to freedom of mobility and social justice. *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time* exemplifies art as a mobile form of resistance, with the power to forge connections, solidarities, and global publics called upon to witness the violence unfolding in remote detention facilities. As such, art expresses the solidarity, identity, and human agency that Ramadan finds at work in refugee camps.

The empirical phenomenon of the growth of island detention shows no sign of abating. Instead, the restless search for new islands on which to detain continues. This shortsighted response to displacement and paths to solutions grew, rather than diminish in scope as a response to displacement by the international community. As mentioned, recent decisions by Denmark and Bangladesh confirm the continued salience that islands hold to hide displacement, even if only in the geographical imagination.

Remote detention contributes significantly to the death of asylum, advancing its physical, ontological, and political death. The geographical arrangement of institutions reduces access to asylum and the resources needed to actually get asylum. Those who are institutionalized experience confinement, trauma, and physical harm; they are removed from society as workers, family members, as persons, their social identities increasingly tied to spaces of confinement. This disappearance removes them from public awareness and discourse, and further serves to criminalize them. As those held in detention are deemed security threats, their political chances for asylum are diminished.

Many migration and border scholars have written about crisis, some drawing on Agamben's writing. What crisis is this? At the precise moment when we are witnessing the highest rates of displacement since World War II, and rates of asylum seeking have been increasing globally in recent years, we see fewer legal paths to protection, and an erosion of rights. It is asylum itself that is in crisis, a phenomenon rendered invisible on islands, where art is the technology mapping into relief this particular erosion of access to human rights. I locate the death of asylum in each of these geographical moves of archipelagic sovereignty. It is the restless search for new islands on which to detain, the endless proliferation of spaces of confinement as migrants encounter borders along the way, and the geographical imagination of islands that advances offshore detention. States deploy these crises as moments of securitization to advance ad hoc exclusions. They have only worsened with the Covid19 pandemic as paths to asylum shut down further.

While we are living out what feels like an intensification, I want to argue that it is hardly new, but a cycle that continues. Countries are now behaving more and more as islands, a trend intensified by the 2020 Covid19 pandemic, one which brings into relief the nation-state as entity that operates with an island mentality. Nationalism was on the rise before the pandemic struck, and countries scrambled to shut down borders and secure their own supply chains internal to sovereign territory. Flying in the face of decades of scholarship on globalization and economic integration, nation-states have once again been radically reanimated and reconfigured as islands. Fear, geopolitics, and racialization have fueled both historic and contemporary rounds of exclusion. The question we must now ask is what these latest – and particular – expressions of "island mentalities" foretell.

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