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Reframing detention and deportation as policies that create new connections, blur state borders, and fail to meet primary objectives

Detain and Deport

The Chaotic U.S. Immigration Enforcement Regime

Nancy Hiemstra

| GEOGRAPHIES OF JUSTICE AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION |

Detention and deportation have become keystones of immigration and border enforcement policies around the world. The United States has built a massive immigration enforcement system that detains and departs more people than any other country. This system is grounded in the assumptions that national borders are territorially fixed and controllable, and that detention and deportation bolster security and deter migration. Nancy Hiemstra's multi-sited ethnographic research pairs investigation of enforcement practices in the United States with an exploration into conditions migrants face in one country of origin: Ecuador. *Detain and Deport's* transnational approach reveals how the U.S. immigration enforcement system's chaotic organization and operation distracts from the mismatch between these assumptions and actual outcomes.

Hiemstra draws on the experiences of detained and deported migrants, as well as their families and communities in Ecuador, to show convincingly that instead of deterring migrants and improving national security, detention and deportation generate insecurities and forge lasting connections across territorial borders. At the same time, the system's chaos works to curtail rights and to maintain detained migrants on a narrow path to deportation. Hiemstra argues that in addition to the racialized ideas of national identity and a fluctuating dependence on immigrant labor that have long propelled U.S. immigration policies, the contemporary emphasis on detention and deportation is fueled by the influence of people and entities that profit from them.